

A CRITIQUE OF THE POSTMODERN EPISTEME IN SELECTED CONTEMPORARY
NIGERIAN NOVELS

By

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DEDICATION

God Almighty, the giver of all wisdom, knowledge and understanding;

Mama, the harbinger, the gladiator, who left so abruptly leaving behind no contact address, but like an actor, when the ovation is loudest; and

My Girls, 'Ele', 'Sisi' and 'Omoge', in whom I am well pleased!

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ABSTRACT

Western postmodern approach to literary interpretation has, arguably, misinterpreted the cultural and ideological meanings of African literary texts. This has been a critical scholarly problem since the emergence of African literature. Although African literature derives its form and style from Western alternatives, its cultural and ideological contents differ considerably from those of the West. Even though several scholars have variously enunciated the need to jettison Africa's reliance on Western modes of interpretation, no extensive research has practically detailed the historical, contextual and futuristic implications of the problem. This study, therefore, investigates the implications and consequences of applying Western critical standards to the interpretation of non-Western societies. It also suggests a possible way out of this problem in African literary research.

The study employs the Afrocentric worldview, as propounded by Cheikh Anta Diop and expounded by Molefi Asante. This approach provides the African mind the epistemological polemic to critique postmodern literary theory. The choice of texts is informed by the thematic contiguity of contemporary Nigerian novels like Bandele-Thomas's *The Sympathetic Undertaker* and *The Man Who Came in From the Back of Beyond*; Okediran's *Boys at the Border*, *Dreams Die at Twilight* and *Tenants of the House*; Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage*; Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*; Marinho's *The Epidemic*; Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael*; and Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh*. The method of analysis is a probe into the internal arbitrariness in the texts to reveal the repressed meanings. This deconstructive analytical procedure gives credence to the assertion that the Western literary canon is inadequate to provide a development-driven theoretical standpoint for Nigerian literature.

The texts reveal the contradiction in employing the Euro-American postmodern method for the analysis of African literature. The exploration of 'traditionally forbidden' themes of sex, promiscuity, pornography, homosexuality, moral laxity and corruption in these texts underscores the need for a value-conscious African alternative. The innovation of disjointed style undermines the quest for cosmic harmony to the consternation of development-seeking African critics. The hermeneutic differences between Africa and the West are apparent in the different interpretations the two societies ascribe to symbols, totems, motifs, and rituals. The "basic principles" in Africa's relative cultural homogeneity are seen in the promotion and sustenance of her history, philosophy, religion, oral and written traditions, languages, ethics, values and cosmogony,

tendencies which researchers can advance in their quest for an African theory. However, these “basic principles” cannot be extracted from a Western source. They can only be arrived at through a sustained investigation of African history, culture and tradition. Africa has not yet evolved a fine-tuned “mega theory” which, in evolution and practice, is comparable to the standard now attained by the West.

If an Afrocentric theory of reading literature must be formulated, African scholars must be much more grounded in African epistemology. A fuller understanding of the core tenets of African epistemology would show that her system of knowledge is a credible alternative to Western methods of inquiry. This would invariably translate to the reconstruction of knowledge to suit the African need.

Key words: Afrocentric worldview, Literary theory, Contemporary Nigerian novels, Euro-American postmodern method, Hermeneutic differences.

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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this work was researched and written by Akinsola Oluseyi Olaniyi under my supervision.

Nelson O. Fashina, *Ph.D (Ib.)*

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CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

The emergence of the postmodern world has been facilitated by notable historical epochs in human history. Among the notable catalysts of the emergent postmodern order were historical watersheds such as the post World War 1 and the rapid dynamics of socio-political and economic changes that followed as after-effects of the Holocaust (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Spielvogel, 2000; Bilton et al, 2002). The decimation of Germany and her ally had led to resentment and disaffection after the World War 1 (1914-1918). New political arrangements, like the League of Nations formed in 1920 to ensure global peace, had failed to assuage the disaffection of nations. Fascism under Benito Mussolini in Italy had emerged to influence global politics. German leader, Adolf Hitler, came to power as the leader of the Nazi-party to espouse the so-called supremacy of the Aryan race over others! The need to curb German military aggression in Europe made the World War 11 (1939-1945) inevitable. After series of heavy defeats, Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. A peace pact was eventually signed between the United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union and Germany on May 8, 1945 in Berlin (Spielvogel, 2000; King, 2006).

Out of all the dreadful consequences of the World War 11, the Holocaust is the most devastating. As the Nazi-controlled German army set out on the mission of exterminating the entire Jewish population of Europe and succeeded in killing about six million Jews in the process, it became difficult to rationalise these brutal killings with the rationalities the Enlightenment portends! After all, but for the Scientific Revolution that was given impetus by modernity, the highly organized German bureaucratic network could not have found it convenient to employ the instrument of science and technology towards the mindless massacre of the Jew. According to George Ritzer (1996:583), no form of mass killing, not even the “irrational pogroms” can be likened to the devastating consequences for which science was employed during the war. Nothing compares to the use of science and a highly organised bureaucratic network to “successfully carry on a mass extermination of the scale undertaken in the Holocaust”⁽⁵⁸⁴⁾. Quoting Feingold, Bauman (1989) provides a vivid and detailed representation of the ‘terror’ of science unleashed on the Jews during the Holocaust:

(Auschwitz) was a mundane extension of the modern factory system. Rather than producing goods, the raw material was human beings and the end product was death, so many units per day marked carefully on the manager’s production

charts. The chimney, the very symbol of the modern factory system poured forth acrid smoke produced by burning human flesh...In the gas chambers the victims inhaled noxious gas generated by prussic acid pellets, which were produced by the advance chemical industry of Germany. Engineers designed the crematoria; managers designed the system of bureaucracy that worked with zest and efficiency more backward nations world envy. Even the overall plan itself was a reflection of the modern scientific spirit gone awry (8).

Also, Jackson Spielvogel (2000) documents a gory account of Nazi brutality towards the Jews:

After they have been gassed, the bodies were burned in the crematoria. The victims' goods and even their bodies were used for economic gain... The Germans killed between five and six million Jews, over three million of them in the death camps. Virtually 90 percent of the Jewish populations of Poland, the Baltic countries, and Germany were exterminated. Overall, the Holocaust was responsible for the death of nearly two out of every three European Jews (834).

In similar vein, while commenting on the testimony of Rudolf Hess, a concentration camp commander at the famous Nuremberg trial, Margaret King (2006) presents a vivid account of how Hitler's men killed the Jews mercilessly in their infamous operation tagged "Final Solution":

Nazi managers invented a method of mass extermination: the gas chamber. SS guards packed hundreds, even thousands of prisoners at a time into the sealed rooms. They then introduced a precise quantity of Zyklon-B gas (crystallized prussic acid, normally used as pesticide). Death followed in just a few minutes- between three and fifteen (826).

Besides the Holocaust, other related instances which expose the Enlightenment to legitimacy crisis and hostile criticism are the atrocities perpetrated with Stalinism. Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago* (1973) provides a monumental recap of the dastardly activities perpetrated under the guise of Stalinism in Italy. All these unequivocally foregrounded postmodern thinking.

Meanwhile, these historical 'tragedies' marked the demise of the Enlightenment epoch which was the period on which the Western intellectual pillar rested. In that era of regeneration, science and reason were no longer capable of providing the ultimate solution to historical and socio-cultural problems (Abram, 1981; Ray, 1990; Selden & Widdowson, 1993, Bertens, 1995; Garbadi, 2001; Milner & Browitt, 2002). New realities blurred hitherto established and conventional appraisal of societal realities. There emerged a new dawn which heralded a new

thinking and reasoning by sociologists, philosophers, architects, historians, anthropologists and literary critics in Europe and America. No one could doubt the fact that a new world has emerged to 'announce' the demise of modern culture, at least, as it was fast emerging. The postmodern world is therefore accountable for as the totality of the new world outlook which has been mid-wived by the demise of modernity. George Ritzer (1996) describes the new world as encompassing

a new historical epoch, new cultural products, and a new type of theorizing about the social world. All of these, of course, share the perspective that something new and different has happened in recent years that can no longer be described by the term "modern", and that those new developments are replacing modern realities (608).

Lawrence Cahoon (1996) describes the art of the time thus:

This period saw the development of art which seemingly renounced unity of style for pastiche - and which in some cases threatened to break down the very notion of art - writing that embraced eclecticism and laughed at (or with?) alienation rather than complaining of it, ... The idea of an avant-garde, of art as the most serious and truthful of cultural occupations, was increasingly abandoned (8).

The postmodern world has therefore evolved to replace the modern belief system; hence Robert Ray (1990:131) calls it "the radical break with traditional assumptions about meaning". If Tony Bilton et al (2002:40) call modernity "the great transformation", the new world has therefore produced "another great transformation".

Unarguably, the historic event that heralded postmodern culture was the World Wars 1 and 11, thus Milner and Browitt (2002:169) refer to it as a "dominant culture of the postwar West". With social unrest and wanton destruction of life and property, the ability of science to provide order in the society became discredited. The 1950s and 1960s eras manifested the core tenets of postmodernism so much that Hans Bertens (1995:5) describes it as the "attitude and sensibility of the 1960s counterculture". According to Selden and Widdowson (1993), the unprecedented Holocaust and its attendant "unimaginable" consequences in the society led to "ontological uncertainty" in a fast emerging world devoid of meaning, unity and coherence. Terror, chaos and disintegration became the lot of the society in a rapidly changing world. Established concepts or ideas became discredited and undermined through the celebration of, rather than lamentation of, ambiguity and disorderliness:

If there is a summarizing idea it is the theme of the absent centre. The postmodern experience is widely held to stem from a profound sense of ontological uncertainty. Human shock in the face of the unimaginable (pollution, holocaust, the death of the 'subject') results in a loss of fixed points of reference. Neither the world nor the self any longer possesses unity, coherence, meaning. They are radically 'decentred' (178).

The imperative of this reasoning method is the desire to "subvert the foundations of our accepted modes of thought and experience so as to reveal the meaninglessness of existence and the underlying 'abyss' or 'void' or 'nothingness' on which our supposed security is precariously suspended"(Abram, 1981:110). This is achieved through a sustained repudiation of traditional belief system in a bid to undermine "the Enlightenment belief in the unity of reason and progress, the idea that there is a rational purpose or teleology to history" (Gabardi, 2001:5).

It is expedient to identify the *raison d'être* for this social 'earthquake' that threatened and ridiculed the foundation of Western thinking methods. Coming as a direct off-shoot of post-industrial Western society, technological explosion and advancement in information and communication across the world led to the advent of the electronic age, with computer, cable network, mobile phone, satellite television, and the Internet producing improved technology. With the whole world at our fingertips, the 'borderless' interconnectivity gave rise to the unhindered influx of culture, norms and lifestyles that were hitherto considered the exclusive preserve of Europe and America. As the entire world is shrunk with recourse to e-business, e-mail, e-culture, man becomes "an internationalised consumer" who now "inhabit a multinational, multimedia, interdependent world marketplace" in the globalised society (Malpas, 2005:2). According to Bilton et al (2002), a fall-out of this development is the unhindered transfer of information, attitude, norm and culture across the world in our "information-laden, media-saturated" world, where "we experience events virtually and instantaneously from around the world 24 hours a day, seven days a week". The world therefore becomes a global village where people

are no longer defined in a structured way by the job that we do, but that we actually construct our ever-changing identity through what we consume, be this on the internet, in shopping centres, on holiday or sitting in front of the TV. If the characteristic modern activity was manufacturing, the defining postmodern activity is shopping. In sum, the

postmodern age is a global, post-industrial age of proliferating signs, hyper-reality and deep-seated skepticism and uncertainty (517).

Thus, information technology becomes a major catalyst for increased economic activities all over the world.

As expected in the fast emerging world which Steven Best and Douglas Kellner (2001:1) describe as “the Third Millennium” which culminated in “a digitized and networked global economy and society,” the transformation in people’s attitudes, fashion, norms and deeds was unprecedented, leading to the unhindered infiltration of Western ideals (Cahoone, 1996; Watson, 2001). Custom and convention are allowed to freely spread across the globe in the new ‘borderless’ world. The ensuing global interdependent relationship turned the entire world into a global market controlled by the Western technologically advanced nations and multinationals. The end result is emphasis on money and bargaining power at the expense of the technologically inferior nations and their underprivileged people. Malpas (2005) puts it more succinctly:

Contemporary culture in all its variety rests on ‘money’, on ‘buying power’, and the apparently borderless postmodern world is so only for the Western elites who have the wealth and power to travel, consume and freely choose their lifestyles. In stark contrast to them stand the dispossessed peoples of those parts of the planet for which globalization seems often to mean a loss of security and self-determination rather than an expansion of opportunity

(1-2).

The high-point of this postmodern world is the Internet which shrinks space and time. Henceforth, all cultures of the world are to be seen and heard without repression, suppression and intimidation. According to Smart (1992:34), Daniel Bell’s “post-industrial” Western society which heralded “a vast historical change in which old social relations (which were property bound), existing power structures (centred on narrow elites), and bourgeois culture (based on notions of restraint and delayed gratification) are being rapidly eroded,” is here with us.

As influential as the period of the Enlightenment is, we are not oblivious of unfavourable critical opinions on modernist tendencies that significantly undermined modern ideals and gave rise to postmodern thinking. These critiques have attained the status of a consensus among critics hence the need to discuss them. The influence of the Enlightenment had begun to wane beginning from the time its inability to promote rational thinking was exposed, especially after the incidence

of the French Revolution and the World Wars 1 and II. These events significantly cast aspersions on the 'naïve' optimism of progress and development as articulated by Enlightenment thinkers like Immanuel Kant, Max Weber and Karl Marx. Although the age came with a promise to assuage man from irrationality, it betrayed this optimism with the killing, maiming and wanton destruction of lives and properties during the wars, thus critics argue that it is grossly disappointing because it has "awakened many more expectations than it was able to fulfil" (William, 2004:635). The inability of the Enlightenment to sustain its enormous expectation led to its disclaimer as anti-Enlightenment critics engaged in deliberate polemics directed at its philosophical foundation. In the opinion of Grant (2001:29), the late nineteenth century anti-Enlightenment philosophers, like Nietzsche, directed their outright repudiation of Enlightenment philosophy "at the hard-won gains of the Enlightenment itself with Nietzsche proclaiming that God is dead, and that truth, morality and knowledge itself were mere illusions".

Meanwhile, the eventual demise of socialism in Russia and its former allies is another incident which undermines Enlightenment thinking. Uncertainty and tension enveloped the 'Cold War' era and naturally, "a time of high tension" and pessimism is expected to be followed by "a period of sober reflection and reassessment" (Williams, 2004:635). The disillusionment after the 'Cold War' led to global disenchantment and disdain for socialist thinking in its entirety, thus encouraging the wholesale 'importation' of America's free-market capitalism. Now that it is established that even socialism cannot guarantee the anticipated utopia society devoid of mundane sentiment, oppression and inequality, a new lease of life is welcome. If man can no longer be assured of a society where he can achieve his maximum potential in a classless egalitarian world devoid of restriction, then communism can invariably make way for capitalism. In fact, Grayling (2008) submits that some anti-Enlightenment thinkers delude themselves by anticipating a communist utopia society which is only a mirage:

This new line of thinking is a sad commentary for Enlightenment thinkers because it calls for serious scrutiny of the philosophical assumption that informs the foundation of modernist tendencies. Thus, postmodernist current of thought becomes inevitable (xx).

It is clear that the central concern of the Enlightenment is the resolve to discountenance Victorian ideals of development which is espoused in various myths and traditional assumptions. While pre-Enlightenment critics find solace in myth and tradition to buttress their thesis about the

relationship between man and the society, Enlightenment thinkers reiterate the irrationality of myth and conclude that a concept that cannot pass empirical test is nothing but an ‘irritating misnomer’ that should be jettisoned. Henceforth, reason should be the watchword in social engineering. Ironically, all the tendencies associated with modernist philosophy do not fare better as they also propound their own mythological speculations. For instance, Marxism articulates the ‘myth’ of the inevitability of utopia after the proletariat prevails over the bourgeoisie in a class-structured society while Christianity advances its argument with the conviction that a monolithic world of unalloyed loyalty to Jehovah is desirable. Unfortunately, these ‘myths’ become restrictive and call to question the so-called freedom associated with the Enlightenment. As people seek a way out of the repressive doctrine of modernity, prominent among which are Marxism and Christianity, postmodern ideals emerge with the ‘largesse’ to further liberate man from any restrictive ideology or orthodoxy. Post-Enlightenment critics begin to imbibe its core assumptions.

In addition, the overbearing attitudes of the State come to the fore in the modern era. While the state looms large in her capacity to promote and sustain law and order in the society, she nevertheless begins to exercise this authority, at times, in a dictatorial and most inhuman manner. This is clearly at variance with her social contract with the people. Evidence abounds of occasions when the inalienable rights of the people are violated and the people are suppressed in a way that is largely inimical to human capacity development. In the name of nationalism and in defence of territorial integrity, man engages in war with fatal consequences. Modern leaders like Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini led their people to various preventable wars with devastating consequences for lives and properties. These wars confirm the anti-Enlightenment position that the mere existence of the nation-state is not a pre-condition for order in the society. In fact, with the active connivance of the government, through a state sanctioned policy, the modern man is further humiliated and pauperized. This unfortunate reality casts the Enlightenment in bad light and informs postmodern thinking.

Also, the project of the Enlightenment is heavily criticised by non-Western critics because of its philosophical assumptions which view development and culture only from Western standpoints. Instead of understanding national sentiments and prejudices, Western critics were erroneously influenced by Enlightenment ideals to believe that the West should provide the apposite benchmark to articulate world development. The likely aftermath of this parochial

thinking which merely helps to sustain Western hegemony is that non-Western culture is perceived with contempt hence its advocates seek a disclaimer of Western critical standard in return. Although landmark incidents which underscore Enlightenment thinking, like the Copernican Revolution, French Revolution, Industrial Revolution among others, unarguably occurred in the West, their significant consequences have lasting effects on global developments, Nigeria inclusive. Therefore while fashioning their developmental efforts along Western paradigm, non-Western critics are not unmindful of their indigenous peculiarities which accord them a certain measure of dignity and self-worth. Thus, the determination to create an identity devoid of Western dictation makes the series of struggles and strife by non-Western nations against perceived Western interest inevitable. Against the backdrop of the need to renounce Western critical standard, the project of the Enlightenment therefore suffers a major setback and postmodern critical model comes to the fore.

In a similar vein, anti-Enlightenment critics accuse the advocates of Enlightenment ideals of dictating the direction of scientific research to further underscore their relevance and indispensability in social engineering. The obvious danger in this action is that scientific discoveries become a means of advancing the ideological linings of the state and an instrument strategically employed to articulate “the interests of dominant social groups at the expense of knowledge that would benefit the common people” (Heise, 2004:150). As the state begins to influence scientific inquiries, science loses its neutral status in political calculation. In no time, scientists become an ally of the state whose research findings can no longer be relied upon for objectivity. Therefore the quest for a more liberal science “that would be more responsive to democratic and progressive political goals” gives rise to postmodern thinking which makes case for a multi-dimensional interpretations of scientific postulations. This seriously casts aspersion on scientific truth and value judgement.

The Enlightenment’s promotion of liberal science helps to advance liberal perspectives which eventually become its Achilles heel. As liberal ideology comes to the fore, free-market economy emerges with its alienating consequence for the less-privileged class. Now that the indispensability of man is threatened as he now has to compete with machine and fellow-men in the highly organised bureaucratic network, the weaknesses of science become manifest. As the importance of man further diminishes, the ensuing economic order relegates him to the background in social analysis. The expected aftermath is enough cause for concern and it

eventually gives impetus to Marx's theory of alienation. Therefore, anti- Enlightenment critics see alienation in a capitalist society as evil that must be confronted and altered to have a modicum of order in the world. Postmodern philosophical postulation becomes a ready beneficiary.

Another critique of the Enlightenment is that its pronouncement on the omnipotent nature of science or reason in the world is largely inimical to human growth and development. If science can do away with man because it is capable of providing credible explanation to natural occurrences, then man is not better than a robot in the final analysis. Since the solution to nature is embedded in scientific postulations, human agency is nothing but a robot that is unlikely to achieve anything worthwhile without recourse to science. Henceforth, man can even fold his arm and expect science to salvage him from natural disasters. Landry (2000:1) identifies both Friedrich Nietzsche and Max Weber as critics who believe that whenever science or reason is employed primarily "to maximize the manipulation of nature", mankind is reduced "as subjects of reason, to the status of the objects they seek to manipulate". No wonder Williams (2004) submits that postmodern thinking gains preeminence in the world simply because science fails to promote equity for man in an unequal capitalist social structure:

The Enlightenment made scientific thought the touchstone of truth in the modern world but the public was let down by the manner in which science was harnessed to the needs of industry. Instead of science being the instrument of human emancipation, it became the instrument of the aggrandizing development of the market economy. Science became detached from the pursuit of truth and was reduced to problem-solving for the capitalist enterprise (637).

Thus, the negative aspect of the Enlightenment becomes an avenue to implant the legacy of postmodernism.

The most decisive turning point for the implantation of postmodern ideals is the reactionary publication of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's "Dialectic of Enlightenment" (1996). Having 'disengaged' from orthodox Marxism, their argument elicits a repudiation of a 'vain' hope of utopia that is the hallmark of Marxist theorising. They see no hope of liberation in Kantian postulation on the Enlightenment, whose legacy only leads to the 'institutionalisation' of totalitarian tendencies, hence was seriously compromised in the twentieth century. Situating their argument within the confine of Hegelian "determinate negativity", Horkheimer and Adorno (1996) allude to both the positive and negative ideals that are inherent features of the Enlightenment, features that foreground dialectic theorising and foreclose any absolute claim on

the Enlightenment:

Determinate negation rejects the defective ideas of the absolute, the idols, differently than does rigorism, which confronts them with the idea that they cannot match up to. Dialectic, on the contrary, interprets every image as writings. It shows how the admission of its falsity is to be read in the lines of its features- a confession that deprives it of its power and appropriates it for truth (244).

To this end, Horkheimer and Adorno rebuff Enlightenment thinkers who are advocating a consensus model of thinking in the society. According to them, Enlightenment's sustenance of scientific knowledge is targeted towards promoting the myth of science above others. Instead of advancing towards attaining progressive and liberated thinking, the society can only retrogress because man is no longer 'permitted' to use his freedom to think! The perspective to unravel cosmic misery is embedded in scientific postulation. No other form of thinking is credible!

Apparently bemused at the turn of events in the twentieth century despite the 'utopia' promised by the Enlightenment thinkers, Horkheimer (1895-1973) and Adorno (1903-1970) produce the most devastating critique of the age in a classic entitled "Dialectic of Enlightenment". Corroborating Cahoon's (1996:243) claim that the Enlightenment is "self-negating", they decry the contradiction in the Enlightenment which, on one hand promotes liberal world view and, on the other hand, encourages totalitarian tendency. In line with Hegelian dialectics, they situate the Enlightenment in the context of "determinate negativity" so as to expose its grey areas. In their analysis, they argue that in all situations, the realisation of the false claim in a system is an inherent feature of all belief system, hence no belief is sacrosanct and inviolable. The truth embedded in any scientific knowledge also gives room for its own negation as no knowledge is absolute. Such 'truth' cannot even take off until we admit its inherent falsity. Therefore the absolute claim of science contravenes the "determinate negativity" of dialectic as the truth and falsity are interwoven and inseparable in any socio-cultural analysis.

Horkheimer and Adorno chide the Enlightenment for sounding the death knell of diverse perspectives, so as to promote scientific mode of analysis as the grand norm. In its attempt to guide against recourse to mythology and traditional doctrine, the instrument of science assists the Enlightenment to advance a unified knowledge which it sanctions as the absolute truth to which the society must conform. Ironically, the Enlightenment rejects traditional orthodoxy but advances its own mythology. Its theory of negation, its 'grand narrative', becomes its own mythological

postulation! In line with this, Horkheimer and Adorno posit that insistence on only scientific ‘mythology’ ultimately translates to societal retrogression towards a pre-history, pre-enlightenment era when mythology held sway. This forecloses man’s determined effort to contribute to social growth.

Also Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the Enlightenment becomes totalitarian and repressive hence undermines human’s determination to liberate the society from retrogressive tendencies. Although it sets out to harmonise man’s thought pattern, his developmental effort in the society becomes a futile exercise. Therefore, with the Enlightenment, societal creed becomes rigid with no place for dissentient opinion. This reactionary posture gives life to its bourgeois leaning and helps sustain its authoritarian rhetoric. It is inimical to social growth and emancipation.

However despite the global inevitability of postmodern thinking, it is evident that postmodern ideals may not find a safe haven in African critical endeavour. The reason for this is not far-fetched: the precarious situation in which the continent finds itself does not warrant abysmal decimation of its philosophical and epistemological foundations by any theory which is largely unAfrican. The post-independent African society is bedeviled by all manner of evils that are in sharp contrast to the yearnings of her past heroes and heroines who struggled to attain self-rule. Ironically, while the oppressive and inhuman treatment meted out to Africans in the name of slave trade and colonialism have not been redressed, Western critics are still committed to a wholesale imposition of Western critical standard on African worldviews. Apparently in their bid to justify slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonial ideals, they promote ‘alien’ theories that only help to sustain the pre-eminence of the West. This is done with the intention to permanently obliterate other cultures and pronounce theirs as the ‘norm’, Unfortunately, these ideals are not in consonance with the determination of African scholars to articulate a critical standard that is development-conscious. Consequent on the belief that only an African-specific theoretical assumption can provide an appropriate critical standard for developing the continent, the 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the beginning of sustained critical repudiation of Western theories by African scholars. These African critics are committed to the task of discovering an African-centred theory as an alternative epistemological model.

This study denounces postmodern tendencies that are evident in our selected contemporary Nigerian novels. Since these ideals are not in consonance with the desire to liberate the nation from

the shackles of poverty and cultural subjugation, the study is targeted at the bastion of Euro-American critical standard that is inimical to development for Africa. Besides, it is committed to the need to appropriate an alternative African indigenous theoretical model that has universal appeal and aimed at a better understanding of African cultural and epistemological specificities. In the quest for an African-centred theoretical paradigm that is largely conscious of the continent's historical and socio-cultural peculiarities, it interrogates the intellectual foundation on which Western philosophical assumptions rest and calls the bluff of Western theorists whose postulations are barely out to justify the "material and socio-psychological humiliations" of Africa (Prah, 1998:1). Finally, it proposes an African-specific critical standard that can serve as a unique contribution to knowledge and provide a worthy legacy to humanity. After all, with Soyinka's landmark Nobel Prize in 1986, African scholars have ground to 'announce' the arrival of African writings and criticism.

1.1 Background to the Study

Largely regarded as capable of guaranteeing order from the hitherto 'disorder' that characterised Victorian age, modernism denounces in strong terms any recourse to myth, religion and traditional sentiments as a means of social engineering. Ironically, it soon begins to elicit its own limitations and contradictions in the contemporary society. The optimism associated with the Enlightenment had started to fall apart after series of incidents which called for serious scrutiny. The incidents that exposed the inadequacies of Enlightenment to public ridicule include the atrocities perpetrated during and after the French Revolution, the dastardly act and pogrom that are the hallmark of World Wars 1 and II, the oppression and suppression that were pronounced in dictatorial communist regimes, the disillusionment which engulfed the world after the 'Cold War' and the attendant 'institutionalisation' of capitalist economic order. Unfortunately, the postmodern order which emerged as a form of reaction to these limitations and contradictions became manifested so much that it tremendously influenced, albeit negatively, contemporary Nigerian novelists! Thus, the resolve to investigate the place of postmodern ideals, as well as their contextual relevance to African developmental aspirations, informs this study.

Expectedly, the entire world began to catch the bug of postmodernism and other related 'virus', no thanks to the satellites television and the Internet which gave rise to unprecedented global interconnectedness. As postmodern assumptions were allowed to spread unhindered across the globe, Euro-American ideals and norms began to infiltrate other culture of the world, albeit

with devastating consequences for non-Western societies. In no time, the influx of postmodern sentiments into African critical consciousness largely influenced the literary sensibilities of many Nigerian novelists both in content and form as evident in their literary oeuvre. This conclusion is foregrounded by the assumption that when an ‘alien’ theory is permitted easy entry into a society, it invariably ‘imposes’ its own critical canon on the indigenous mind. Thus, since no one can deny the influx of postmodern tendencies in postcolonial African society, it falls in place that postmodern literary theory becomes the stock-in-trade of these writers, unless they want to be insensitive to their environment. The looming danger inherent in this reality provides a requisite background to this study. Besides, we need to know that no ‘alien’ theory can dispassionately articulate an appropriate theoretical model to study African art. Apart from the fact that cultural peculiarities differ, such theory would be clearly inadequate to address Africa’s developmental yearnings. The reason for this boils down to the assumption that Western theory assumes the cross-cultural homogeneity across the world. Therefore from the 1950s, African critics have always engaged in sustained rebuff of Western ‘arm-chair’ critics for their attempt aimed at sustaining the cultural hegemony of the West. To achieve this end, postcolonial African critics continually articulate an indigenous African-centred approach to analysing African culture, history, philosophy, literature, sociology and religion (Asante, 1987; Henderson, 1995; Irele, 1999; Magubane, 2005; Zelesa, 2005; Olaniyan, 2005; Fashina, 2008). Thus at the risk of sounding immodest and engaging in ‘excessive nationalism’, they call for cautious application of Western theory in African critical discourse for it is counter-productive and somewhat culturally and socially irrelevant to the African society and cosmic meaning. In place of Western theory, an alternative African-centred epistemological paradigm should be erected. Apparently drawing inspiration from Henry Louis Gates (1988), Fashina (2009:5) charges 21st century African scholars to “evolve African specific research, reading and analytical methods” to serve as the appropriate template for African critical discourse devoid of Western dictate. In this vein, he proposes an indigenous African theory which is “ensconced” in the Ifa corpus. Even if this ‘audacious’ effort has not yet enjoyed universal acceptability for obvious reasons, the resolve to jettison the ‘bandwagon’ and seek an African-centred theory is commendable and can serve as worthy background for this study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The interdependent relationship among nations of the world irrespective of cultural peculiarities in a 'borderless' world underscores the influx of postmodern ideals into both the critical and creative stances of African scholars and writers. Consequent on this, overbearing Eurocentric worldview engulfed African epistemological persuasions. However, the challenges of Africa's development and the need to advance a development-driven alternative theory that is in line with Africa's cultural idiosyncrasies foreground the resolve to repudiate postmodern critical model and articulate an African-centred theoretical canon that places Africa at the centre of its analysis. In this vein, this study investigates the causes, consequences and implications of appropriating postmodern philosophy into contemporary Nigerian fiction. It also advances a possible way out of this 'crisis' in African literary research. To achieve this, it exposes the abysmal application of postmodern ideals through a sustained critique and redefinition of its basic assumptions. This is to make them conform to and be relevant to the realities of modern Nigerian existence. A nation's quest for cultural re-awakening that is in line with her indigenous epistemology does not warrant tendencies that are largely inimical to the promotion and sustenance of her cultural worldviews. Thus, we embark on critical examination of selected postcolonial Nigerian novels that, either consciously or unconsciously, espouse postmodern tendencies. Towards the realisation of this set goal, the study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- (a) Postmodern discourse disavows 'metanarratives' for being untenable in socio-cultural analysis. If this is so, how does it intend to buttress its argument for the adoption of 'mininarratives'? Does this adoption not amount to generalisation it earlier disclaims?
- (b) Postmodernism deconstructs the grand narratives that support Western intellectual ideals, thereby seeking liberation from repressive doctrine. However, does its refusal to proffer alternatives not amount to being parasitic in nature? Is its deconstructive approach not advancing another grand narrative? Can we foreclose recourse to grand narratives with the puzzling array of nationalistic feelings and sentiments that influence contemporary global politics?
- (c) If absolute knowledge is unattainable because knowledge has been 'relativised', what is the fate of research and sociological enquiries in a postmodern society? If postmodernism 'fictionalises' all disciplines, has it not undermined inter-disciplinary research? Has it not

- sounded the death knell of all research efforts?
- (d) With creative freedom espoused by postmodern thinkers, experimentation becomes the hallmark of postmodern fiction. If meaning is now tentative as anything goes, can we guarantee that this liberty will not promote irrationality over the rational? Would it not support conservative linings at the expense of progressive postulations?
 - (e) Postmodernism supports the transitory nature of the society from the pre-modern era, through the modern period, to the postmodern age. It sees social transformation as an inevitable consequence of social development. If this transformation attests to the advent of postmodern sentiment in our contemporary society, does it not contradict its claim on the disclaimer of universality of events? Does it not amount to an absurdity and ‘irresponsible sophistry’ to still claim the world does not exist? Can we still sustain the assertion that historic events in the world, like the Holocaust, the terrorist attack on World Trade Centre and Pentagon, are unreal?
 - (f) In Africa, the social significance of literature is assured. Kunene (1981) and Ngugi (1981) reiterate that literature, particularly for a discerning African mind, is meaningless unless it distills social message. This would, invariably, translate to continental good. However with the cynical or skeptical attribute of postmodern philosophy, can it find a safe haven in African societies? Can its antirepresentational, antifoundational lining help to salvage the continent from her socio-political imbroglio?
 - (g) In meaning formation, postmodern thinkers believe textual analysis should be done devoid of context. Ironically, critics argue that the place of context in meaning formation is looming and conspicuous, because it is “the spine of meaning” (Odebunmi, 2006:25). Thus, knowing full well that society provides the enabling raw materials for literary production, can we have effective meaning without taken context into cognisance?

This study will attempt to address these posers.

1.3 Justification of the Study

Researches have shown that historical, cultural and socio-political realities that are predominant in a society, over a period of time, have largely influenced and continued to shape, direct and redirect the literary sensibilities of writers in such society both in content and form. This situation is not inadvertent but it is consequent on the need for writers to reveal societal realities since the society provides the background, the raw materials for literary works, thus literature

becomes a mirror, a reflector, a search-light through which the society is laid bare for all to see (Eagleton, 1975; Webster, 1990; Barry, 1995). The all-embracing and all encompassing nature of literature provides a writer with an enabling environment to document imaginatively the cultural, historical and socio-political milieu, albeit from his own subjective position. Lanrele Bamidele (2000) puts it more succinctly:

Literature in its aesthetic form creates a fictional universe where there is a possible verification of reality at the experiential level of man living in the society. It could be stated that imaginative literature is a re-construction of the world seen from a particular point of view which we may refer to as the abstract idealism of the author or the hero (4).

In Nigeria for instance, no meaningful literary work can neglect the historical cum social environment where it is produced and, in its place, talk about the esoteric! It is apparent that society has always been the bedrock of literary works of Nigerian novelists; suffice it to say that societal consideration is the *sine qua non* for Nigerian writers' literary efforts. This is consequent on the need for Nigerian writers to explore their society in their creative works, having come to terms with the realities of our existence as a nation. In a nation of failed hope, a writer cannot but write about corruption, injustice, moral laxity, administrative ineptitude, infrastructural decay and related vices which Chinua Achebe imaginatively depicts in his *A Man of the People* and which prompts an appreciative Irele (1988) to describe Achebe's effort as better than that of any socio-political commentator on Nigeria's situation! Therefore since our selected literary works present a vivid albeit imaginative account of the Nigerian situations, they overtly or covertly, begin to reveal some salient features of postmodernism. However, these texts merely depict a society devoid of order, in line with postmodern literary assumptions. The writers seem to have resolved to merely explore the societal ills to the status of becoming the centre-point of their literary sensibilities uncritically! Thus, our study is justified for it queries the social relevance of these texts and rebuffs their philosophical and epistemological foundations.

Another justification for this study is its exploration of the works of contemporary Nigerian novelists who employ unorthodox writing styles and unconventional themes, features that are "traditionally forbidden" in African literary discourse. Since the efforts of these writers are in tandem with the postmodern literary tradition which celebrates vulgarity with disjointed narrative techniques, preferring "arbitrariness" to "a systematic and rational evaluation from accepted tradition" (Awosika, 1999:24), postmodern literary theory becomes apposite to their literary

‘misadventure’. Thus, the topicality of the present study is foregrounded by the exigencies of repudiating postmodern literary theory, a theory which albeit unAfrican, yet provides a safe haven for ‘westernised’ Nigerian writers in their resolve to expose the society using methods that are different from that of their earlier counterparts.

Also our study is justified because it challenges Nigeria novelists whose works foreclose the preeminence of reason. A critical analysis of texts like Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* (2004), Okediran's *The Boys at the Border* (1987), *Dreams Die at Twilight* (2001) and *Tenants of the House* (2009), Marinho's *The Epidemic* (1992), Arthur -Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* (2000), Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* (1995), Bandele-Thomas' *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* (1991) and *The Sympathetic Undertaker* (1991) and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) reveals that our society is on the precipice because established literary convention is no longer fashionable. This innovation is evident in the thematic and stylistic thrusts of these novelists. While they discuss socially ‘rejected’ themes that celebrate vulgarity, obscenity, homosexuality, violence, pornography, sex, necrophilia, rape and marital infidelity, they usually prefer fragmented, disjointed narration, in line with the stream of consciousness technique. Although these texts make for interesting reading, a discerning mind begins to wonder what Nigeria and Nigerians stand to benefit from their uncritical stance. In fact, we make bold to say that these texts cannot assist in the promotion and sustenance of our cultural heritage.

Although socialist realism is mostly patronised and explored by contemporary Nigerian novelists, socialism has not been accorded its pride of place in African literary discourse despite its promise of utopia (Onoge, 1985; Udentia, 1993; Uwazomba, 2000). The reason for this is not unconnected with the decline in fortune of socialism/communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union perhaps on account of the autocratic rule of Josef Stalin. This culminated in the eventual disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the production of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (Umukoro, 1994). However, with technological advancement and the emergence of capitalist economy, innovation and experimentation which elicit the non-conformist nature of literature become the hallmark of contemporary Nigerian novels. Thus, this study is justified for it encourages our writers to go beyond mere experimentation and rhetoric which are incapable of altering the social maladies. If the society must be salvaged, they need to redirect their literary sensibilities to articulate the yearnings and aspirations of a nation, though comatose but in search of political rejuvenation and socio-economic re-birth.

Another justification for this study is that it presents Nigerian novelists who are professionals from diverse callings, thus exposing the society from a multiplicity of angle. This invariably gives us insight into related disciplines, from law to medicine, literature to philosophy, history to cultural studies, sociology to political science, and turns our study into a conglomerate of so many fields of human endeavour. With works from Arthur - Worrey (a lawyer), Wale Okediran and Tony Marinho (medical practitioners), and Uche Mowah (a literature teacher), our study becomes a microcosm of several disciplines. The multidisciplinary nature of postmodern assumptions has earlier been stressed.

Finally, any academic endeavour that can generate research interests among scholars and critics is commendable and cannot be said to be out of place. Such effort is even more appreciated if it presents new writings from largely 'unsung' writers. This study promotes new Nigerian novelists whose thematic pre-occupation explores the decadence of postindependent Nigerian society with the use of fragmented narrative style, in line with postmodern literary tradition. It also calls for research attention to shift to new writings on which an enduring intellectual edifice can be built. Without mincing words, our resolve to explore literary works from 'budding' but versatile Nigerian writers is expected to be daunting. Apart from their relatively 'obscure' status when compared with the first generation Nigerian writers, we are likely to be confronted with paucity of critical materials. However this challenge is worth the effort for it opens a new vista in contemporary critical discourse. It can be recalled that Niyi Osundare (1991:7) has earlier called for research attention to shift from the Tutuola, Okigbo, Achebe, Soyinka's era to new generation writers simply because the old generation of Nigerian writers "have been around for so long".

1.4 Objective of the Study

This study sets out to investigate postmodern tendencies that are evident in the literary oeuvre of selected contemporary Nigerian novelists. In a nation bedeviled with all manner of evils that have made nonsense the aspirations of her past heroes and heroines, the exigencies of the time do not warrant the adoption of a theory that does not take into cognisance the nation's seemingly intractable problems. It is believed that postmodern thinking is antithetical to her yearnings. To this end, it reveals postmodern assumptions in the works of these writers and repudiates them simply because they are socially irrelevant and incapable of addressing Nigeria's problems. Thus, since the literary works of our selected contemporary Nigerian novelists are dominated by tendencies that are clearly at variance with that of their earlier and more established counterparts

both in content and form, this study avers that this development calls for redirection of research attention towards repudiating tendencies that are not in tandem with the nation's developmental pursuit. This is consequent on the need to jettison Western theory that is overtly inimical to the resolve by African scholars to advance a theoretical model that is in tandem with their developmental aspirations.

In a similar vein, this study is aimed at eliciting the inadequacies of Western theoretical canon to articulate indigenous African theoretical paradigms. Against the backdrop of the fact that no Western theory can provide an appropriate theoretical template to read African literary texts, it does a deconstructive reading of some selected African texts whose writers employ Western critical standard that is 'alien' to African-centred approach to studying African culture and socio-political environments.

Despite the unpopular status of postmodern thinking in African critical discourse, no one can deny its influx into contemporary Nigerian literary discourse. So pervasive is this influx that no credible discussion of recent Nigerian texts can ignore it. Thus, this study exposes postmodern thinking that has crept into some postcolonial Nigerian texts with a view to interrogate and critique their philosophical assumptions. This is to lend credence to the conclusion that postmodern theorising is a Western 'tool' designed to promote and sustain Western cultural hegemony.

Another objective of the study is to showcase the multi-disciplinary nature of postmodern aesthetics, a feature that underscores its multi-dimensional implications in disciplines like literature, philosophy, history, sociology, theology, architecture, anthropology and cultural studies. Despite disciplinary peculiarities, diverse postulations and conclusions are embedded in these areas of human endeavour owing to postmodern assumptions. This provides an enabling environment for the study to disavow these tendencies and give an insight into hidden or suppressed alternatives in our selected texts.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study covers the linear origin of postmodernism and its contextual relevance to reading the poetics of our selected contemporary Nigerian novels. Bearing in mind the imperative of awareness of the basic ideals of modernism before any credible discussion of postmodernism could be done, the study also x-rays the points of convergence and divergence among modernist critics, upholds the basic assumptions of modernism, identifies the core tenets of postmodernism, interrogates the social relevance of postmodern ideals, submits that these ideals are at variance

with the developmental yearnings and aspirations of African scholars, and proposes an African-centred alternative in line with the Afrocentric theoretical postulation.

Apparently owing to its traditional African story-telling narrative origin, the exploration of prose fiction in social analysis has attained the status of a consensus among recent Nigerian writers. Thus since the place of prose fiction is assured in African literary discourse, this study employs the genre to advance its argument that the thematic and stylistic pre-occupations of contemporary Nigerian writers cannot help to salvage the nation from her woes. Although drama and poetry are equally of tremendous importance to articulate these tendencies, our study employs the novels because it believes that postmodern tendencies dominate the literary oeuvres of recent Nigerian novelists. These novelists experiment with “traditionally forbidden” themes and ‘unconventional’ narrative techniques. These writers and their creative works include:

Wale Okediran:

The Boys at the Border (1991)

Dreams Die at Twilight (2001)

Tenants of the House (2009)

Tony Marinho:

The Epidemic (1992)

Toni Kan Onwordi:

Ballad of Rage (2004)

Fola Arthur-Worrey:

The Diaries of Mr. Michael (2000)

Frank Uche Mowah:

Eating by the Flesh (1995)

Chimamanda Adichie:

Half of a Yellow Sun (2006)

Biyi Bandele-Thomas:

The Man Who Came in From the Back of Beyond
(1991)

The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams (1991)

1.6 Literature Review

Critics are unanimous that most of the ideals of postmodernism are obviously contestable especially owing to its symbiotic relationship with philosophy. This relationship speaks volume about postmodern conviction never to accept any established or perceived knowledge about society or culture, despite its misgivings about knowledge, truth and reason. Apparently towing Plato's line in *The Republic*, as well as the existentialist philosophy of Nietzsche and Heidegger, postmodernism dismisses reality as not just unreal but only a figment of people's imagination with the consequent "loss of the real" in the capitalist age of technological explosion (Jameson, 1991; Baudrillard, 1992; Sim, 2001; Easthope, 2001). However, the fact remains that we cannot deny the occurrence of landmark historic events, like the Holocaust, which led to postmodern theorising in the first place. If we do, we can then conclude that the Holocaust and even postmodernism are mere illusion. On the contrary, since the Holocaust occurred, postmodern culture is undeniable, and the reality of the world is unquestionable (Norris, 1992). Since truth exists in human judgment, behaviour and action, no theorist can hide under the banner of postmodernism to deny its existence unless he is either mischievous, insensitive, wicked or an incurable pessimist. When Baudrillard claims the Gulf war never took place, Christopher Norris (1992:11) chides his 'irresponsible sophistry' for the killing and destruction that ensued make the Gulf war a reality. He refers to him as a "cult figure" who articulates "some of the silliest ideas yet to gain a hearing". No wonder of all leftist critics who denounce Baudrillard's postulation, Sim (2001:13) singles out Norris as been "harshly critical of Baudrillard's work" ostensibly on account of "his flippant attitude towards the Gulf War"

We are not oblivious that the philosophical assumptions of science can be attacked on several fronts particularly for advancing a 'relativist' perspective on scientific postulations. However, critics believe there is no credible ground to deny its empirical conclusions that are evident in major scientific breakthroughs. No ideologue or theorist can deny the veracity of scientific knowledge that stares us in the face because scientific truth is empirically verifiable and valid irrespective of our political and religious inclinations. Science does not have a place for ideology in its discourse. It is an infallible concept whose stance is empirically verifiable. The fact is that once these postulations have successfully undergone the "usual tests, which are independent of any political context" (Butler, 2002:37), they become sacrosanct and inviolable until 'superior arguments' are presented to further advance knowledge. Any postmodernist who disclaims

scientific truth is perhaps mixing ideology with epistemological truth. Little wonder Butler calls for a clear demarcation between epistemological and ideological persuasions in postmodern disclaimer of scientific truth:

This is, partly at least, because the truths of science, rather than those of politics or religion, seem as a matter of fact to be equally valid for socialist, African, feminist, and pacifist scientists (though some persons in these categories deny this). For empirical scientists only accept truths that have this universalizable character. Aspirin works everywhere. It is one of the things that they are not willing to be politically or culturally relativist about (37).

We are aware that in some instances, political consideration may influence the articulation of certain scientific breakthroughs, especially if it helps to sustain the hegemony of the power-that-be. In fact, occasions abound when science has been employed to investigate and ameliorate the fatal consequences of diseases and pestilences that threaten human existence, such as the investigations on Sickle Cell anemia, Lassa fever and the dreaded Human Immunodeficiency Virus. However, such discovery may not stand the test of time if it violates established scientific 'grand norms'. Therefore we aver that even if the drive or motivation for some scientific experiments are "open to moral and political criticism," it is needless to jump to conclusion that science is all out to articulate only the worldviews of Western super-powers and institutions. Butler (2002) believes that the central activities of scientists are beneficial to the generality of the people in the long run and cannot be said to be covertly political:

Quantum mechanics, genetic engineering, and our scientific knowledge of the global climate of course have interestingly different relationships to the financing and pursuit of Western political and military objectives. But these contextual judgements can be accepted without it following that the core activities of scientists are somehow unsuccessful in arriving at the most reliable way of analysing nature we can manage. There is something very odd indeed in the belief that in looking, say, for causal laws or a unified theory, or in asking whether atoms really do obey the laws of quantum mechanics, the activities of scientists are somehow inherently 'bourgeois' or 'Eurocentric' or 'masculinist', or even 'militarist' (37).

Even if political consideration can influence scientific conclusion, leading to what Butler refers to as "bad science", such position can neither command validity nor stand the test of time unless it meets empirical verifiability test devoid of political inclination. In the same vein, Grant (2001)

reiterates that scientists are largely unaffected by postmodern philosophical narrative in their analysis of natural phenomena. Nature, not narrative, offers the most reliable explanation to science and its ally, technology. In the quest for truth, no postmodern ideal can supplant the indispensability of formulae and experiments. Any postmodernist who sets out to advance irrelevant political sentiment to undermine empirical scientific truth is either naïve or 'ill-informed'. Thus, Butler avers that postmodernists who make case for socio-politics of science are merely ignorant of the core tenets of science itself.

Similarly, postmodernism is likely to result in pessimism, frustration, subversion and indeterminacy in the society (Brooker, 1992). While modernism attempts an all-encompassing explanation to address the chaos, strife and disorder in the society, postmodernism prides itself in celebrating the dislocation in the world. It, however, fails to proffer a categorical solution to the societal maladies but, instead, a relativist conclusion. The likely consequence of this, in the opinion of Selden & Widdowson (1993), is that postmodernism only promotes "romantic anarchism" with bourgeois rhetoric that is not interested in any genuine "social transformation". According to Spencer (2001), postmodernism is

characterized by dissent and disillusionment in equal measure. Although some of the products or manifestations which are grouped under the heading of postmodernism are playful or joyous, 'postmodernism' often seems to revert to an attitude of an awkward and petulant teenager, wavering between anger and revolt on the one hand and sullen reproach and refusal on the other (161).

In no time, despair and conservatism become a pastime in the world. Thus in a postmodern world, the utopia seeking posture of marxism is discredited because the new capitalist world order encourages skepticism about traditional ideal of human progressive march towards development. No wonder leftist critics like Jameson (1991) and Eagleton (1996) refer to the contemporary capitalist era as that which is antithetical to socialist thinking. The era discountenances marxist ideology and helps to sustain bourgeois politics. It is an era when postmodern thinking connives with free market capitalism to promote the perpetuation of the *status quo*.

While castigating modernism on account of its submission that a single unifying postulation can take care of societal realities in all cases, postmodernism maintains 'a safe ground', refusing to offer any alternative to modernist appraisal. In order to counter the totalising claim of modernism, postmodernism asserts that in contemporary society, no unifying postulation

is credible because multiplicity of meaning is required. Thus, no argument is superior to another and none can regulate the other (Cahoone, 1996; Grant, 2001; Lewis, 2001). Bertens (1995) quotes Lyotard as making a case for multiplicity of meaning in political situation without being able to categorically state how these diverse interpretations could be regulated to achieve a required end:

The idea that I think we need today in order to make decisions in political matters cannot be the idea of the totality, or of the unity, of a body. It can only be the idea of a multiplicity or of a diversity. Then the question arises: How can a regulatory use of this idea of the political take place? How can it be pragmatically efficacious (to the point where, for example, it would make one decision just and another unjust)? Is a politics regulated by such an idea of multiplicity possible? Is it possible to decide in a just way in, and according to, this multiplicity? And here I must say that I don't know (196).

Ironically, these diverse meanings are let loose as they do not have a point of convergence which can be adduced to achieve “at least a basic consistency of definition” (Watson, 2001:54). Critics wonder how the advancement of conflicting positions can help sustain order in socio-political analysis. This deliberate ‘oversight’ is regrettable and does not show any genuine concern to alter the chaos and strife that envelope contemporary society. Also, it confirms the assertion that postmodernism is parasitic in nature, feeding fat on other theoretical postulations without proffering one.

Also, critics agree that postmodernism is self-contradictory. If it sees any claim on truth to be relative, how does it intend to advance its own ‘truth’ which modern thinkers are nevertheless duty bound to disclaim also (Cahoone, 1996; Easthope, 2001; Wilson, 2004). A theory which queries the veracity of Western narrative should not have wasted its precious time advancing its own ‘grand narrative’. In fact Derrida’s “false ‘logocentric’ confidence in language as the mirror of nature” is nothing but an illusion, “a false metaphysics of presence” (Butler, 2002:17). While Lyotard dispenses with grand narratives that promote absolute knowledge of the world, he prefers to argue for the use of “language games” as justifying human action in contemporary society! He thereby covertly advances another ‘grand narrative’! As unsubstantiated as his adoption of “language games” is, it raises a poser on the desirability of articulating a generalisation he earlier opposes. “Language games” seek for legitimate knowledge which postmodernism jettisoned. Therefore, Haralambos et al (1995) posit that his position is untenable and unconvincing:

The evidence he uses to support his claims is sparse, leaving

the reader with little reason to prefer Lyotard's 'language-game' to that of other social theorists. While rejoicing in diversity Lyotard ends up celebrating language-games conducted according to one set of rules, those of the technical language-game (910).

Thus, Lyotard's "language games" do not fare better when compare with 'metanarratives' he condemns as untenable. His treatise is nothing but "the most sweeping generalisations about the direction of human development".

In postmodern texts, the authors' significance is reduced to the extent that they have no control over the texts. With "The Death of the Author," the readers have unlimited liberty to interpret the texts as they like and, invariably, promote divergent views. Since the environment or context plays no role in meaning-formation in postmodern works, the authorial intention is undermined for the realisation of relative, multi-various positions. The likely result of this is the reduction of human agency to mere robot that is incapable of altering the societal maladies. If we premise our thinking along this line, as the postmodernist would have us do, then we may have sounded the death knell to sociology and sociological enquiries *en masse*. When sociology emerged and started to flourish after the Industrial Revolution in the late nineteen and early twentieth century, its theorists like Max Weber, Emily Durkheim, Augustus Comte and Karl Marx believed they have identified a credible and reliable solution which would assist human beings to better understand the society, in line with modernist assumptions (Ritzer, 2008; Giddens, 2001). On the contrary, postmodernists argue that 'metanarratives' are relative and untenable, since no human agency is needed in the final analysis. In fact with postmodernism, the onus of proof is shifted away from theorists! (Lyotard, 1996; Gibbins & Reimer, 1999). This position puts sociological enquiries and theories in danger.

When postmodernism relegates the author to the background and calls for diverse interpretations in meaning formation, critics erroneously think it is now out to promote the indispensability of the readers at the expense of the author. Ironically, critics are caught in awe that it does not have a place for readers too. It surreptitiously 'liberates' readers to read whatever meanings that suit them into a text because meaning is relative and there is no accurate or correct meaning. Therefore, if meaning is 'meaningless', the implication of this line of thinking is that hermeneutics is discredited (Cahoone, 1996).

Also, postmodern texts celebrate chaos, nihilism, loss of value and absence of morality. Although these concepts are evidently present in the contemporary society full of strife and disorder, it is dangerous to dwell too much on them without deeming it fit to provide panacea for social change. This relativist perspective justifies any misconduct since no universal truth is possible. Critics see the disclaimer of absolute truth and the rationalisation of diverse perspectives as unhealthy and counter-productive (Cahoone, 1996; Rescher, 2003; Sean Easley, 2009).

Since postmodernism 'relativises' knowledge, most critics see it as unscholarly. A theory which takes a swipe at other theories without providing alternatives makes research effort unnecessary. Modern social theories, especially feminism and marxism, aim at discovering the ultimate truth about human society. However, postmodernism discountenances any quest for absolute truth or knowledge. This undermines research effort a great deal for it sees efforts put up in conducting research as incapable of leading to ultimate goal. Henceforth with postmodernism, research can no longer reveal the truth (Cahoone, 1996).

Any worthwhile appraisal of the society ought to be done in a way or through a medium that is accessible to the people since they are agent of social change. Ironically, postmodernism relegates the role of the people to the background and, therefore, advances its argument using abstract, obscure, incoherent, disjointed narrative techniques to present its 'unconvincing' treatise on the society. Segun Oladipo (2006) is of the opinion that although landmark events are associated with the Enlightenment age, fundamental changes would continue unabated in the world. He therefore denounces postmodernism for being too much in a hurry to condemn modernism whose project is still ongoing:

After all, the process of enlightenment (seeing things in a better light) is a continuous one, as human experience and the history of science generally show. And although there are usually milestones (revolutionary changes, if you like) in this process and there can be reversals, which should and sometimes do serve as sources of further illumination, the process has not stopped and would not stop until the end of the world (147).

Also, the aftermath of advanced technological innovation and unprecedented communication explosion is the postmodern suppression of the quest for identity by the less privileged and non-Western developing nations in our 'globalised' world. As globalisation becomes entrenched, capitalism is 'institutionalised'. This ensures that the more technologically superior nations

dominate, exploit and lord it over the developing nations culturally, economically and socio-politically. In the emerging 'interconnected' world, local peculiarities are eroded. Contemporary world is bedeviled with the evil of capitalism and its attendant oppression and suppression of anti-Western views, no thanks to the Internet, cable satellite and other instruments of "electronic colonialism" (Hesmondhalgh, 1998:164) and "economic globalization" (Beck, 2000:100). Any 'discordant tune' aimed at cultural nationalism and self-determination is immediately tagged a 'terrorist act'. The resolve to create a self-identity devoid of Western influence accounts for pockets of skirmishes between Western and some non-Western nations in the world. Osama bin-Laden's al-Qaeda's activities, especially the highly publicised September 11 2001 twin attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon Building in Washington DC, readily comes to mind here (Malpas, 2005). Even if critics argue that his guerilla tactics contradict the basic Islamic injunction, a discerning mind can rationalise his action as a determined attempt aimed at creating an identity devoid of Western dictate.

Meanwhile, the 'ambitious' speculations of postmodern thinking remain unpopular in non-Western societies. Non-Western critics see postmodern theorising as a critical canon strategically adduced by their Western counterpart to advance and sustain Western hegemony and repressed non-Western cultures (Afolayan, 2007). Although the post World War II era of disenchantment and the post 'Cold War' period that gave rise to the entrenchment of free-market capitalism are sad commentary on the Enlightenment's claim to order, freedom, equity and fairness in the society, postmodern assumptions do not fare better because they are incapable of producing any 'credible' alternative to the limitations and contradictions associated with modernist philosophy. Ironically, postmodern thinking overtly 'promotes' liberal worldviews but covertly suppresses anti-West theoretical propositions in critical disciplines like literature, philosophy, history, theology, sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. However since world history is incomplete without recourse to all cultures of the world, postmodern worldview is repudiated among non-Western people. Thus, critical discourse on postmodern episteme is replete with repudiation, disclaimer or outright renunciation.

1.7 Research Methodology

This study carries out a deconstructive analysis of our selected novels. This enhances the search for postmodern tendencies in them, as well as the way the authors have employed them. This is not inadvertent but consequent on the assumption that deconstructive reading employs the

unconventional style in its quest for the contradiction and suppressed meaning in a text. It therefore relegates authorial meaning to the background. This is to drive home the point that fiery criticism or outright repudiation of postmodern ideals can be rationalised on the premise that African scholars are committed to the task of articulating an indigenous critical standards. This would, invariably, provide an alternative critical paradigm that is beneficial to African scholarship on one hand, and disclaim Western intellectual discourse on the other. Unfortunately, postmodern thinking does not guarantee this quest for an indigenous critical canon! Yet, nothing can becloud the conclusion that postmodern literary tradition has tremendously influenced contemporary Nigerian novelists, as evident in their thematic and stylistic thrusts. Therefore through the use of the binary opposition method, we shall carry out a critical reading of these novels so as to identify these features.

Also since postmodern thinking is uncomfortable with any restrictive tradition and orthodox reasoning method which inhibit literary creativity, experimentation becomes its watchword. Therefore, we have carefully selected some contemporary Nigerian novelists who experiment with unconventional themes and disjointed narrative technique to serve as our guide. In this vein, the data selected for this study are essentially contemporary Nigerian novels that elicit some ideals of postmodernism. Our choice is informed by the need to situate postmodern assumption in the context of contemporary Nigerian novels and critique its basic tenets in line with its contextual relevance to African critical discourse. This is coming against the backdrop of the fact that despite its 'unpopular' status in African literary discourse, particularly on account of its 'nihilist' tendencies, postcolonial Nigerian writers have never failed to reflect on some of its features in their works. With Okediran's *The Boys at the Border*, *Dreams Die at Twilight* and *Tenants of the House*, the filth in our national institutions is revealed and condemned. While military rule and its attendant brutality and oppression are the themes of Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh*, Marinho's *The Epidemic* and Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* lend credence to the conclusion that both visionless leadership and irresponsible followership are the bane of postcolonial Nigerian society. Also, *The Man Who Came in from the Back of Beyond* and *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* are Bandele-Thomas' graphic testimonies of a failed nation presented with disjointed narrative technique, while the treatment of themes of marital infidelity, sex and sexuality, the use of vulgar language and disjointed narrative technique stand Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* out. All these features are

quintessentially postmodern whose relevance in African critical discourse needs to be re-examined.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The study explores Afrocentric theoretical model to critique some selected contemporary Nigerian novels which elicit the core assumptions of postmodernism. This is consequent on the assumption that the Afrocentric critical canon provides an apposite theoretical template to counter Western critical standard which is at variance with an African-centred approach to analysing the African worldview (Chinweizu, 1975; Asante, 1987; Keto, 1994; Henderson, 1995; Obenga, 1995; Poe, 2003). On account of its philosophical underpinning which denounces Euro-American critical standards and promotes an African-centred theoretical paradigm, Afrocentrism becomes a ready tool directed at the bastion of Euro-American canon on one hand, and sustenance of African identity through “acts of consciousness, or more correctly, of self-consciousness”, on the other (Obenga, 1995:10). In this vein, Henderson (1995:92) posits that the postcolonial African mind employs the Afrocentric canon “as an obstacle to perceived Eurocentric cultural hegemony and white supremacy once the more obvious external trappings of enslavement and colonialism were removed”. To this end, since postmodern thinking tremendously influences our selected texts, the Afrocentric critical alternative provides the requisite benchmark for its critique. If the fact remains that postmodern ideals are directed towards sustaining the cultural hegemony of the West, then committed African scholarship has no choice but to seek an alternative, non-Western, African-specific theoretical model that is relevant to Africa’s developmental yearnings and aspirations. Keto (1994:vii) has earlier posited that “Afrocentricity” provides an appropriate template to articulate “the complex theoretical process of knowledge formation which places Africans at the center of information about themselves” while Asante (1987:6) calls it a resolve to situate “African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior.” This deconstructive approach enables us to expose these texts to diverse interpretations, reveal the repressed meanings in them, and interrogate their relevance to Africa’s developmental pursuits.

The conspicuous place of society in theory building for socio-political analysis has been stressed. To buttress the argument that cultural and socio-political environments have to be taken into consideration when articulating a socially relevant theoretical model to suit literary works, Amuta (1989) asserts that no theoretical model can be socially relevant unless it takes its cues from the society:

As a vital component of the critical enterprise, the interpretations of the literary products of a given society can only command validity if they are rooted in theoretical paradigms that either organically derive from or are most directly relevant to the objective conditions of life in the society in question. Such a theoretical paradigm must, in addition, derive its relevance from its commitment to the freedom of members of the society. For freedom is the precondition of art (6).

The point is that the contemporary Nigerian society is bedeviled by all manners of evils and people that make the quest for order a mirage. This development provides new Nigerian writers with an ample opportunity to observe their environment and churn out literary works that lay the society bare for all to see as their imaginations dictate. Babatunde Omobowale (2001) quotes Tanure Ojaide as reiterating the interdependent relationship between literature and society:

Literature is an art and a cultural product... The interaction of the individual with time and space will give birth to human experience... one can best understand the literature of a people from their total experience: historical, socio-cultural, political, economic and other backgrounds. Art has a cultural role in Africa where it is traditionally functional. The artist has responsibilities and certain dynamics relate the artist to his or her experience (64-65).

Therefore if the Nigerian society determines the direction of its literary works, it falls in place for it to also inform the theory to be used in its analysis. Thus, this study employs Afrocentric theoretical praxis for it is most suitable to critique the epistemological foundation of Western cultural worldview.

1.9 Organization of the Study

Here, we present a breakdown of our chapters.

Chapter 1: This is the introductory chapter of the study. Among others, it contains the general introduction, background to the study, statement of the problem, justification of the study, objective of the study, scope of the study, literature review, research methodology, theoretical framework and organisation of the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter drives home the point that a proper understanding of landmark events that culminated into the age of Enlightenment is germane to a credible discussion of the ideals of postmodernism. To this end, it takes a cursory look at the Victorian age that precedes the modern epoch and to which its early origin can be traced, does an exposé on the consequences of

modernity and, despite its Western lining, legitimises its preeminence as a requisite theoretical assumption that is readily available to denounce postmodern ideals in African critical discourse. To achieve this, it enunciates the core assumptions of postmodernism, provides a critical repudiation of postmodern tendencies by the advocates of the Enlightenment, and concludes that these tendencies are at variance with the developmental yearnings of African scholars.

Chapter 3: This chapter does a critical analysis of three fictional works of Wale Okeiran, *The Boys at the Border*, *Dreams Die at Twilight* and *Tenants of the House*, and Frank Uche Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh*. Under the subtitle 'Characterology and Inverted Morality as Postmodernist Existentialism in Okeiran and Mowah's Novels', the depth of decadence some of our national institutions like the Custom Services, medical establishments, National Assembly, and the military is revealed. As the rot continues unabated, no one 'immunised' from the perfidy which is given free reign. In fact, any attempt to be above board in the society becomes an exercise in futility.

Chapter 4: Here, we revisit the hypocrisy, greed and avarice of visionless leaders in Nigeria. Ironically, the masses that bear the brunt of the harsh standard of living are lily-livered, hence unable to effect any meaningful change. This is the reality of our existence as imaginatively created in Tony Marinho's *The Epidemic*. As corruption, nepotism, moral laxity and infrastructural decay become institutionalised, Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* sees no way out of the doldrum. It comes under the subtitle 'A nation in Comatose: Nihilism in Marinho and Arthur-Worrey's Novels'.

Chapter 5: Aptly subtitled 'Postmodern Aesthetics in Selected Biyi Bandele-Thomas' Novels', this chapter does a reading of Biyi Bandele-Thomas' *The Man who Came in From the Back of Beyond* and *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams*. It presents a society bedeviled with escalating economic and socio-political travails, a nation of dashed hopes which reduces her people to perpetual want and misery. A graphic account of the Nigerian situation depicts Bandele-Thomas as a writer who is familiar with his Nigerian root. It is entitled.

Chapter 6: Here we present the novels of Toni Kan Onwordi and Chimamanda Adichie's *Ballad of Rage* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* respectively. The exploration of the themes of sex and homosexuality, fragmented narrative technique and disjointed plots in these texts make them quintessentially postmodern. It is subtitled 'A Deconstructive Reading of Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*'.

Chapter 7: This chapter concludes the study. It x-rays the extent by which the study has resolved

the pertinent questions it sets out to investigate. It asserts that despite its looming presence in contemporary Nigerian literary consciousness, postmodern ideals may not appeal to the contemporary African mind hence should be treated with disdain it rightly deserves. It therefore enjoins African scholars to be committed to the quest for an African-centred critical theory which can assist in the task of salvaging the continent out of her cultural, economic and socio-political imbroglio. However, it warns them to be grounded in African worldview first. This would provide them with an African epistemology which can be employed in the quest for a development-driven, African-specific cultural theory.

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CHAPTER TWO

2.0 From Modernism to Postmodernism: The Points of Convergence and Divergence

The Middle Age period in human history has always been regarded as the era of “intellectual darkness” (Spielvogel, 2000:487). As the Victorian ideals came to the fore, myth was regarded as a reliable instrument for social engineering, though its plausibility cannot be empirically verified. How do we convince a discerning mind of the veracity of the myth surrounding the birth of Athena, a Greek god who was said to have no mother but “sprang fully armed from the head of Zeus”?, or that of Odùduwà, the progenitor of the Yorùbá, who was said to have descended from heaven with a chain? Myth hitherto provided a ‘credible’ explanation for social phenomenon. It also justifies cosmogony and the activities of deified legendary personalities. For instance, Greek mythology was dominated by the anthropomorphic activities of gods and goddesses from Zeus to Athena, Apollo to Hermes, Hestia to Artemis, Europa to Orestes, Dionysus to Aison, while that of Yorùbá articulates the cosmic relevance of deified gods and goddesses from Ògún to Sàngó, Ôrúnmilà to Obàtálá, Oya to Ôsun, as well as the much maligned Esu (Idowu, 1962; Ifie, 1989; Krammer, 1997; Salami, 2002; Fashina, 2009). In fact, Western civilisation was largely influenced by Greco-Roman mythology of which Christianity was its most eloquent testimony. The Bible documents so many Christian myths ranging from the creation story to that surrounding the birth, miracles and the ascension of Jesus Christ. Thus while agreeing with Krammer (1997:757) that myth is “neither invalid, unreliable, extinct”, we aver that it however derives its veracity from its capacity to articulate a civilisation and justify the action and inaction of its progenitors, be they gods or mortals. However from about the 15th century Renaissance, Victorian ideals in arts, history, philosophy and literature began to wither only to be followed by the modern era: the era which Gabardi (2001:3) claims encompasses the renaissance, protestant, Industrial Revolution and the upsurge of socialism.

As an epoch, modern era is difficult to date because it spans several decades. According to Habermas (1992:126), the Latin variant of modern, i.e *modernus*, was first used in the closing decade of the fifth century as a mark of demarcation between the present and the Roman past. Although we can identify three distinctive phases of modern era to include the early sixteenth and late eighteenth century dawn of modern development, through the time and consequences of the French Revolution, to the late nineteenth century spread of modern values across the globe, yet the

precise date of Western modernity remains contentious. Some of its assumptions can be seen as early as the fifteenth and sixteenth century eras of slave trade and colonialism respectively, while its influences began to manifest from the seventeenth century Scientific Revolution, through the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and climaxed with the nineteenth century advent of sociology as an academic discipline ((Berman, 1983; Smart, 1992, Spielvogel, 2000; Henry, 2004; King, 2006; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008). This lack of consensus explains why critics differ on its evolution in Europe and America; hence Sheppard (1993:1-4) says it lacks “clear chronological boundaries” because it is essentially a “transitional phenomenon”. In the same vein, Brooks (1990:119) opines that the perspectives of two schools of thought foreground the ideal of modernism as “applying to a particular group of writers and artists in a particular period” and “describing a certain artistic posture”. These diverse critical opinions gave rise to so many modernist accounts hence we have capitalist, socialist, sociological, historical and philosophical accounts. Thus any attempt aimed at articulating a unified definition of modernism can only remain a mirage. No wonder Peter Jones (2004) asserts that no single ideal encapsulates the entire modernist thinking in all its ramifications:

No single idea, belief or practice unites all of the writers associated with Enlightenment thought; no one meaning informed even the banners under which dispute was sustained; no one definition embraces the ways in which the most self-consciously used terms were employed (3).

Notwithstanding divergent views on its actual date, critics are unanimous that modern period influenced every facet of human endeavour from history to philosophy, archaeology to sociology, anthropology to history, theology to psychology, literature to cultural studies, and promoted unprecedented social transformations from the time mankind began to strive for progress and emancipation from restrictive tradition and religious orthodoxy (Bilton et al, 2002; Malpas, 2005).

Although modern era began with the revolutionary spirit of the late eighteenth century period which promoted an inter-disciplinary critique of the world vis-a-vis its unprecedented historical change, it gathered momentum with the activities of some radical nineteenth century thinkers, sociologists, philosophers and theorists like Sigmund Freud, Augustus Comte, Max Weber, Charles Darwin, Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Albert Einstein. (Milner & Browith, 2002). Having been greatly influenced by seventeenth century thinkers like Galilei Galileo, Nicolaus Copernicus, Isaac Newton, John Locke, Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, eighteenth century Enlightenment thinkers aver that for humanity to be liberated from

traditional assumption, religious bigotry and primordial chauvinism, science, as well as its attendant truth, rationality and objectivity, is required. According to King (2006), the second century Ptolemaic geocentric cosmology, which claimed that the earth was stationary at the centre of the universe where other heavenly bodies rotated around it, was eventually disclaimed by seventeenth century Copernican model which argued that the sun was at the centre of the universe where earth and other heavenly bodies revolved around it:

The old model of the universe had prevailed for some 1400 years, since it was formulated by the ancient Greek mathematician, geographer, and philosopher Ptolemy... This model was shattered by Nicholas Copernicus who in 1543 proposed that the sun was central and that the earth was the third planet from the center ⁽⁴⁸⁴⁻⁴⁸⁵⁾.

This landmark astrological 'revolution' has a significant impression on natural, social and human development and thinking in subsequent generations.

Modernism is a Western ideal which claims to have unraveled the direction of social change through a concerted and sustained critique of traditional assumptions and beliefs. Using its 'grand narratives' to buttress its claim and elicit its core values and assumptions, modernism attempts a single but universal explanation of the society vis-a-vis the role of man. It is premised on the assumption that chaos and disorder are associated with the pre-enlightened society but with scientific emancipation, a universal explanation is required. Having 'demythologised' the world, man can now capture, explain, control and ultimately dominate the natural order. No one is left in doubt that modernism upholds and sustains "the fundamental intellectual pillars" on which Western ideals and society are based (Abrahams, 1981; Marshal 1994; Barry, 1995; Cahoon, 1996; Landry, 2000).

The eighteenth and nineteenth century European societies witnessed an unprecedented industrial development, the highpoint of which was the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. With advancement in science and technology, social development and growth became predictable since reason, occasioned by the seventeenth century Scientific Revolution, was now capable of providing the ultimate solution to social problem. Machine technology, which consequently led to industrial development and tremendous social growth owing to its leaning towards free market economy, became entrenched. Technological advancement became a major catalyst for unprecedented improvement in material living standard. The modern era, 'the golden age,' 'the age of reason,' the Enlightenment epoch has arrived! The idea behind Enlightenment thinking is

the resolve to articulate the indispensability of reason in the quest for human emancipation and the enhancement of human life. Enlightenment philosophers set out to demystify traditional sentiment and religious orthodoxy by employing a rational mechanism for social ordering. In this task, they seek to liberalise human thinking through the instrument of science. This however promotes a unilateral interpretation of social phenomenon (Habermas, 1992; Cahoone, 1996; Bell, 1996; Kant, 1996; Bilton et al, 2002; Malpas, 2005; King, 2006).

Meanwhile, as reason came to the fore in social engineering, myth and tradition were jettisoned. In the world of Enlightenment thinkers, no knowledge is credible until it has undergone scientific scrutiny for it is in science that rational explanation of social phenomenon and progress for mankind is situated. Traditional assumptions and mythology are perceived as irrationality aimed at undermining humankind's quest for emancipation from bondage and affliction. Henceforth Enlightenment thinkers argue that only science can lead man towards the attainment of his maximum potential (Henry, 2004; Schouls, 2004; Parry, 2004). A.C. Grayling (2008) is an eloquent advocate of scientific superiority in social analysis as espoused by Enlightenment philosophy:

Thus, science shatters the systems of technology and metaphysics. But it is not just the victory of scientific knowledge as such, but the scientific method and mindset, which rout the old and obfusatory orthodoxies...the rejection of religious' hegemony over thought was the crucial starting point for the task that the philosophers urged each person to undertake: to become autonomous, relying on reason and applying scientifically minded rationality to building better lives and societies (xiii-xv).

Therefore, the universe ceased from being controlled solely by God. In no time, "magical explanations of events were doomed" and in place of magic, rational man began to dominate the society with his ability to "postulate a rational explanation" to enhance cosmic harmony (King, 2006: 484- 495).

The 'emergence' of man at the centre-point of social analysis came with certain realities: man became the sole determinant of, and catalyst for, unprecedented social development. As a free-thinker who is able to dominate and control his environment devoid of any supernatural dictate, he is at liberty to lord it over nature and assert his own preminent status. As he has acquired the knowledge to unravel the "secrets of nature", gone are the days when his relationship with nature was characterised by unalloyed obedience and awesome reverence. Sheppard (1993)

does not mince words in referring to him in glowing term:

Like his enlightenment predecessor, the nineteenth-century liberal humanist assumed that man was moral by nature and endowed with a power of rationality which enabled him both to unlock the secrets of Nature and to exercise control over himself. Having dispensed with God, the enlightened nineteenth-century free thinker filled that gap with man, who, he assumed, was the measure of all things (18-19).

The premise for this submission is obvious: human society is not eternally organised or divinely ordained. It is an historical contraption that is alterable. Through the instrument of reason, man can query nature to redress its oppressive tendencies in his quest for emancipation from stereotyped tradition and primordial sentiment. Fredrick Nietzsche's philosophy obviously influenced the liberal humanist of the Enlightenment era.

Although the modern epoch was secular in nature, Christian mythology was rife during the period (Habermas, 1992; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008). While Christian worldview promotes the Christian God, known as Yahweh, as the omnipotent controller of the "cosmic machine", it vehemently disavows the existence of other gods! This over-bearing attitude of an 'omniscient' God is not in tandem with the basic tenet of modernism on freewill and self-determinism, hence Yahweh's activities are clearly at variance with Enlightenment thinking. Thus on account of its preference for 'mystery' at the expense of reason, Christianity becomes anti-Enlightenment. No wonder Enlightenment thinkers disclaim it, calling for the promotion and sustenance of reason devoid of any "sacred mystery" for the world to be free from religious dogma (Calinescu, 1987; Malpas, 2005). In fact, Krammer (1997) recounts Thomas Jefferson's bold attempt at rewriting the bible in a manner that retains aspects that are empirically verifiable and discards those that stand logic on the head.

A good example of modernist criticism is marxism. Marxist literary theory, based on the historic narrative of society as postulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, does not subscribe to the idea of an autonomous author who writes devoid of social constraint. To a marxist, a writer's idea or perspective is shaped by the society. A committed writer is therefore expected to place his work in the service of the people with the conviction that a classless egalitarian society would emerge where the proletariat would lord it over the bourgeoisie. Thus, in line with modernist assumption, society becomes an evolutionary process towards utopia (Gugelberger, 1985; Barry, 1995; Marx and Engels, 1996; Eagleton 1996; Williams, 1997; Childs, 2000; Malpas, 2005; Daly,

2006). Thus, marxist critics believe that since the past dominates, and still wants to dominate the present, the only hope left for the present to liberate itself from the yoke imposed on it by the past can be found in communism.

The influence of marxism on modernist assumption is enormous. From marxian perspective, industrial development led to advanced technological innovation and improved productivity. Ironically, this 'revolution' gave rise to conflict and strife between the two major classes in the fast emerging industrialised capitalist society: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Having been reduced from peasant farmers to workers without any significant access to the means of production except their meagre wages, the proletariat became mere commodities, tools, instruments, "animals, beasts of burden, or inhuman machines". His worth can only be measured in relation to his "functional context". He has become an 'appendage' in the name of wealth creation and profit maximisation. Consequently, man becomes alienated from his productive activity, from the product, from other workers, and he ultimately fails to achieve his potential. Therefore in his bid to assert his humanness and restore his dignity, man continually engages in conflict in the society with the conviction that victory over oppression is realisable in the imminent 'workers' paradise'. Marx's theory of alienation encompasses class oppression which explains the relationship between the two classes in an unequal class arrangement that alienates the proletariat in exchange for subsistence wage (Ritzer, 1996; Roberts, 2004; King, 2006; Daly, 2006). This perspective has lasting impression on modernist writing and justifies Childs (2000:30) description of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* as "the first of the many modernist proclamations of (the need for) a radical break from the past". Henceforth, a secular society is born where divine ordering of the cosmos is jettisoned and in its place, man came to the fore as the centre-point of social analysis. Therefore, even if their approaches differ, marxism became the blueprint, the article of faith, the creed, from where radical writers like Brecht, Lukacs, Jameson, Benjamin and Adorno got inspiration to advance modernist writings.

Without doubt, Immanuel Kant's "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1996) provides a seminal representation of Enlightenment thought, in the manner which Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's "Dialectic of Enlightenment" (1996) elicits the most "engaging and challenging" yet devastating critique of the Enlightenment in the Hegelian tradition (William, 2004:420). Kant's treatise is of eloquent representation of the ideals of the Enlightenment because it takes into cognisance the limitations of the project, thus justifying

Williams' accolade that his argument is at variance with "the usual dogmas of the movement". From Kant's perspective, man's inability to emerge from his immaturity unto Enlightenment is self-inflicted. He is evidently aware of his state, but is unwilling to wriggle out of it because he does not possess the courage to take initiative without being guided:

Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own understanding (51).

Lack of determination is his Achilles heel as he is unwilling to make a determined attempt to leave his present situation. Having forgotten that success is inevitable after initial failure even from the most difficult task, he becomes complacent:

It is so convenient to be immature! If I have a book to have understanding in place of me, a spiritual adviser have a conscience for me, a doctor to judge my diet for me, and so on, I need not make any efforts at all. I need not think, so long as I can pay; others will soon enough take the tiresome job over for me (51-52).

The reason for man's apathy and lack of courage is evident: the overbearing influence of religious dogma and prescriptive tradition has led the society into being controlled by stereotyped and uncritical doctrine that undermine human's intellectual faculty. In such society, man is unable to question religious sentiment and traditional orthodoxy even when they are inimical to social development! He is unperturbed and resigned to fate at a time he is expected to take the bull by the horn and strive towards self-liberation with his destiny in his own hand:

Dogmas and formulas, those mechanical instruments for rational use (or misuse) of his natural endowments, are the ball and chain of his permanent immaturity. And if anyone did throw them off, he would still be uncertain about jumping over even the narrowest of trenches, for he would be unaccustomed to free movement of this kind (52).

Therefore, for mankind to be liberated from traditional orthodoxy that hinders freewill, Kant advocates liberty to use one's reason at all times as only reason can guarantee a smooth sail towards Enlightenment. Nature does not inhibit man from being enlightened. It is incumbent on him to shake off his lethargy and 'confront' his problem headlong. If he does, nothing can

overcome him on his way to 'victory' in his endeavour.

Kant is not oblivious of a certain measure of control which is imperative in the society. Having agreed to be led under a state's sovereignty, it becomes imperative for man to submit totally to the dictate of the state once he remains under the 'commonwealth.' Since he has chosen to stay within the territory controlled by the state, he must obey its dictate for the overall well-being of the public:

Thus it would be very harmful if an officer receiving an order from his superiors were to quibble openly, while on duty, about the appropriateness or usefulness of the order in question. He must simply obey ⁽⁵³⁾.

This conclusion is premised on the assumption that man's deference to state control will invariably enhance the overall interest of the state and facilitate social growth. The society stands to benefit tremendously from such unalloyed obedience. However, this does not foreclose his recourse to reason in as much as this intellectual exercise does not jeopardise the overall interest of the state. Although the state comes first in all estimation, man is at liberty to voice his opinion without restriction on the "impropriety" or otherwise of any state policy. In the same vein, a priest cannot but instruct the congregation in accordance with the doctrine of the church which appoints him, otherwise he is bound to follow the dictate of his conscience and resign honourably. However as a scholar, he is at liberty to critically impart the said doctrine on the people, according to the dictate of his conscience, without necessarily offending his sacred duty. Under whatever guise, he is not expected to be unreasonable.

Meanwhile, Kant provides a ray of hope from this perceived 'absurdity' sanctioned by the state. It is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to perpetually impose an opinion on a particular group of people. Although a single perspective may subsist over a long period of time, a superior position is bound to replace it over time no matter how enduring it is. If an opinion dictates human reasoning at a time, future generation would definitely rebuff it and, in its place, advance a contrary but superior opinion. The incidence of the Enlightenment cannot be resisted perpetually. No "religious constitution" can subsist permanently even if it is imposed by the state. Therefore, no society has inalienable authority to lord its knowledge over subsequent generations. If it does, it would soon be met with stiff resistance in man's determined quest towards enlightenment. It is only when man strives to promote divergent worldviews that the march towards enlightenment is assured. Doing otherwise is tantamount to a gross violation of inalienable rights of mankind and to

“virtually nullify a phase in man’s upward progress”. Though particular knowledge may persist for a long period, it cannot subsist permanently.

Also, Kant craves for the era when no one, government inclusive, would hinder the people from developing intellectually. People should be liberated from a stereotyped belief system that militates against their intellectual development, and no government should stand in their way. Although government is permitted to maintain an army to prevent chaos, command obedience and defend its territorial integrity, it should be enlightened enough not to suppress the citizens’ resolve to jettison barbarism and primitivism. Whenever a leader allows dissentient opinion to be heard without being censored, the government benefits tremendously from divergent views to the betterment of the state. Kant describes such a leader as an enlightened one who deserves all accolades and praises for liberating “mankind from immaturity”. Such a leader needs not be troubled about the likely consequence of unlimited freedom once the interest of the state has been taken into cognisance.

As regards the present period, Kant admits that limitations and restrictions have been reduced to a bearable minimum, thus we are fast approaching the Enlightenment. All forms of hindrances and obstacles that inhibit modern man from achieving his potentials are fast declining in the present age. Henceforth, man can now act and think freely without suppression from any quarter:

If it is now asked whether we at present live in an enlightened age, the answer is: No, but we do live in an age of enlightenment. As things are at present, we still have a long way to go before men as a whole can be in a position (or can even be put into a position) of using their own understanding confidently and well in religious matters, without outside guidance (55-56).

Even if the enlightened age still remains a mirage, the removal of all impediments against “universal enlightenment” is a good omen that we are fast approaching the age of Enlightenment. Man’s resolve to jettison religious orthodoxy foregrounds this conclusion.

Notwithstanding a barrage of criticism and assault from the postmodernists and other critics, Jurgen Habermas, unarguably, remains one of the most consistent and eloquent promoters of modernist ideals, hence Ritzer (1996:586) refers to him as “the leading defender of modernity”. In his “Modernity-an Incomplete Project,” Habermas (1992) observes the transition from the classical era to Middle Age period when science began to articulate the “infinite progress of

knowledge and in the infinite advance towards social and moral betterment”. He concludes that though the modern era is an ‘ideal age’, it is not a fixed historical epoch for its development is an ongoing exercise:

The romantic modernist sought to oppose the antique ideals of the classicists; he looked for a new historical epoch and found it in the idealized Middle Ages. However, this new ideal age, established early in the nineteenth century, did not remain fixed ideal. In the course of the nineteenth century, there emerge out of this romantic spirit that radicalized consciousness of modernity which freed itself from all specific historical ties (127).

Therefore, modernity prides itself in its ability to reveal its multi-dimensional framework while conquering ‘unknown territory’ over a varied period of time. Enlightenment thinking employs cognitive skills to liberate man from esoteric linings.

Also, Habermas warns of the danger inherent in joining the conservative bandwagon that advances anti-modernist, premodernist and postmodernist sentiments. Although caution should be taken not to subscribe hook, line and sinker to “the extravagant expectation” of the Enlightenment, which has been undermined by contemporary realities, this does not translate to an outright repudiation of Enlightenment ideals. Instead of jettisoning modernity on account of its internal contradictions (as the postmodernists would have us do), we better learn from its shortcomings and contradictions. Our concern should be primarily to uphold the ‘noble’ intention of Enlightenment thinkers and make no fuss about its limitations and contradictions:

I think that instead of giving up modernity and its project as a lost cause, we should learn from the mistakes of those extravagant programs which have tried to negate modernity. Perhaps the types of reception of art may offer an example which at least indicates the direction of a way out (135).

Thus, Habermas concludes that though modernity has been seriously undermined by the twentieth century realities, the contemporary world should learn from its excesses and look on to its continual development. It has not peaked. Commenting unequivocally, Spencer (2001) agrees with Habermas’ position that the project of modernity is an ongoing process whose uniqueness is given credence by its penchant for self-criticism and internal-assessment:

Modernity even in this sense, of a centuries-old tradition of change and debate about change, can hardly be said to have come to an end. The declining role of religion and the pace of economic and technological change are factors that will

shape the future as decisively as they have shaped our past
(158).

The project of modernity climaxed with the French Revolution of 1789. Although this epochal event was largely a French phenomenon, its 'promise' of liberation freely influenced Europe, America and the entire world. The subsequent Industrial Revolution significantly transformed the Western world from an agrarian to industrial society and, consequent on this, a new way of analysing the universe ensued, with reason, devoid of dogma, as the determinant factor (Sheppard, 1993; Ritzer, 1996; Bilton et al, 2002; *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008). Although no account is exhaustive, we shall identify some of the features of modernity, as documented by critics like Ritzer (1996), Bilton et al (2002), and Pierson (2004), among others.

2.1 Consequences of Modernity

With the Industrial Revolution, industrial manufacturing replaced agricultural produce. The discovery of modern equipment enhanced productive capacity and, consequently, the factory system emerged with division of labour ensuring that productive tasks were appropriately distributed among workers. Although manufacturing production predates the modern era, it however reached its high-point with improved manufacturing activities occasioned by the use of advanced technology in modern period (Bilton et al, 2002). George Ritzer (1996) provides a concise but apt account of the instance of Industrial Revolution:

The Industrial Revolution was not a single event but many interrelated development that culminated in transformation of the Western world from a largely agricultural to an overwhelmingly industrial system. Large numbers of people left agricultural work for the industrial occupations offered in the burgeoning factories. The factories themselves were transformed by a long series of technological improvements. Large economic bureaucracies arose to provide the many services needed by industry and the emerging capitalist economic system (6-7).

Thus, the factory system ensued as the most significant consequence of modernity. It led to the "invention of power driven machinery" which improved productive capacity and organised the workers in a better way compared to what obtained in traditional society.

Coming as an off-shoot of improved economic activity, capitalism became the new economic order. Consequently, an entrepreneur class emerged to engage in sustained and

aggressive pursuit of profit, leaving the proletariat to wallow in abject poverty in the midst of plenty. To a capitalist, workers are not better than dummy that must be gagged and repressed so as to make the accumulation of wealth a *fait accompli*. In the ensuing free market economic system, goods and services were produced and exchanged for the benefit of the few who had the technological wherewithal to engage in mass production, while the workers were reduced to robot who had to endure long hours of tedious labour for a relatively low wage. Citing Henry Ford as instance, Bilton et al (2002:28) conclude that with capitalist economic order, “increased output” is inevitable owing to the discovery of modern and highly sophisticated technology of manufacturing with low cost of production. Ironically, the gain embedded in “increased output” helps to sustain oppression with massive subjugation of workers in a desperate attempt to eliminate inefficiency. This however gave rise to bickering and resistance from the oppressed class. Therefore to restore their dignity and guarantee survival, the modern period witnessed series of workers’ disaffection and social upheavals all in a determined bid to alter or, at least, ameliorate the oppression and imbalance associated with modern capitalist society. Such reactions include sabotage, pilfering, protest, strike, work-to-rule, picketing, among others. The formation of trade unions became imperative and workers responded by organising themselves into groups to agitate for better wage, enhanced condition of service and other benefits in the capitalist industrial society.

Also with industrial development, a large numbers of people migrated *en masse* to the cities to earn a living from the industrial system created by the use of modern equipments. While this benefited the bourgeoisie significantly, at least it guaranteed availability of labour at low cost in the fast emerging urban centres, it however led to population explosion and its attendant urbanisation problems such as increase in crime-rate, people living in slum and squalor, pressure on infrastructure, environmental pollution and over-crowding, among others. It was the challenges posed by population explosion that geared Thomas Malthus to postulate on the danger of unchecked population growth (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2008). It could be recalled that Malthus warned on the peril of population growing in geometric proportion while food supply is growing in arithmetic proportion. If this is left unaddressed, food crisis is imminent in the world.

Meanwhile with science and technology, man is liberated from hitherto restrictive tradition that limits his potential to tame, control and dominate the world. With the Enlightenment, tremendous social change and innovation were propelled by the use of logic in, and sustained pursuit of, the ideal towards a specified end. Man is believed to be endowed with the ‘secret’ to

unravel the cosmic misery. Therefore to be modern revolves around absolute conformity with “rational forms of thought and rational social organisation”. This highly structured system gave rise to a complex institution of government and corporations with efficient control, calculation and evaluation of product, ability to predict product’s uniqueness, and organised control of workers’ skill to elicit their dispensability. Max Weber’s theory of bureaucracy explains institutional control of human and material resources towards the attainment of corporate goal (George Ritzer, 1996; Bilton et al, 2002; Labinjoh, 2002).

A major defining moment for modern period occurred from the early twentieth century. By this time, science and technology had transformed the world into an artificial construct whose control is subject to man’s dictate. Science gained a preeminent status and technology took a driving seat towards progressive articulation of the society. Henceforth, medicine became capable of explaining the nature of man after a rigorous medical examination, unlike the pre-modern era when all misfortune was seen as ‘an act of God’. Bilton et al (2002) attribute the tremendous social transformation of the twentieth century to science and technology:

During the twentieth century, science became a huge undertaking, and technology grew rapidly in pervasiveness, scale and power. Scientific knowledge and technological systems have played a pivotal role in transforming the natural world into a created environment subject to human coordination and control. The size and complexity of these systems means, however, that our ability as individuals to shape or even understand them is compromised ⁽³²⁾.

Thus science and technology provided a rational explanation for human and society phenomenon.

Meanwhile, the nation-state emerged to assert authority and exercise control over man. In order to guide against lawlessness and chaos in a rational world, the ‘state’ took over control of power over its citizens with its influence covering a clearly defined territory. Either in a totalitarian fashion or in a democratic/welfarist manner, the state is conspicuous in its regulatory task to achieve maximum loyalty and unalloyed obedience (Bilton et al, 2002; Pierson, 2004). Therefore in the name of nationalism, the state justifies the action of its citizens who engage in brutal killings and wanton destruction of properties during warfare! Bilton et al argue that the killing of about six million Jews by the Nazis during the World War 11 is a clear testimony of man’s brutality during warfare, all in a bid to prove his unflinching loyalty to the cause of the state:

There is no greater testimony to the potential power and destructiveness of the modern state than the millions who died at the hands of totalitarian governments during the twentieth century. The Holocaust- the attempt during the Second World War by the Nazis-controlled German state to eradicate the Jewish population of Europe is an horrific example of this (35).

Thus, states engage in warfare against one another to protect their territory and related interest. Towards maintaining their sovereignty, states employ man who, having been trained with modern equipment, has to kill and maim fellow men all in the name of nationalism and defence of territorial integrity.

2.2 Legitimizing the Enlightenment

The incidence of the Enlightenment has always been characterised by ridicule, scorn and disdain. Postmodern thinkers overtly undermine its philosophical postulation “with ambivalence, skepticism, or resistance” on account of its core “assumptions about nature, progress, human observation, appropriate methodologies for creating knowledge, and the role this knowledge should play in shaping public policies” (Heise, 2004:137-138). Anti-Enlightenment critics argue their case by bemoaning Enlightenment’s inability to fulfill high expectation and optimism its advocates promise. They premise their opposition to Enlightenment ideals on the assumption that modern thinkers’ conclusion on the libertarian lining of the Enlightenment is grossly exaggerated. They notice a glaring contradiction in modernist quest for liberty while, at the same time, imposing the doctrine of science as the ‘grand norm’. They do not see the rationale behind Enlightenment’s so-called promotion of freedom from primordial sentiments while overtly justifying the ‘myth’ of science. Postmodern thinkers argue that the incidence of the Enlightenment has further “led to the reinstatement of myth at the centre of the human world” (Williams, 2004:425). They, therefore, aim their repudiation “at the basic building-blocks of Enlightenment thought by questioning the ideas of rationality, autonomy and the very possibility of establishing universal truths”. They chide Enlightenment thinkers for allowing the totalitarian principle of Western epistemology to becloud a more beneficial, relativist, multi-dimensional interpretation of social processes. They further express their disenchantment with Enlightenment’s “naïve” over-generalisation which it elicits by couching development and reason only on modernist terms. Their apprehension is given impetus by the excesses of the Republicans after the French Revolution, a development which “cast a shadow over the naive optimism of the specifically Kantian version of inevitable progression

towards Enlightenment”.

Citing Nietzsche’s perspective that “God is dead, and that truth, morality and knowledge itself were mere illusions” as a landmark, Grant (2001) identifies the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century as the period which heralded a sustained questioning of the “hard-won gains of the Enlightenment”:

Progressive conflict between the narratives has therefore weakened them all, so that, at the end of the twentieth century, there seem to be no candidates to take over from them in tying all our knowledge and our actions to some coherent historical plan. All that is left is a field where the fragments left over from these grand narratives compete with one another and with new rivals. This field, however, is governed by a new alliance between technology and capitalism, constituting what some theorists have dubbed 'post-industrial society'. But what big story does capitalism have to tell? (29-30).

Smart (1992:165) observes the absence of synergy between societal growth and human capacity development in the age of Enlightenment, a situation which exposes the era’s “lack of correspondence between powerful and rapid developments in technology and slower, more uneven changes in the spiritual, moral, and political capacities of humanity”. Other related instances which undermine Enlightenment’s claim to order include the draconian measure of suppressing dissentient opinion during the reign of Josef Stalin in the former Soviet Union, the self-acclaimed superiority of the Aryan race under Adolf Hitler in Germany, the illiberal nationalistic chauvinism under Benito Mussolini in Italy, the inability of marxism to achieve utopia its advocates seek, and the global disillusionment after the ‘Cold War’ period (Grayling, 2008:xix). Against the backdrop of inhuman totalitarian attitude which characterised communist regimes in the West, Spencer (2001) submits that the optimism associated with communism disappears and in its place, postmodern thinking is entrenched:

Reaction against totalitarianism within the Soviet Union had its parallels in reaction against the closed minds and authoritarian practices within the politicized French left. By the late twentieth century both Marxism and modernism had become easy targets for the dissenting impulse within postmodernism. Both had been institutionalized, both had become associated with an 'establishment'-even where this was the 'establishment' of oppositional groups, trade unions, party organizations, academic faculties (165).

Thus, underpinning their argument is the conclusion that the atrocities perpetrated with Stalinism, Nazism and Fascism are consequent on the failure of the Enlightenment to sustain order and liberate the world from barbarity and inhumanity.

Unarguably, the organised killings that occurred during the French Revolution, World Wars 1 and 11, and the dictatorial rules of Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini constituted a grave abuse and contradiction to the rationality associated with the Enlightenment. With the mindless massacre and uncertainty that enveloped these eras, Enlightenment thinking was no doubt grossly undermined. Nevertheless, we aver that Stalinism, Nazism and Fascism are in principle and practice clearly at variance with the tenets of the Enlightenment in all its ramifications. Although these socio-political concepts advocate a unified and absolute conformity to the authority of the state, feature that is overtly in accordance with the Enlightenment's pursuit of 'stoic' allegiance to scientific 'mythology', we submit that the central concern of the Enlightenment is unalloyed liberation from uncritical doctrine hence could not have sanctioned an imposition of a restrictive worldview in the society, *a la* Stalinism, Nazism and Fascism. If the crux of Enlightenment's ideals is the liberation of the world from restrictive tendencies of traditional assumption associated with medieval period, then it makes sense to submit that for articulating total submission to the authority of their respective states, Stalinism, Nazism and Fascism have all betrayed the hope associated with modern period hence they are clearly anti-Enlightenment tendencies. No wonder Grayling (2008) refers to Nazism and Stalinism as "counter-Enlightenment" phenomena owing to their uncritical imposition of a unified traditional belief system which was essentially the prime target of Enlightenment disavowal:

For example, the argument that the historical Enlightenment spawned Nazism and Stalinism is answered by noting that these are in fact counter-Enlightenment phenomena, because they share with the monolithic authority structures of religion and absolute monarchy that which the historical Enlightenment emphatically repudiated: the desire to impose on everyone a single outlook to which everyone is obliged to conform and whose rule everyone is obliged to obey, on pain of punishment even to death (xix-xx).

Therefore though Stalinism, Nazism and Fascism occurred during the period of the Enlightenment, their dictatorial and totalitarian tendencies are evidently not in consonance with the freedom associated with the period. In fact, they take their cues from traditional, pre-modern,

pre-Enlightenment era. Little wonder Spencer agrees that even Marx admits the limitation of utopian ideals hence he supports Jewish prohibition of seeking information about the future.

Also, the post 'Cold War' demise of socialism in the former Soviet Union and its former allies did not help the cause of Enlightenment thinkers. Since the disintegration of the Soviet bloc, the end of socialist thinking became inevitable. As the last strand of socialist ideology was being replaced with industrial capitalism, the 'paradise' envisaged by socialist thinkers became a mirage. Critics argue that the Enlightenment came with the hope for an ideal, perfect society devoid of mundane or irrational sentiment: a utopian society. In such a society, man is expected to achieve his maximum potential while the society becomes ideal for human habitation. In this anticipated society, a classless egalitarian world would lead to equality as no one is further restricted by nature. However, since such a society remains a mirage and its actualisation an unaccomplished or uphill task, Grayling concludes that the society envisaged by modern thinkers remained elusive while such hope is bound to collapse. Notwithstanding the inability to achieve utopia, we submit that the efficacy of scientific knowledge, despite its obvious limitations and outward over-generalisation, is consistent with the rule of reason as opposed to myth. Even if an ideal society *a la* marxism is impossible, man's concerted effort to better his lot in the society, through the instrument of science and technology, is commendable. Grayling argues that even if Enlightenment philosophy is not an omnipotent narrative which can claim to have achieved a perfect, ideal society, yet it makes a concerted attempt towards improving the overall condition of mankind in the world:

Some commentators on the latter, usually its critics, make the mistake of thinking that the historical Enlightenment was perfectibilist in its hopes, that is, took itself to be directing mankind towards an ideal future state. In fact it was meliorist, that is, committed to the idea that things can be made better; and this remains true of contemporary Enlightenment thinking (xii).

Therefore, despite its major setback, the Enlightenment still retains its core ideals seen in contemporary world. Such includes liberal view, respect for law and order and religious tolerance. Henceforth people can now claim to be atheists without fear of persecution.

Another criticism directed towards the Enlightenment is its penchant to advance and sustain its myth while, at the same time, reject traditional myth! Horkheimer and Adorno (1996:245) accuse the Enlightenment of contradiction and insincerity because its philosophy sets

out to “secure itself against the return of the mythic” only to return to mythology, succeeding in jettisoning “the classic requirement of thinking about thought” to advance its own in a more dictatorial manner. In their opinion, the Enlightenment’s mythology imposes a unilateral view of the cosmos and encourages mankind to imbibe it hook, line and sinker, thereby foreclosing any voice of dissent. As the advocates of scientific mythology, the modernists propose “a unified movement that had one central theme” thus imposing a way of life to sustain social engineering (Williams, 2004:414). For instance, while marxism argues that a utopian society is imminent after the proletariat’s revolution, christianity spurns other religious affiliation owing to its conviction that only Jehovah can liberate man from Adamic sin in preparation for paradise. Critics argue that these ‘meta-narratives’ became dictatorial and repressive just like traditional sentiments they rejected. They foreclose any perspective that is antithetical to scientific postulation, thus Williams (2004:413) chides them for being “blind to the limitations and dangers of their own project”. However, we posit that the utopia-seeking posture of the modernists is not a resolve to undermine diverse perspectives but an ambitious venture to articulate a world-view they perceived as capable of addressing socio-political phenomena. In fact, despite its “limitations” and ‘messanic’ attributes, marxism offers the most consistent critical paradigm to counter the irrationality and mundane sentiments that dominated the pre-Enlightenment era.

The libertarian objective of science is also discredited by critics. In modern society, the state emerged to promote law and order and exercise authority over the people. In her characteristic manner of compelling obedience and protecting her territorial integrity, the state does not shy away from her domineering attitudes which, at times, can undermine freedom in the society. Ironically, instead of liberating the people from the yoke and oppression of pre-modern feudal society, the state becomes an instrument in the hands of the rich few to suppress and further impoverished the poor majority. Horkheimer and Adorno (1996:252) posit that according to the reasoning of Enlightenment thinkers, human beings are nothing but “material, just as nature as a whole is material for society”. Nevertheless, we submit that despite its shortcomings, but for the timely intervention of the state, man would probably still be existing in the Hobbesian state of nature where life is short, nasty and brutish as oppression resurfaces “in a fascistically rationalized form”. In modern time, the state takes up the daunting task of national development and enjoins the citizens to contribute their quota towards nation building. Through the provision of “appropriate recipes for national development” such as generation of employment, mass political education,

provision of social amenities, provision and maintenance of basic infrastructures and sustaining an enabling environment for technological advancement, the state continues to loom large in modern society. Even in technologically advanced societies, the regulatory authority of the state has never been in doubt. On this account, the important role the state plays in modern society cannot be jettisoned on account of its alleged domineering capability.

In a similar vein, anti-modern critics believe that modernism exposes itself to criticism because of its outward homogenous philosophical underpinning in an obviously heterogeneous world! The world is peopled by diverse people and made up of heterogeneous societies hence any attempt to homogenise it is bound to fail. One cannot but be taken aback when pro-Western critics articulate a homogenous epistemological assumptions for the world without taken non-Western cultural peculiarities into consideration. Instead of being humble enough to realise their little or no knowledge about the epistemological foundation of other cultures, Western critics attempt to ‘force’ Western culture down the throat of non-Western people! This makes the recourse to violence in non-Western societies inevitable. Thus as a reaction to ‘omniscient’ Western narration, critics of science prefer a relativist conclusion which accords it certain level of objectivity. They submit that the objectivity claim of science is nothing but a ruse! Others argue that the seeming ‘objectivity’ of science is inadequate and has to be radically and fundamentally altered to sustain its remaining modicum of objectivity (Heise, 2004). Nevertheless, while we do not intend to generate controversy as regards the homogeneity of scientific knowledge, we aver that scientists are diverse on their claims on several facets of human endeavour. Scientists engage in research to demystify earlier postulations. Therefore, caution should be taken not to discountenance science on account of its alleged homogenous claims.

Closely related to this is the allegation that scientific ‘truth’ is not “‘value-neutral’”. Critics argue that the objectivity claim of science is without ground because “fundamental beliefs and even ideological assumptions are hardwired into the definition, goals, and procedures of scientific inquiry” (Heise, 2004:150). When ideological persuasion, political affiliation, ethnic chauvinism and religious sentiment are allowed to easily infiltrate into scientific postulations, its value-conclusion becomes questionable. All these are aimed at justifying the domination of a group of people over the others through various scientific conclusions that are inimical to human emancipation. Similarly, Heise alludes to critics’ claim that there is “no special cognitive status” in scientific knowledge. In fact it “cannot be detached from the sociocultural context” which

upholds its credibility, hence socio-political consideration foregrounds scientific ‘truth’! If this is the case, critics believe no one can adduce any objectivity and universality to scientific postulations. Instead, a pluralist, not universal, conclusion is plausible. They therefore advocate for a more liberal, socially beneficial science which takes public perspectives into cognisance. However if scientific inquiry is allowed to be controlled and dominated by public perceptions, we may have sounded its death knell for its validity becomes subjective and therefore questionable. No wonder Heise (2004:154) submits that some critics of science, having discarded relativism in their quest towards achieving improved objectivity, engage in a sustained attempt to draw a line of demarcation between the objectivity of science on one hand, and its “value-neutrality” on the other hand:

But not all critical perspectives of science that build on postmodernist strands of thought are relativist and “culturalists” in this sense. On the contrary, some critics of science reject relativism and insist that some form of objective knowledge is necessary and desirable. In their argument, contemporary science is in fact not objective enough, and needs to be fundamentally changed and complemented to attain anything like objectivity (154).

To them, the overbearing attitude of postmodern ideals does not dissuade them from seeking a better science that is socially desirable.

Also, some critics observe the contradiction in the instrument of reason which, in one instance, serves to control and manipulate nature, and in the other, helps to subjugate mankind. This line of thinking justifies the “suspicion that science might essentially be a tool of oppression at the service of the powerful”, while scientists are merely “experts who serve as mere mouthpieces for governments or business companies rather than for the common people” (Heise, 2004:147). If this is the case, then there is no assurance that science is “as beneficial to the majority as Enlightenment philosophy had claimed through the general belief that increased knowledge furthers the individual’s emancipation and liberation”. This conclusion is premised on the assumption that reason, in the hand of scientists, can be employed to advance and promote the cause of the state at the expense of human development and emancipation. For instance, the negative power of science, as well as that of its ally technology, was employed in a most devastating manner to the consternation of environmentalists in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. According to Heise (2004:146-147), science and technology may have “lost track of the networks and interconnections that really make living ecosystems functions” because they are unaware “of

the environmental damage that technological advanced societies inflict on natural ecosystems”. As science becomes a tool employed by the powerful minority to suppress majority opinion, it becomes an uphill task to justify Enlightenment’s conclusion that reason serves the dual role of subduing nature and bettering man’s condition. Thus, its postulation is used to feather the next of the government and institutions at the detriment of the masses (Landry, 2000). According to Grayling (2004:xxvi-xxvii), instead of serving as an instrument to prevent oppression, science becomes a weapon of oppression, transforming “against the very values that were responsible for its own first success”, hence “the ghosts that the Enlightenment sought to exorcise rose again in new and equally terrible disguises”. This pessimistic assertion reduces mankind to a robot unworthy of any good deed. However, even if we accuse science of justifying “sexist and racist” remarks through its biological theories, Heise agrees that such theories have been renounced incidentally through the instrument of science itself. If we agree that the negative use of science can be detrimental to human emancipation especially at the hand of oppressive state control *a la* Germany under Adolf Hitler, yet this contradiction should not be exaggerated as it forms the kernel of Hegelian philosophical postulation on dialectic. Hegelian dialectic emphasises the assumption that contradiction is an indispensable reality in the society. It cannot be divorced from the society. Thus, it is expected of a discerning mind to employ a holistic approach to its understanding. If this is not done, any analysis of the development of the contradiction in the society is bound to create further contradictions because the core assumption of dialectic is “the centrality of contradiction” (Ritzer, 2008:45). Also, Ritzer argues that even Marx admits that contradiction is inevitable in the society because capitalism, as well as its attendant class consciousness, is central to it. However, unlike Hegel, Marx posits that philosophical rhetoric on contradiction is insufficient in resolving this contradiction. He avers that through conflict, the contradiction leads to a perfect society after the impending revolution.

In a similar vein, another criticism directed at the threshold of Enlightenment ideals is its protection of the interest of the bourgeoisie in a class-structured society, hence Williams (2004:411) calls it “the servant of earthly masters rather than the measure of truth”. In the capitalist society, the proletariats are continually agitating for a better deal because their interests are perpetually relegated to the background. Therefore it is incumbent on science to fashion out a system to sustain the economic interests of the bourgeoisie to further maximise their economic benefits and prevent violent reaction. As the Enlightenment takes the interest of the minority into

cognisance at the expense of the downtrodden, the exploitation that ensued is worse than that experienced with Machiavelli and Hobbes. It is ironic that rather than liberating the proletariat from oppression in the march towards utopia, its “bourgeois philosophy” extends beyond its limit to further pauperise the people. It eventually unleashes the free-market economy and its attendant inequality on them. However, we submit that even the die-hard proponents of the Enlightenment are aware of its limitations and contradictions. For instance, Williams (2004) singles out Kant out of twentieth century Enlightenment thinkers “for presenting an understanding of scientific knowledge that was ultimately of no interest to the twentieth-century positivist followers of the Enlightenment”. He posits that Kant is evidently aware of the limitations and boundaries of the Enlightenment:

However, despite this largely symbolic significance, Kant was very serious about the boundaries the concept placed on what we can know. We can indeed account for things and events as they occur discretely in time and space, but we cannot account for them in their totality. From natural science, as Kant understood it, we can draw no ultimate theoretical conclusions about the nature of the universe and human life ⁽⁴¹⁷⁾.

Thus, Enlightenment is a continuous process of development whose criticism is one of its inherent features.

The Enlightenment’s promotion of liberal world-view in place of religious bigotry gave rise to a free-market economy which eventually became its albatross. The aftermath of a ‘liberalised’ economy is capitalism and its attendant alienation of the class of the proletariat. According to Peter Childs (2000:29), with capitalism occasioned by Industrial Revolution in Europe, industrialised society ensued with machine competing with human for space in the capitalist world order. The ‘institutionalisation’ of capitalism led to a free-market economy where market-force became the sole determinant of the economy. The fast emerging factory system, with its highly organised hierarchical structure, began to replace the agrarian economy. Therefore, critics are unanimous that the claim to universal perfection by the proponents of Enlightenment had been discredited with the incidence of capitalism. In fact, such critics argue that the exploitation and alienation that were the hallmark of capitalism had made nonsense the Enlightenment’s claim to better the lot of modern man. However despite the exploitation embedded in capitalism, it, nevertheless, liberates the society from the shackles of feudal system and elicits a ray of hope in the near future. Little wonder Ritzer (2008) claims that even Marx

cannot contemplate a return to pre-modern economic system despite the limitations of capitalist order because capitalism is “primarily a good thing”:

Notwithstanding its exploitation, the capitalist system provides the possibility for freedom from the traditions that bound all previous societies. Even if the worker is not yet truly free, the promise is there. Similarly, as the most powerful economic system ever developed, capitalism holds the promise of freedom from hunger and from other forms of material deprivation ⁽⁶⁴⁾.

Like Ritzer, Bilton et al (2002) x-ray the overall consequences of capitalism and conclude that it is beneficial to the society. This is evident in its ability to generate improved work-ethic backed by advanced technology in the management of both human and material resources. The end result is increased output made possible at a relatively low cost. In this vein, Williams (2004) accuses Horkheimer and Adorno’s “Dialectic of Enlightenment” of articulating a naïve misrepresentation of the ideals of the Enlightenment because some of its critics are aware of the fact that its ambitious project is not without limitations:

However, in reducing the essence of the Enlightenment to the capitalist society to which it partly gave rise, Horkheimer and Adorno misrepresent the historical Enlightenment. Just as the ancient and pre-modern societies that were displaced by modern capitalism were not in every respect hostile to the aims of human emancipation, so not all the proponents of the Enlightenment were blind to the limitations of modern commercial society ⁽⁴¹⁴⁾.

Therefore, we aver that capitalism is not essentially evil. It has inbuilt mechanism for self-probing. Past societies were equally bedeviled with a more intense form of exploitation! The only difference is that such exploitation did not have an economic interpretation.

Without mincing words, Horkheimer and Adorno are assertive in their condemnation of the Enlightenment, particularly its alleged ‘barbarity’ under the Nazis during the World War 11 and its imposition of capitalism in America. However, we challenge their sophistry on account of its outward conservative rhetoric. It is worthy of note that conservative philosophical lining had become a common feature of German intellectuals ‘entangled’ by the atrocities perpetrated through Nazism and disillusioned by the recent disintegration of the former Soviet Union. While agreeing that capitalism is inhuman and exploitative, turning man to a tool, a commodity, an object whose desirability is evident in his subordination only to his “functional context,” Roberts (2004) chides them for their inability to proffer alternatives to the barbarity of the Nazis and the alienation

embedded in capitalism. He submits that they are too ‘rash’ and impatient to learn the lessons from such experience. He attributes their impatience to “the myriad of indignities of exile”:

But it is disappointing that two such gifted analysts could not have spent a little more time considering that question and the lessons, if any, that might have been learned from it

(73).

Also, Roberts notices a glaring contradiction in Horkheimer and Adorno’s condemnation of Nazism on one hand, but yearning for the imposition of state-controlled ideological establishments to replace the non-performing German institutions on the other hand! He concludes that Nazism was better resisted with more vigour and success globally than it was even repudiated in Germany:

At the same time it is noticeable that- despite the lamentable performance of all German’s intellectual institutions under the Nazis, including the universities, the arts, and the law- Horkheimer and Adorno still hold to the Humboldtian notion that there is merit and moral stability in state-monopolized ideological establishments (72).

Similarly, Williams (2004) identifies Horkheimer and Adorno as neo-marxists who, having being largely influenced by the Hegelian/dialectic tradition, are disenchanted by the progressivist tendencies of modernist assumptions and therefore invariably espoused postmodernism, a theory which is in tandem with their opposition to the totalising claim of the Enlightenment. He posits that neo-marxists are of the opinion that the ideals of Enlightenment stand discredited for it has failed woefully to fulfill the optimism and high expectations its over ambitious critics elucidate:

The Enlightenment made scientific thought the touchstone of truth in the modern world but the public was let down by the manner in which science was harnessed to the needs of industry. Instead of science being the instrument of human emancipation, it became the instrument of the aggrandizing development of the market economy. Science became detached from the pursuit of truth and was reduced to problem-solving for the capitalist enterprise (409).

Thus, we submit that their argument is nothing but a conservative bourgeois rhetoric directed at the threshold of progressive Enlightenment thinking.

It is evident that Horkheimer and Adorno are all out to seek a positive notion of Enlightenment devoid of suppression and domination. Ironically, they employ a dialectic approach which emphasises the “unity of opposites.” This cannot but reveal both the positive and the negative sides. The Enlightenment sets out to debunk traditional ‘irrationalities’ only to elicit those inherent negative attributes too! In fact, for drawing its influence from Hegelian dialectic,

the “Dialectic of Enlightenment” is not immune to negative allegations. Enlightenment is a continuous process which embedded its own criticism. Also, Enlightenment thinkers are not oblivious of the limitations of scientific postulations, as Horkheimer and Adorno reiterate. Scientists are aware of the limitations of their own project hence they embark on series of experiments to counter earlier discoveries. Therefore Williams (2004) maintains that Horkheimer and Adorno’s “Dialectic of Enlightenment” does not reveal a full grasp of the ideals of the Enlightenment because it seeks a fresh understanding of the Enlightenment beyond the confines of its advocates:

So Horkheimer and Adorno set themselves the task of recovering the emancipatory potential of the movement, and seek to do this without drawing too extensively from Enlightenment thinkers themselves. In their view, the original exponents of Enlightenment are too steeped in its errors and false ambitions to provide a wholly trustworthy resource for the present. They are part of a bad past that has to be rejected. Its critics have to look primarily to themselves and new, radical contemporary trends to ground their new thought. This accounts for the strong interest shown by Horkheimer and Adorno in the avant-garde, atonal music and new forms of personal and social expression (413).

Unfortunately, their argument portrays the Enlightenment “in too stark and one-sided a way”, thereby failing to understand its core tenets. Even in the pre-enlightened society, a modicum of liberty was permitted, hence freedom is not an exclusive preserve of the Enlightenment.

Despite the inevitability of globalisation realities all over the world, there emerged anti-Enlightenment criticism directed towards exposing its grey areas, especially from the 1990s. With globalisation and the shrinking of the entire globe, genuine fears began to emerge concerning its tendencies to obliterate national peculiarities and idiosyncrasies. As the world becomes a “global village” devoid of national boundaries, information that was hitherto the exclusive preserve of a privileged class or advanced nation can now be accessed anytime, anywhere with the use of the Internet. In this “borderless world,” no nation can protect her national peculiarities from the prying eyes of others or her privacy from being ‘invaded’ by competing nations. Similarly, anti-globalisation critics are uncomfortable with the “information glut” heralded by this era of information explosion. They claim to be at sea to distinguish between objective information or personal opinion on sensitive areas of human endeavour like science and technology. According to Heise (2004:141), because we are at liberty to publish without restriction or limitation, “it became

harder to know which information derived from reliable sources and represented authenticated knowledge, and which did not.” Therefore the ‘truth’ from the Internet source may not be fool-proof after all. Nonetheless, the ills embedded in globalisation are not enough to warrant its jettisoning. Since no nation can exist in isolation of the world, it is incumbent on us to employ its positive attributes to advance our national ideals. Besides, a discerning mind cannot but commend science and technology for the development of the world and for bettering the condition of man. Heise (2004:138) reiterates the landmark achievements made possible by advancement in science and technology. Such innovations include the exploration of the Moon and Mars, the production of atomic bomb and the “path-breaking theoretical revolutions such as relativity theory, quantum mechanics or the discovery of DNA.” Even the production of our basic necessities that enhance living like foods, shelter, clothing, cars, television and refrigerators, as well as how they get to the final consumers, is made possible by advancement in science and technology. We should not grope in the dark for long on account of the limitations of science and technology.

Finally no one should suffer fools gladly. With the post World War II realities, especially the fall of the former Soviet Union and the disintegration of the entire Soviet bloc, pessimism is expected and it clearly engulfed the world after the ‘Cold War’. Although this pessimism signaled the advent of the so-called postmodern age, we are sure it will soon be replaced or undermined by another, thereby turning it to a fad that will disappear over time, in line with social transformational theory. Nevertheless, either for good or bad, postmodern tendencies can no longer be ignored in our contemporary cultural, economic and socio-political studies. This conclusion leads us to the next level of discourse which entails the history, meaning and ideals of postmodernism.

2.3 The Tenets of Postmodernism

Any discussion on postmodernism can hardly command validity if it fails to identify its proponents, particularly those whose theoretical standpoints have provided it with a worthy identity. Although the list is by no means exhaustive, two household names stand out: Jean - Francois Lyotard (1924-1998) and Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007). Lyotard and Baudrillard are prominent postmodern thinkers particularly on account of their hostility to the ‘grand’ narrative and Platonic questioning of the reality of the world respectively (Brooker, 1992; Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Bertens, 1995; O’Day, 2001; Easthope, 2001; Spencer, 2001). Jean-Francois Lyotard, a “leading figure” in postmodern debate, is a French professor of philosophy who

‘derailed’ from orthodox marxism to begin an extensive inquiry and questioning of it. This is perhaps to express his disenchantment at the pro-establishment lining of the French Communist Party (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Sim, 2001; Butler, 2002). Eschewing a philosophy greatly indebted to Nietzsche and Heidegger, Lyotard rejects the quest for legitimate and absolute knowledge which inform scientific analysis in the Enlightenment period. Science prides itself in its ability to promote and sustain a laid-down rule or standard which explains and justifies human liberation and emancipation from primordial tradition and superstition. This is embedded in its ‘metanarratives’ that are given credence by the philosophy of Hegel and Marx, which attempts to legitimise it, in line with the avant-garde tradition.

While presenting his ‘report on knowledge’ in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1996), Lyotard identifies two types of knowledge that are no longer credible in contemporary society: the narrative and scientific knowledge. Narrative knowledge “does not require any proof” but derives its validity from its “internal consistency and rules of procedure”. On the other hand, scientific knowledge lays claim to universality and objectivity, thus sets out to ridicule the former. Since Lyotard does not see the relevance of these forms of knowledge in the contemporary world, he seeks an outright disclaimer of scientific articulation of progressive march of history and quest for political emancipation. With Lyotard, gone are the days when the legitimacy of historical truth can be found in “the realm of narrative” of scientific knowledge which seeks credibility in “a metadiscourse that makes an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth” (Bertens, 1995:125). With postmodern philosophy, science goofed if it thinks it has discovered a narrative that shows the progressive direction of the world and possesses the means for total freedom. It merely succeeded in creating a repressive barrier which requires the adoption of “mininarratives” to surmount. No wonder Grant (2001) submits that Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* offers the most significant analysis which situates “meta-or grand narratives” in the right perspective:

While grand narratives such as the Enlightenment narrative of infinite progress in knowledge and liberty, or the Marxist narrative of progressive emancipation of labouring humanity from the shackles imposed upon it by industrial capitalism, have played a crucial role in anchoring knowledge and politics in modernity, postmodernity has entailed a crisis of confidence in them. One reason for this

crisis is the rise of critical philosophy, begun, ironically, with the Enlightenment (29).

Lyotard's argument takes off on the ground that knowledge is no longer the same in the contemporary society. Its status has been radically altered to incorporate its manipulation only by those who have access to it because it has been 'commodified' and can be stored for commercial purposes in our "knowledge driven economy". Henceforth, its control lies in whosoever can make it functional, for its totality is now a mirage. With computer technologies, enhanced by multinational corporations, it can no longer produce absolute truth. In fact, it has lost its value: it is no longer an end but a means to an end (Bertens, 1995; Landry, 2000; Easthope, 2001; Malpas, 2005). Sim (2001) argues that to enhance credibility, integrity and liberation, Lyotard calls for *petit recite* or "mininarratives" which are situational, tentative and relative. With the post World War I realities, no one can lay claim to objective truth any longer:

Lyotard considers that little narratives are the most inventive way of disseminating, and creating, knowledge, and that they help to break down the monopoly traditionally exercised by grand narratives. In science, for example, they are now to be regarded as the primary means of enquiry. Postmodern science, Lyotard informs us, is a search for paradoxes, instabilities and the unknown, rather than an attempt to construct yet another grand narrative that would apply over the entire scientific community (9).

Lyotard posits that the totalising claim of science is illegitimate, bankrupt and without grounds. With warfare, disasters, earthquakes, nuclear threat and ecological crisis rampant in the contemporary post-industrial world of computerised technologies, the recourse to science for analysis of the society is no longer credible. On account of his "incredulity towards grand narrative," Landry (2000:85) argues that the flagrant rebuttal of Enlightenment's claim to universal perfection stands Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* out as a strong "aversion against the universal". So germane to the understanding of postmodern thinking is Lyotard's perspective that Easthope (2001:18) concludes that he is "the first, important advocate of postmodernism in philosophy and culture", the leading exponent of postmodernism. Also, Grant (2001:25) submits that Lyotard's postulation provides an apposite benchmark to articulate "a definitive character" for postmodernism, so much that the core assumption of his work "is generally replicated in all the European theorists who supply the resources for postmodern theory"! His postmodern philosophy is a determined attempt to promote "the telling of numerous,

varied and localised 'little' narratives” to signal the demise of grand narratives or, at least, debunk the claim that the grand *recite* of science is legitimate even in the post-industrial age (Wilson, 2004:427). No wonder his effort is “widely regarded as the most powerful theoretical expression of postmodernism”. But for his philosophical postulation and that of other postmodern theorists, Sim (2001) believes it would have been inconceivable to articulate a dissentient opinion on the impossibility of absolute knowledge in the world:

There is no longer any point engaging in debate with, for example, Marxism, the argument goes; rather we should ignore it as an irrelevance to our lives. Postmodern philosophy provides us with the arguments and techniques to make that gesture of dissent, as well as how to make value judgements in the absence of such overall authorities (3).

Therefore, these positions from Landry, Easthope, Grant, Wilson and Sim, among others, justify Lyotard’s argument as quintessentially postmodern.

Lyotard’s treatise is premised on the assumption that certain “historical contradictions” do not give credence to the indispensability of scientific truth as the catalyst for social engineering, thus “local narrative with its emphasis on diversity and heterogeneity” is required in the contemporary world (Sheehan, 2004:29). For instance, if science is infallible, why did it become an instrument of terror employed for the destruction of the Jews especially during the World War 11? In a similar vein, if communism is the benchmark for measuring progress in man’s quest for utopia, has the time not come for its critics to seek for an alternative against the backdrop of the fact that its basic assumptions have been discredited with the atrocities perpetrated by Josef Stalin? Also with the free-market economy which perpetually alienates the proletariat, has the Enlightenment’s claim to advance man’s development and emancipation not been made nonsense of? Thus, in line with Lyotard’s postulation, postmodern thinking disavows the possibility of order in the society. An attempt to create order can only lead to the ‘institutionalisation’ of disharmony in the world for, as Hegel claims, contradiction is an inherent feature of life.

Jean Baudrillard is another French sociologist and cultural critic whose controversial analysis of contemporary society of improved communication technology helps in promoting the ideals of postmodernism. So influential is Baudrillard’s argument to the articulation of postmodern ideals that Grant (2001:28) refers to him as “the high priest of postmodernism” while Sim (2001:11) submits that his works is an “important expression of postmodern philosophy”. In Baudrillard’s view, the image of the society has blurred the reality in the society as the

advancement in communication technologies gives rise to “self-generating, self-mirroring images and experience”. The postmodern world is “a world of simulacra, where we could no longer differentiate between reality and simulation. Simulacra represented nothing but themselves: there was no other reality to which they referred”. What emerges is the loss of the real for it has been replaced by its copy. Thus, nothing exists to differentiate between reality and its illusion. The world of simulation and hyperreality has therefore evolved (Baudrillard, 1992; Brooker, 1992; Haralambo et al, 1995; Ritzer, 1996; Sim, 2001; Wilson, 2004; Malpas, 2005).

The kernel of Baudrillard’s argument as adduced in his “Simulacra and Simulations” (1992) is that in contemporary postmodern world, the ‘distance’ between reality and its model has completely collapsed. Although the model is produced to have insight into, or a full grasp of, the real, it actually succeeded in replacing the real, becoming more real than the reality it mirrors initially. In this world of the hyperreal, no one can decipher reality because its model has been ‘transformed’. Man is now “lost in the realm of hyperreality that refuses us the distance to stand back from our experiences and question them” (Malpas, 2005:94). In Baudrillard's world of signs and images, no one can comprehend reality for it has lost its meaning. What we now refer to as reality is nothing but “an endless circulation of signs from which any sense of reality has fallen away, a world in which there are simulations and only simulations” (Easthope, 2001:20). The world is merely an image dominated by signs of another world that has never existed. Such signs become self-referential for we can only see the representation of simulated reality and not reality per se. The sign of reality which “initially referring to a material reality beyond itself, the sign then distorts, disguises, and finally replaces that reality” (Sheehan, 2004:31). What we used to perceive as reality has been so ‘corrupted’ that it now has several interpretations. This notion of the hyperreal presents a world where reason can no longer be adduced to justify the existence of any reality. What we now have is a “transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing” (Baudrillard, 1992:153).

The decisive turning point for Baudrillard’s world of hyperreality is the post World War II era of unprecedented advancement in mass media communication technologies. In the name of advertisement and television commercials, the world now witnesses a wholesale alteration of reality through media technology that produces its image, having supplanted reality. With television technology designed by the Western media establishments and multinationals, the message becomes ubiquitous with the intention to completely annihilate reality in the quest to

achieve a commercial end and further strengthen capitalism (Sheehan, 2004; Malpas, 2005). Gibbins & Reimer (1999) do not mince word before attributing this development to “communication technology”:

By this, Baudrillard means that computerization, communication technology and the media together frame human experience by producing images and models of reality that are increasingly supplanting reality itself as the gauge of what reality ‘is’. How do we know what is real? We watch television and we read newspapers and books, and the models of reality presented in these media are the ones we use to gain an impression of reality ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

In the same vein, Marc O’Day (2001:112) reiterates the looming place of television in articulating postmodern discourse. He submits that whenever discussion centres on “postmodernism, postmodernization, postmodernity or just the postmodern in general,” television is an indispensable “postmodern medium *par excellence*”. His position is anchored on the premise that even if Baudrillard “overstates” his rhetoric on simulation, it is doubtless that television can distort reality:

Baudrillard overstates his case, yet there are indeed numerous examples where the reality of television problematizes or even replaces everyday reality. For instance, while many studies have shown that people are perfectly capable of distinguishing between soap-opera reality and real life, this doesn't stop a few of them from abusing the real-life actor or actress who plays the role of a currently unpopular character ⁽¹¹³⁾.

A good example can be deduced from television commercials and advertisement where, through embellishment and distortion, reality is replaced by its copy or image and such copy or image appears to be more real than the reality it mirrors. Also, people are so influenced by television programmes so much that they forget their ‘unreal’ nature. For instance, Storey (2001) is awestruck how television viewers in the West empathise with characters in soap opera to the extent of writing letters seeking or offering them assistance! He argues that television viewers in Europe and America relate with characters in soap opera as if they are real:

For example, we in the West live in a world in which people write letters addressed to characters in soap operas, making them offers of marriage, sympathizing with their current difficulties, offering them new accommodation, or just writing to ask how they are coping with life. Television

villains are regularly confronted in the street and warned about the possible future consequences of not altering their behaviour. Television doctors, television lawyers and television detectives regularly receive requests for advice and help (149).

Which better evidence can buttress Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality! He even claimed the Gulf war did not take place! What we have is a televised, sign or copy war! Media technology has a profound but pervasive influence on the contemporary society.

Baudrillard's treatise on the 'unreal' nature of the Gulf war centres on the inability to account for the real events and realities of the war, all of which have been simulated to achieve a commercial end, with the television assuming the status of "a gigantic simulator". In the 'scrambling' for the latest events, stories and photographs of the war by the Western media organisations, proliferation of signs ensued. This led to diverse signs of the hyperreal devoid of the actual carnage and wanton destruction of lives and properties. Thus, the representation of the war became a strategy aimed at justifying Western might as people were 'fed' with information which assisted tremendously to sustain Western hegemony. The truth of the war was largely suppressed (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Baudrillard, 1995). Therefore, even if Baudrillard "overstates" or "overgeneralised" his controversial perception of reality in the contemporary media-saturated world, no one can deny the influential role of television to simulate reality. Despite some misgivings, O'Day (2001) cannot agree less:

Again the case is overgeneralized - and again there is an unwillingness to discuss television overtly in any detail - but there is no doubt that from this rather reductive perspective commercial TV is, and always has been, ruled by the economic necessity to sell audiences to advertisers. We are all, in a sense, working for capital when we watch television. Some people joke that advertisements are the 'real' programmes - and often the best (114).

The television has continued to play a pivotal role in shaping people's mindset to achieve commercial end at the detriment of reality. In the contemporary postmodern world, advertisements and commercials on television are particularly driven by the desire to attain enviable economic height. Having succeeded in influencing audience choices, further wealth is amassed for the sustenance of capitalist nations and organisations.

Heavily influenced by semiology, Baudrillard's argument to justify the unreal nature of the world is presented in four stages. In the first stage, the sign reflects the real or original world. It

later goes on to mask, distort or pervert the reflected reality in the second stage. Also at the third stage, the sign completely replaces the reality to the extent that the latter is no longer visible. Finally, the sign begins to exist independently of the reality such that no resemblance between the two can be seen. No corresponding relationship is evident at this stage. The signifier has 'overthrown' the signified (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Barry, 1995; Haralambos et al, 1995; Cahoone, 1996; Watson, 2001). Besides the obvious influence of Nietzsche, Heidegger and Bataille, Baudrillard is tremendously indebted to Plato. In *The Republic* (1979), Plato does not have a place for artists. Since the world is 'unreal' but only an imitation of another world, any work of art in such a 'non-existing world' is twice removed from reality. This position apparently influences Baudrillard.

Postmodernism can only serve as a useful critique of contemporary culture if it incorporates the ideals and contradictions of modernism, whose tenets it seeks to undermine. If the 'post' marks a period of succession, a time after a unique event, we can then safely conclude that the world is transitory in nature, with the transition from pre-enlightened or medieval period, through the modern or industrialized period, to the contemporary postmodern era (Calinescu, 1987; Feher, 1990; Sheppard, 1993; Fekete, 2001). Therefore, Susan Wilson (2004:410) argues that for postmodern thinkers to "account for their own philosophical premises," they have to come to terms with the core tenets of modernism, "the period that they claimed to supersede". Since the prefix 'post' barely elicits the indispensability of modernism before a credible discussion of postmodernism can be done, we aver that the identity of the latter cannot be divorced from its source, otherwise it loses its meaning. Whenever critics argue that modern assumptions have been jettisoned or completely eroded especially owing to post World War 11 disillusionment, they should be reminded that these realities inform postmodern tendencies in its entirety. Therefore postmodernism is meaningless unless it recognises modernism as its origin or source from where its argument starts, and its critique begins, else its discourse cannot take off (Hutcheon, 1988; Krammer, 1997; Malpas, 2005). If it is meaningful at all, "it is as it differs from modernism". Doing otherwise, perhaps on the lame excuse that modernism has been superseded, jettisoned or discredited is to leave postmodernism idle with nothing to condemn, nothing to undermine, nothing to replace, hence its argument turns to a charade. Thus, an exposé on modernism is germane to any credible discussion of postmodernism, for the latter is a development arising from the former.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to ascribe an all-embracing definition to postmodernism. Even among its core proponents, consensus still remains an uphill task, and this may continue for sometimes owing to its hydra-headed peculiarity which makes an authoritative definition elusive and open to challenge and repudiation. The reason for this is not far-fetched: postmodern criticism exists in several disciplines, academic and non-academic alike; hence it is open to diverse meanings and interpretations (Calinescu, 1987; Hutcheon, 1988; Bertens, 1995; Marsh, 1996; Ritzer, 1996; Gibbins & Reimer, 1999; Sim, 2001; Connor, 2004; Hutcheon, 2004; Hart, 2006; Childs & Fowler, 2006). Its multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional implications tremendously influenced disciplines like philosophy, archaeology, history, sociology, theology, journalism, music, literature and cultural studies hence an all-encompassing definition becomes intractable. The best we can have is “a profusion of definitions and redefinitions” (Spencer, 2001; Scott, 2001; Heise, 2004; Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004). Hence, Awosika (1999:24) argues that the central ideal of postmodernism, its tenacious disposition to interpret post World War is nothing but an exercise in futility.

Despite the heterogeneous nature that foregrounds its amorphous complexity, postmodern critics have not abandoned the quest for its origin and meanings in all facets of human endeavour. According to Cahoon (1996), its early origin can be traced to the works of Rudolf Pannwitz (a philosopher), Federico de Onis (a literary critic), Bernard Iddings Bell (a theologian) and Arnold Toynbee (an historian). There is also evidence of its occurrence in journalism, music, painting, social sciences and the natural sciences. As a reaction to modern architectural quest for perfection, it gained pre-eminence with the destruction of Pruitt-Igoe and the construction of Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles in 1972, and blossomed in literary studies (Ray, 1990; Jameson, 1991; Smart, 1992; Haralambos et al, 1995; Cahoon, 1996; Jencks, 1996; Curl, 1999; Gabardi, 2001; Grant, 2001; Easthope, 2001; Watson, 2001; Connor, 2004). Thus, Peter Brooker (1992) describes it as having

an amoebic range of attributions and meanings, in academic debate and in journalism. In general terms it can be said to describe a mood or condition of radical indeterminacy, and a tone of self-conscious, parodic skepticism towards previous certainties in personal, intellectual and political life (175).

This ambivalence accounts for diverse interpretations of postmodern thinking, a feature which underscores the need for critics to access it from an eclectic perspective. Hutcheon

(1998:3) calls it “a contradictory phenomenon,” Lash (1999:56) submits that it is “ubiquitous”, Morris (1988:242) refers to it as a “big speculation”, Spencer (2001:158) calls it “a paradox and a provocation”, while Bertens (1995:3) describes it as “an exasperating term” which can be applied to “a wide range of objects and phenomena” and useful for “diametrically opposed practices in different artistic disciplines”. Nevertheless, Watson (2001) posits that twentieth century postmodern theorists are united under the general skepticism over modernist “grand narratives” which attempt to situate cultural worldviews under a solitary “metanarrative”:

The key thinkers have all identified a common theme in the scepticism of the twentieth century towards the once great certainties of history and society. We no longer unquestioningly accept the universal claims to knowledge and truth of the great stories which have organized our culture. These include religion, the progress of modernism, the progress of science, and absolute political theories like Marxism (158).

Therefore even if the attempt aimed at achieving an all-encompassing definition of postmodernism is futile, its proponents have succeeded in identifying its inherent features, a kind of commonality, which can provide it with, at least, a definitive character. Simon Malpas’ (2005) comprehensive but inexhaustive list of diverse critical opinions on postmodernism is representative enough:

As a means of thinking about the contemporary world, the postmodern has been defined in a huge variety of different ways: as a new aesthetic formation (Hassan, 1982, 1987), a condition (Lyotard, 1984; Harvey, 1990), a culture (Connor, 1997), a cultural dominant (Jameson, 1991), a set of artistic movements employing a parodic mode of selfconscious representation (Hutcheon, 1988, 2002), an ethical or political imperative (Bauman, 1993, 1995), a period in which we have reached the ‘end of history’ (Baudrillard, 1994; Fukuyama, 1992; Vattimo, 1988), a ‘new horizon of our cultural, philosophical and political experience’ (Laclau, 1988), an ‘illusion’ (Eagleton, 1996), a reactionary political formation (Callinicos, 1989), or even just a rather unfortunate mistake (Norris, 1990, 1993). It evokes ideas of irony, disruption, difference, discontinuity, playfulness, parody, hyper-reality and simulation (6-7).

Postmodernism is a late twentieth century style, period or movement that reacts against modern style or “the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century” (Heise, 2004:137), hence Storey (2001:147) describes it as “a populist attack on the elitism of modernism”, while

Landry (2000:10) sees it has a concept which indicates “a break with the modern and is defined in counterdistinction to it”. It rejects established modernist features which seek unity, order, truth and knowledge, thus Curl (1999:516) asserts that it heralds “a loss of faith in what were once regarded as certainties” and consequently promotes “cynicism, fragmentation, ill-digested eclecticism”. Since theories are all out to “inferiorize” or “demystify” the earlier ones (Fashina, 2005:102), postmodernism unmask the inherent short-comings, oversights, contradictions and inadequacies that are evident in modern culture, thus foregrounding the conclusion that modernism, which “demythologized” the world, would soon become “obsolete” (Anderson,1984:113). In fact, Landry (2000:23) reiterates the reasons why postmodern debates have continued to rage to include its sustained criticism of the “Enlightenment rationality and the project of modernity, as well as for their ability to point to and interrogate changes in contemporary culture”. In the view of Cahoon (1996), postmodernism represents the most consistent criticism of Western culture and the Enlightenment:

At a minimum, postmodernism regards certain important principles, methods, or ideas characteristic of modern Western culture as obsolete or illegitimate. In this sense, postmodernism is the latest wave in the critique of the Enlightenment, the critique of the cultural principles characteristic of modern society that trace their legacy to the eighteenth century, a critique that has been going on since that time (2).

In the same vein, Landry (2000:10) quotes Mike Featherstone (1985) as describing postmodernism only as “a negation of the modern, a perceived abandonment, break with or shift away from the definitive features of the modern, with the emphasis firmly on the sense of the relational move away”. In postmodern narrative, Awosika (1999:24) submits, “prized concepts like classical unity or modernist obsessions” are renounced “for their opposites”. This is coming against the backdrop of the fact that modernism has ended or, at least, it is undergoing what Barry Smart (1992:141) calls the “irreversible transformation”. With postmodernism, modern ideals, principles and beliefs are questioned, exposed, ridiculed and undermined without any recourse to alternative. This underscores its influence by the post World War 11 disillusionment in Europe (Jameson, 1992; Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Barry, 1995; Hassan, 1996; Gibbins & Reimer, 1999; Wilson, 2004).

Although postmodernism can be understood in relation to modernism, it nonetheless dispenses with the ‘grand’ narratives which inform modernist assumptions, thus sounding the

death knell of Enlightenment theorising! Nineteenth century sociologists like Augustus Comte, Max Weber, Emily Durkheim and Karl Marx believed that industrialisation is the hallmark of development. With industrial development, coming as an offshoot of Industrial Revolution in Europe, science overcame myth, superstition, religion and all primordial prejudices, signaling the era of the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinkers conclude that science is capable of guaranteeing ultimate solution to cultural, historical, economic and socio-political challenges of man in the society. This perception is embedded in the “metanarratives” of Western intellectual framework and articulated by Enlightenment critics (Habermas, 1992; Haralambo et al 1995). According to Lyotard (1996:503), “metanarratives” mask the contradictions and inadequacies in the society and create the impression that the society can be salvaged. He, therefore, describes postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives” for no singular judgment can take care of all situation. Featherstone (1985) buttresses Lyotard’s argument:

The revelatory truthfulness of the secret of the end arrived at via the detection of the immanent logic of the process. If history in general, and modernity in particular, are western myths, the fatefulness of modernity is cast in a new light: its fate is that we no longer acknowledge its fatefulness. Its forced identity is collapsed to release a profusion of differences, universality gives way to particularities and narrative and memory cede to counter-narratives and counter-memories (1).

Therefore with postmodernism, it becomes unthinkable for anyone to assume that a particular position can be adduced for all societies irrespective of cultural affiliations or political biases. Never can there be a consensus of opinion on social issues as the modernists would have us believe because postmodernism has “ousted notions of universalism, internationalism and 'art for art's sake', and replaced them with concerns for the values of specific cultures and their differences” (Scott, 2001:135). The world is peopled by people from diverse cultural backgrounds and no unifying “metanarrative” is sufficient to address all situations. Henceforth, Western “metanarratives” are now illegitimate, obsolete and unfashionable. According to Huntcheon (2004:119), there is no “single anchoring centre” in postmodernism for there is no longer a “single truth” but rather “multiple truths”. Therefore in place of “metanarratives”, postmodernists crave for the adoption of ‘mini narratives’ that are temporal, relative and tentative in explaining peculiar situation in a particular society. This postmodern strategy is aimed at articulating divergent narratives which cannot command validity about specific situation. The world is made up of

heterogeneous society and any attempt to homogenise it is bound to fail. “Metanarratives” can only promote the universality of events which is incapable of explaining specific local situation (Lyotard, 1992; Docherty, 1998). Thus, Sim (2001: 12) submits that a “distrust of grand theory” is “the distinguishing feature of postmodern philosophy”.

Closely related to this is postmodern repudiation of the modernists' quest for absolute knowledge where none exists. To a postmodernist, no normative claim about the world is sufficient to explain the maladies in the society. The totality of knowledge is unattainable; it is reserved in whosoever has the technological wherewithal to make it functional. It has become fluid, mobile and can only be used for pragmatic purposes. The advent of postmodern culture makes an all-encompassing interpretation of social phenomenon untenable because “if we are certain of anything, it is that we are certain of nothing. If we have knowledge, it is that there can be none. Ours is a world awash with relativism” (Lawson, 1989: xi). According to Scott (2001:139), as modernism began to denounce “regionalism,” “nationalism” and “popular music” as “parochialism,” “chauvinism” and “entertainment” respectively, postmodernism responded by postulating its theory of “cultural relativism”. Invariably, knowledge in arts, philosophy, history and theology is relative, provisional and tentative as no two conditions are the same. The phrase “think globally, act locally” sums up the philosophy of postmodernism. Henceforth, challenges in different societies are better addressed separately taking specific context into cognisance. Smart (1992) puts it succinctly:

In its paradigmatic form the thesis on the postmodern condition of knowledge suggests that it is no longer possible to generate universal solutions or answers to problems and questions concerning contemporary forms of life from within, what might be termed, a conventional 'modern' problematic. In short, that the analyses, understandings, goals, and values which have been a central feature of Western European civilisation since the Enlightenment can no longer be assumed to be universally valid or relevant (183).

Therefore, even if global reality may influence a particular line of thinking, specific local explanation is most suitable. Anything short of this could undermine critical thinking and reflection. Thus the “antifoundational” outlook of postmodern worldview denounces the objectivity and definitive assertion associated with modernist philosophy in its entirety (Docherty, 1998; Fekete, 2001).

One of the important features of postmodernism is its penchant for disjointed, fragmented and irregular plot structure. In a postmodern text, narration is presented without a beginning, middle and ending. It has no centre, no unity, “no fixed point of coherence” and no chronology of events and time because “it disorders the linear coherence of narrative by warping the sense of significant time, *kairos*, or the dull passing of ordinary time, *chronos*” (Lewis, 2001:124). Unrelated events are merged from a multi-facet point of view, devoid of omniscient narrator, to present historical and social situations in a meaningless world of strife, chaos and disorder. A well developed plot with related and carefully arranged events is relegated to the background and, in its place, unrelated, unconnected and fragmented plot is preferred *a la* the stream-of-consciousness technique. Malpas (2005) agrees that these features are unarguably postmodernist:

For many people, the mere mention of the word ‘postmodernism’ brings immediately to mind ideas of fracturing fragmentation, indeterminacy and plurality, all of which are indeed key postmodern features ⁽⁵⁾.

This non-conformist posture elicits the futility of order and meaning in the society. The onus now falls on the reader to use inference drawn from a ‘stream’ to link these events together to make a whole.

Equally note-worthy is postmodern promotion and sustenance of freedom from stereotyped and totalising attitude of modernist assumption. Through repression and uncritical indoctrination, modernism rejects plurality of culture, views and beliefs and advocates for a consensus form of reasoning and thinking about the world. However, postmodernism prefers freedom and justice from any repressive and autocratic doctrine and calls for multiple views on the social world! No traditional or orthodox reasoning can suppress liberty to think and act according to the norms of the society where a person finds himself. According to Lyotard (1992:149), a postmodern writer can be likened to a philosopher whose works “are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories”. Henceforth with postmodernism, nothing is good or bad, nothing is reasonable or proper from a programmed perspective. In fact, no judgment is valid because such can promote repression and injustice. Smart (1992) denounces a repressive “universal validity claim”, preferring a liberal worldview:

The symptoms associated with the postmodern condition include a displacement of the universalising intellectual, the legislator-prophet, by the specific intellectual, the partisan

facilitator–interpreter; accumulating doubts about universal validity claims; opposition to centralised, bureaucratically organised forms of politics; and the emergence of new collectivities and forms of subjectivity which reveal the limits and limitations of existing critical discourses and radical political strategies (203).

Thus postmodernism becomes an ally in fighting the cause of the downtrodden who have been ‘gagged’ by Western narratives of oppression that see non-Western societies as ‘others’ (Haralambos et al, 1995; Butler, 2002). In this light, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) can be read as a postmodern resolve to liberate the Orient from totalising and repressive Western narrative which views the rest of the world with contempt.

As expected, the freedom and liberty associated with postmodernism make complexity to become its hallmark. With the use of unintelligible, obscure and poetic language, the difficulty and dislocation in contemporary society are revealed. The absence of cultural cohesion and stability make the society incomprehensible. With cosmic disharmony and the society on the edge of precipice, the world is hostile and perilous for human habitation! Danger, therefore, is imminent (Malcom Bradbury, 1991). Thus if writing would be creative and innovative, it should not force order on the society that is already disorderly.

Also with creative freedom, experimentation becomes the order of the day in a postmodern text. Here, a writer is able to distance himself from ideology, culture and traditional norms that impede his subjective analysis of the world. According to Docherty (1998:479), he is free to create without pre-conceived restriction and without fear of being tagged unconventional. Thus, literary texts produced in cyberspace move away from conventional writing method towards an experimentalist's attitude of deliberate ‘destruction’ of language materials to produce an unprecedented, unusual, inhibited original works (Oha, 2001).

In similar vein, the creative freedom encouraged by postmodernism leads to innovations and developments that were hitherto considered unconventional or unorthodox. In contrast to conventional texts that treat socially acceptable themes that are expected to promote cosmic harmony, logic, reason, truth, love and honesty, postmodernism celebrates vulgarity, pervasiveness, corruption and drug-addiction. Traditionally ‘forbidden’ topics that treat sex, promiscuity, prostitution, pornography, obscenity and homosexuality are freely discussed. Examples abound in Wale Okediran's *Dreams Die at Twilight* (2001) where the protagonist, Dr. Lamidi Bello, kills his patients at will and engage in necrophilia (sexual escapades with dead

bodies!). His promiscuous wife, Agnes Uche is an unrepentant nymphomaniac who sees no big deal in having unprotected sex with an unknown foreigner on a visit to Nigeria! Also in Fola Arthur - Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* (2000), lust beclouds Nengi's sense of reasoning to the extent that she allows Mr. Michael, a foreign journalist, to have carnal knowledge of her, consoling herself with the fact that he uses a condom! In Toni Kan Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* (2004), the coital act between unmarried couple is freely discussed without any modicum of decency. Marital infidelity becomes the order of the day. Worst case scenario is given preeminence in Chimamanda Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Sex and sexuality are espoused 'in the open'.

Postmodernism justifies the importance of the readers at the expense of the author, holding the former in high esteem. In a postmodern text, the author cannot lay claim to absolute authority on a text because it is 'immunized' against authorial control. No "right reading" or "correct reading" of a text is possible (Abram, 1981:2006). Citing Roland Barthes' influential essay, "The Death of the Author" (1968) and Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1988) as landmarks, Peter Barry (1995:66) calls postmodernism a declaration of radical textual "independence" which makes objective textual analysis futile and unable to explain historical and socio-political experiences with a simple coherent narration devoid of political bias, ethnic sentiment, class prejudice and religious affiliation. Commenting on "The Death of the Author", Selden and Widdowson (1993) argue that Barthes does not subscribe to the traditional idea of an autonomous author who has absolute authority over his text and can dictate the meaning to be read into it. As no meaning is binding on the readers, diverse meanings can be read into a text because meaning-formation depends on the readers who enjoy absolute liberty to interpret it as they deem fit. The hitherto 'uncritical' perspective that a text originates from the author who alone can articulate criteria for its analysis is now 'jaundiced'. Henceforth, a reader is free to interpret a text without any restriction:

What is new in Barthes is the idea that readers are free to open and close the text's signifying process without respect for the signified. They are free to take their pleasure of the text, to follow at will the defiles of the signifier as it slips and slides evading the grasp of the signified (132).

Also, Cahoon (1996) believes that in a postmodern text, meaning can be deduced in multiple ways because no reading can take a preeminent status over others:

Everything is constituted by relations to other things, hence nothing is simple, immediate, or totally present, and no analysis of anything can be complete or final. For example, a text can be read in an indefinite large number of ways, none of which provides the complete or true meaning (15).

Textual analysis depends on readers who are at liberty to read any meaning that suits their experiences into it. Thus, readers are free to deconstruct a text and still make subjective but valid conclusions. Butler (2002) believes the relegation of the author to the background in meaning formation has the tendency to produce multi-dimensional interpretations devoid of restrictions:

Most importantly, the reader/listener/spectator involved in the articulation or interpretation of this play of language should act independently of any supposed intentions of the author. Attention to an author would privilege quite the wrong thing, for seeing him or her as an origin, or a delimiting authority, for the meaning of the text was an obvious example of the (logocentric) privileging of a particular set of meanings. Why should these not originate in the reader just as much as the author? Authorial (or historical) intention should no more be trusted than realism (23).

The author's dominance is undermined on account of what Barry calls “textual harassment or oppositional reading”.

In Barry's “radical textual independence”, “textual harassment or oppositional reading”, the method employed by postmodernists is revealed. This method, known as deconstruction, makes the realisation of any ‘ultimate’ meaning in a text impossible and futile because that is exactly what it sets out to disclaim from inception. It is actually meant to undermine the philosophical assumptions which underpin a text. While promoting negation as a sacrosanct critical canon, deconstruction elicits the internal arbitrariness in a text and engages in its conscious demystification, rather than resolve its suppositions! There is no conventional boundary where the analysis of a text starts or ends for its traditional assumptions have been discredited (Schuurman, 1993; Spivak, 1999; Benjamin, 2004; Stocker, 2006). Since a text is written devoid of a unifying “boundary”, it lacks a “seeming reference, logicity, or possibility of proof”. Its internal contradictions have foreclosed its supposed ‘truth’ (Abrams, 1981:2006). The implication of this is that no group of people, no culture, no society can dominate others since no one has absolute knowledge. Therefore through rigorous and sustained analysis of a text, deconstruction reveals the hidden or alternative meanings and interpretations that, though neglected by the author, are

germane to its proper understanding. According to Krammer (1997:187), deconstruction “resists the closure of discourse” because it is uncomfortable with “power inequality, metaphysical domination” by critics who foreclose diverse interpretations of text. Butler (2002) submits that its suppositions hinge on the idea of relativism which characterized any attempt aimed at deriving an all-encompassing definition:

The central argument for deconstruction depends on relativism, by which I mean the view that truth itself is always relative to the differing standpoints and predisposing intellectual frameworks of the judging subject. It is difficult to say, then, that deconstructors are committed to anything as definite as a philosophical thesis. Indeed, to attempt to define deconstruction is to defy another of its main principles –which is to deny that final or true definitions are possible, because even the most plausible candidates will always invite a further defining move, or ‘play’, with language. For the deconstructor, the relationship of language to reality is not given, or even reliable, since all language systems are inherently unreliable cultural constructs (15-16).

These repressed meanings and interpretations are discovered with the use of binary opposition methods. Deconstruction is highly influenced by the philosophy of Fredrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Satre, Albert Camus and Sigmund Freud (Nigel Mapp, 1990).

Structuralism attempts “a grammar of literature”, believing that a text is self-sufficient and independent of other texts, context and society with the author “not more than a guest”. However, poststructuralism and its ally postmodernism oppose textual self-sufficiency claim of structuralism but agree that a writer is irrelevant in textual analysis (Selden & Widdowson, 1990; Barry, 1995; Raji, 1999). With intertextuality, the ultimate meaning in a text resides not in the text *per se*, but can be arrived at in relation to other texts. Thus with intertextuality, direct references between different texts come to the fore. This is achieved with the postmodern use of allusion, pastiche and irony in meaning - formation.

It is an indisputable fact that most of the ideals of postmodern thinking dominate the literary oeuvres of contemporary Nigerian novelists, both in content and form. However, we aver that these tendencies are largely inimical to the development of indigenous literary interpretation in particular and the socio-cultural emancipation of the continent in general. It is high time we jettison its discredited ‘promises’ and seek an alternative that takes the development of the nation as its topmost priority. Our next discussion will centre on a critique of these vain ‘promises’ to

further underscore their inadequacies in Africa's developmental pursuit.

2.4 A Critique of the Postmodern Episteme

The core assumptions of postmodern theory are obviously fraught with problems. Most significant among the reasons adduced for this is its symbiotic relationship with philosophy, a discipline that is innately skeptical in nature (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Sim, 2001). Since the basic assumption of philosophical enquiry is a consistent interrogation of every area of human endeavour, postmodern critique of any theoretical postulations in sight falls in place with philosophical scrutiny of nature and knowledge claim. Apparently drawing inspiration from Greek philosophical tradition which largely influenced nineteenth century 'antifoundational' thinkers like Nietzsche and Heidegger, postmodern theorists are committed to a wholesale condemnation of Western thought system which is aimed at articulating a unilateral, totalising and all-encompassing "metanarratives". Whereas modern thinkers believe that the quest for ultimate truth lies in "metanarratives" of human and societal development, postmodern philosophers adopt the attitude of denouncing any attempt to attain absolute truth. According to Sim (2001), this negative philosophical posture is the most defining feature of postmodern thinking:

One of the best ways of describing postmodernism as a philosophical movement would be as a form of scepticism - scepticism about authority, received wisdom, cultural and political norms, etc. - and that puts it into a long-running tradition in Western thought that stretches back to classical Greek philosophy. Scepticism is an essentially negative form of philosophy, which sets out to undermine other philosophical theories claiming to be in possession of ultimate truth, or of criteria for determining what counts as ultimate truth (3).

However, the inherent danger in this attitude is that postmodernism only 'succeeded', if only to an extent, in discrediting other theoretical assumptions. Ironically, it fails to advance its own "metanarratives" as alternative! If the epistemology in cultural worldview is embedded in "metanarratives" which postmodernism denounces, it therefore follows that even the fate of culture is not assured in a postmodern society. True to type, postmodernism is merely interested in "destabilizing other theories and their pretensions to truth than setting up a positive theory of its own; although of course to be sceptical of the theoretical claims of others is to have a definite programme of one's own, if only by default" (Sim, 2001:13). No wonder Landry (2000) concludes that postmodern thinkers have foreclosed philosophical theorising in any form. They are only

interested in formulating antagonistic “practices”:

Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard are typically seen as "end-of-philosophy" thinkers who "clearly oppose the continuation of theoretical philosophy, by any means" and whose writings are "explicitly proposed as [oppositional] practices and not theories" (33).

This ‘parasitic’ tendency is inimical to the attainment and sustenance of knowledge claim in the world.

We are not oblivious of the looming danger inherent in postmodern resolve to promote philosophical skepticism above all other considerations in the quest for truth. In its determination to impress its position that the attainment of a certain level of objectivity is impossible on us, philosophical skepticism is premised on the assumption that certain standards must be met to achieve a pragmatic certainty that enhances the ‘attainment’ of objective truth. Drawing inspiration from the philosophical postulations of Heraclitus, Xenophanes and Plato, skeptic philosophers assert that such standard needs to be proven beyond all reasonable doubt because “authentic knowledge must be unqualifiedly certain and undeniably true” (Rescher, 2004:37-38). Since this standard is unattainable, the process of achieving rational inquiry is flawed. If the society is in a constant state of flux, knowledge, particularly about nature, is an uphill task, hence impossible to achieve! This perspective, according to Rescher (2003), informs radical skeptics’ submission that no one can adduce any plausible explanation to knowledge claim. Reason, itself, is ‘unreasonable’:

For, skeptics in their more radical moments, at any rate insist that there is never a satisfactory justification for accepting anything whatsoever. By rejecting the very possibility of securing trustworthy information in factual matters, skepticism sets up a purportedly decisive obstacle to implementing these aims of reason (57).

The best we can have is a semblance of truth because its totality is a mirage. It is a relative concept whose universality is unachievable. It is thus incumbent on man to employ discretion in his quest for truth. Nevertheless, we aver that the ‘relative’ nature of objective truth stands logic on the head, contradicts reason and merely helps to sustain irrationality, contrary to what the skeptics would have us believe. Rescher (2003) encourages knowledge seekers to strive towards realising objective knowledge no matter the odds. Even if they fail eventually, their effort is worthwhile after all ‘there is no harm in trying’:

It is self-defeating to follow the radical skeptic into letting discretion be the whole of epistemic valor by systematically avoiding accepting anything whatsoever in the domain of empirical fact. To be sure, when we set out to acquire information we may well discover in the end that, try as we will, success in reaching our goal is beyond our means. But we shall certainly get nowhere at all if we do not even set out on the journey—which is exactly what the skeptic’s blanket proscription of acceptance amounts to (56).

In the opinion of the empiricists and rationalists, skeptics set “abstract” standard to deliberately obstruct the realisation of truth and knowledge. Its proposition is the ‘Achilles heel’ to the attainment of objective knowledge. This standard is both unrealistic and unattainable. It is only adduced “to show that no knowledge claims in a certain area (sense, memory, scientific theory, and the like) can possibly meet the conditions of this standard” (Rescher, 2003:58). While the empiricists rely on the use of five sensory organs in the quest for objective truth, the rationalists submit that though the five sensory organs are required, they may not guarantee absolute truth because even nature is not static. What is therefore needed to achieve absolute truth is for all the propositions that validate it to cohere. Unfortunately for the skeptics, this ‘infallible’ standard is erroneous and largely misguided. As skepticism stands in the way of rational investigation in the society, Rescher (2003) posits that man has no choice but to repudiate it in its entirety else his own ideals are questioned and jettisoned:

Skepticism defeats from the very start any prospect of realizing our cognitive purposes and aspirations. It runs counter to the teleological enterprise to which we humans stand committed in virtue of being the sort of intelligent creatures we are. It is ultimately this collision between skepticism and our need for the products of rational inquiry that makes the rejection of skepticism a rational imperative (59).

Therefore, as skepticism adopts the principle of “nothing ventured, nothing gained” directed at the bastion of “rational inquiry”, it invariably “loses sight of the very reason of being of our cognitive endeavors” (Rescher, 2003:56). Its treatise fails woefully to take into cognisance the indispensability of reason in human endeavour hence should be discarded.

Besides, if postmodernism accepts that human society progresses from pre-modern era when myth and primordial sentiments defined human behaviour, through the modern period when science and technology became the major catalyst for unprecedented improvement in material

living standard, to the postmodern world of simulation and hyperreality, does it not intend to advance an explanation for social and historical development it accuses modernism of? Is its acceptance of the transitory nature of the world not a knowledge claim on its own? Man is innately endowed with the mental capability to seek to know the truth. Instead of employing discretion to enhance his natural instinct to seek information, reason is preferred because its “commitment to the cognitive enterprise of inquiry is absolute and establishes an insatiable demand for extending and deepening the range of our information” (Rescher, 2003:57). Any social theorist who fails to adduce reason for sociological proposition has defeated the exact reason for theorising at all, and may have unwittingly sounded the death knell of his sociological enquiry! His conclusion would continue to suffer from credibility problem. This is exactly the fate that awaits philosophical skepticism and postmodern theorising.

In similar vein, postmodern articulation of relativism elicits an outward manifestation of flagrant disavowal of all knowledge claims by its advocates. So as to buttress its claim that absolute truth or knowledge is unattainable, postmodern thinking promotes the ideal of relativism unconvincingly. To a postmodernist, concepts like morality, truth or knowledge, fact or opinion, good or bad are relative concepts that can better be addressed only from an individualistic angle. They would be attained devoid of any stereotyped, totalising or restrictive conclusion. Even morality is informed by personal opinion which can change over time! Thus, Easthope (2001) believes that Lyotard has an unenviable task of convincing the world of the veracity of his own ‘truth’ claim at hand:

Since he affirms that no concept of knowledge founded in truth is still available, Lyotard faces a certain embarrassment in proving that his own version of reality (no grand narratives, only paralogy) is right. Jameson meets no such difficulty in his denunciation of postmodern culture since it is founded in the truth of historical materialism (or not). Norris and Eagleton also claim a reliable ground on which to criticize postmodernism (25).

Nevertheless, if relativist position is taken as postmodern ‘truth’, we agree that its argument is overtly relative and self-defeatist. In actual fact, a theory which discountenances truth claim should not have dissipated energy to advance its own ‘truth’. One is taken aback how the postmodernists intend to convince a discerning mind of the plausibility of their own relativity claim if all knowledge is relative. Wilson (2004) agrees with Rescher that postmodern relativity claim is nothing but a “self-defeating” contradiction:

Here, we exchange belief in truth for belief in the truth of relativism. Via relativism we know that there is no truth to be known. If postmodernism means to declare that it is true that there is no truth, then it becomes self-defeating. Truth, in this instance, is dispensed with in favour of self-contradiction ⁽⁶⁵⁶⁾.

Closely related to postmodern rejection of absolute knowledge claim is its disclaimer of “grand” narrative or “metanarratives”. Apparently taken a cue from Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, postmodernists call the bluff of “metanarratives” or the ‘great’ stories of human and social emancipation. They argue that “metanarratives” act in consonance with the establishment to undermine freedom in the contemporary society. These “metanarratives” are largely inimical to social development because they support uncritical submission to the assumption that the society can be ordered or controlled. This ‘unalloyed’ obedience justifies the supremacy of the privileged class but hinders the development of the underprivileged majority or group who are deprived of the ‘right’ to articulate their own narrative. In the contemporary society, the control of knowledge lies in whosoever can make it functional because it has been ‘commodified’ to achieve an economic end. To this end, what the contemporary society requires is the renunciation of repressive “metanarratives” and the adoption of “mininarratives”, a *petit recite* which, though relative and situational, command validity in their localities. Only this can guarantee ‘freedom’ and ‘equity’ in the society! (Smart, 1992; Bertens, 1995; Lyotard, 1996; Landry, 2000; Sim, 2001; Easthope, 2001; Butler, 2002; Huntcheon, 2004; Wilson, 2004; Malpas, 2005). Nevertheless, as persuasive as Lyotard’s hypothesis seems, we argue that it has obviously failed to assuage all nerves! It is thus fraught with problems. Grand narratives are characterised with allegiance all over the world. Notwithstanding postmodern repudiation, unalloyed allegiance to some ‘grand’ narratives is still evident and very popular, especially among the oppressed nations of the world. For instance, many people are still eager and willing to obey *fatwa* to achieve ‘legitimate’ political and religious goals! Citing Islamic fundamentalism in Middle East and Asia as instances, Sim (2001:14) concludes that the violence and crisis that erupted in form of anti-globalisation movement and religious fundamentalism “in the closing decades of the twentieth century” are contemporary manifestations of unalloyed commitment to some ‘grand’ narratives. Therefore, the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie and other instances of commitment to ‘grand’ narratives account for crisis in some troubled spots in the world like that in Northern Ireland, Serbia and the Middle East. Besides the *fatwa*, Lewis

(2001:121) identifies instances of sustained commitment to “metanarratives” to include the killing of John F. Kennedy and the erection and demolition of the Berlin Wall among others. Therefore, the killing, maiming and wanton destruction of properties across the globe are some of the instances of allegiance to one grand narrative or the other *a la* September 11, 2001. Butler (2002:14-15) asserts that only “a generation brought up in Western democracies” and “liberated to some degree from theology by existentialism” can deny the existence of ‘grand’ narratives.

It is evident that grand narratives legitimise cultural norms and practices in several societies across the globe. For instance, African history is replete with the “metanarratives” of historic nationalist struggle to attain self-rule status from former colonial lords. The immediate post World War 11 period witnessed determination by former colonies to attain self-rule. Equally important is the patriotic efforts of African leaders to confront anti-people, neo-colonial tendencies at independence, like the agitation to reclaim lost lands in Zimbabwe. So germane to the articulation of specific “value judgement” are these narratives that Sim (2001) warns of the peril in disclaiming them:

One of the problems we are left with when we dispense with grand narratives, or central authorities of any kind, is how to construct value judgements that others will accept as just and reasonable (9).

Although the ‘oppositional reading’ technique employed in Derrida’s deconstruction is aimed at outright demystification of the ‘grand’ narrative of the Enlightenment, uncritical disavowal of “metanarratives” would remain unpopular in non-Western societies.

Besides, even if Lyotard ‘convincingly’ argues that ‘grand’ narratives are illegitimate, obsolete or discredited hence should be jettisoned in the contemporary world, a discerning mind cannot but be awestruck when he begins to adduce another ‘grand’ narrative to buttress his argument on the “incredulity towards grand narrative”! In his polemics to ‘expose’ the dispensability of “metanarratives”, Lyotard unwittingly makes “value judgement” which becomes his own “metanarratives”! He surreptitiously produces another ‘grand’ narrative! The question now begging for answer is: how can he employ “metanarratives” to justify the inadequacy of “metanarratives” to sustain development in a postmodern society? Therefore rather than accept its failure to convince its critics on the sense in “antifoundational” theoretical posture and then humbly understand its limitations as a cultural worldview, Sim (2001) agrees that postmodern philosophy continues to advance its ‘jaundice’ perspective which further exposes its inherent

weakness:

What Lyotard is espousing here is antifoundationalism: a rejection of the idea that there are foundations to our system of thought, or belief, that lie beyond question, and that are necessary to the business of making value judgements. Postmodernist philosophy has proved to be resolutely antifoundational in outlook, and unwilling to accept that this renders it dysfunctional in any way as philosophy (9-10).

This posture renders its argument 'purile' and antithetical towards achieving objective truth. In the alternative, if Lyotard's unconvincing treatise in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* is anything to go by, we may conclude that postmodern thinkers are aware of the limitations of their project and do not actually seek any truth after all. In the opinion of Grant (2001), even the core postmodernists know that their "incredulity towards grand narratives" forecloses their own 'grand' narrative as well:

Moreover, Lyotard, whose book *The Postmodern Condition* appeared in 1979 (Habermas's essay was first delivered in 1981), in relating a grand narrative about the end of grand narratives exposes a central contradiction in his account of postmodernism: if there is no longer any credulity in grand narratives, then what grounds could there be for accepting Lyotard's own account? If we do accept this account therefore, then paradoxically, it must be wrong about the status of grand narratives. Moreover, in offering it, Lyotard must himself believe that it must have some credibility, so that even Lyotard himself believes his account to be false (33).

Baudrillard is another advocate of postmodernism whose critical stance, particularly on "the loss of the real", exposes the inherent weakness of postmodern thinking. In his sustained critique of reality in the era of media technology, Baudrillard's influential essay "Simulacra and Simulations" (1992) presents a controversial and 'sensational' polemic to advance his concept of the hyperreal. According to Baudrillard, the image of reality has completely distorted reality. What now exists is a copy of reality which bears no resemblance to its original. In the ensuing hyperreal world, advertisements and commercials on television controlled by the Western media establishments are so perverse that reality is eventually undermined to satisfy commercial end (Baudrillard, 1992; Barry, 1995; Haralambos et al, 1995; Gibbins & Reimer, 1999; Easthope, 2001; Sheehan, 2004). With communication technology, in the opinion of Malpas (2005:94), "the models that can be produced to understand the world have become more real, more sophisticated

and more accurate than reality itself". O'Day (2001) argues that communication revolution occasioned by advancement in television broadcasting foregrounds this development as various television stations compete for economic gains:

Broadcast television has been supplemented and challenged by the arrival of satellite, cable and (more recently) digital and interactive TV. The diffusion of these technologies has been encouraged by 'deregulation', which has seen market forces become increasingly prevalent. In the United States, for instance, the network TV system dominated by the giants ABC, CBS and NBC has been transformed by large numbers of more specialized and local channels. In Europe, the traditional public service broadcasting systems have, to an extent, been undermined by competition from commercial subscription satellite and cable channels (115).

However, even if it is doubtless that television programmes can be simulated to either embellish or distort the real events or occasions, caution should be taken before jumping to the conclusion that all what we see on television are unreal. Some events are too real to be simulated to achieve a postmodern end. A president's budget proposal to the parliament, a doctor's health tips, and a football match between two teams on the television are real, verifiable situations that no postmodernist can simulate. When the television is employed by a law enforcement agent to reel out civil or criminal offences as well as the statutory punishment for offenders, any postmodern thinker in sight is advised to either obey the law or be ready to face the consequence of disobedience. In this vein, O'Day (2001) agrees that "not all television is postmodern and postmodern perspectives provide only one set of approaches, albeit compelling ones, to TV":

However, as I mentioned at the outset, we shouldn't assume that all TV is postmodern. Much programming and viewing is reassuringly traditional. I for one regularly sit and watch the conventional realist narratives of *Coronation Street* and *East Enders* pretty much from beginning to end, with little or no zapping or hopping (though I do sometime shifting now and again) (120).

In actual fact, some television programmes are 'too' real to be simulated by any postmodernist.

Out of all Baudrillard's 'provocative' submissions on simulation, his "flippant attitude towards the Gulf War" exposes him more to barrage of criticisms of which Christopher Norris' 'vituperation' is the most devastating (Sim, 2001:13). More controversially, Baudrillard throws caution to the wind in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place* (1995). He posits that even the Gulf War is only a media war which did not actually take place! In his 'wisdom', the real events of the war

have been simulated so much by their signs and copies to satisfy the economic yearnings of the Western media organizations! (Selden & Widdowson, 1993; Baudrillard, 1995; Barry, 1995; Haralambos et al, 1995; O'Day, 2001; Grant, 2001; Watson, 2001). However in *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War* (1992), Norris chides Baudrillard for his overt insensitivity and flippant disposition towards the carnage and wanton destruction of properties that characterised the Gulf War. He argues that no attempt to 'simulate' the real events of the war can becloud the fact that the war actually occurred and people lost their lives. While condemning Baudrillard's sophistry, he wonders how on earth anyone can descend from reason to irrationality on a full scale all in the name of espousing postmodern thinking. He queries where Baudrillard derives his evidences to buttress his claims. Even if he has some evidences to support his assertion, are these evidences satisfactory enough to convince a critical observer of contemporary reality that the world is 'unreal'? Easthope (2001) articulates Norris renunciation of Baudrillard's philosophy:

Norris chooses to take on Baudrillard because he has pushed his kind of writing as far as it will go, deliberately manipulating rhetoric as a weapon against opponents of the postmodern creed. Norris first of all attacks Baudrillard for retreating from rationality - for extrapolating 'far-reaching conclusions from limited evidence' (23-24).

How else can we describe a critic who thrives in criticising everything, both real and imaginary, but fails to affirm anything on his own? Therefore, Norris is determined to "see off Baudrillard and postmodernism" on account of their unwillingness to advance "an effective opposition between knowledge and ideology" which would elicit political position that can salvage the world from war, chaos, diseases and pestilence. No wonder in his comparison of both Baudrillard and Lyotard, he refers to the former as "altogether less serious and committed thinker than Lyotard" who seems to have derived satisfaction from "being provocative and playful". Sim (2001) situates Norris' refutation of Baudrillard's hypothesis and Habermas' disclaimer of Lyotard's theory in the context of postmodern thinkers who are unwilling to postulate to salvage the society from chaos:

For Norris, Baudrillard's denial of that war's reality is symbolic of postmodernism's emptiness as a cultural theory, and he cannot accept Baudrillard's apparent insensitivity to political turmoil and human suffering. Jurgen Habermas, too, finds postmodernism ideologically suspect, and has taken issue with Lyotard's philosophy on this ground (13).

Also, postmodern thinking encourages pessimism in the society. If no knowledge claim is credible, then pessimism would engulf the world on an unprecedented scale. In no time, knowledge seekers need not bother to direct their attention towards seeking for the truth which, in any way, is a farce in the postmodern world. Even research effort can be jettisoned since no 'truth' can come out of it! Henceforth, man can just wake, eat, sleep and expect to die provided Baudrillard has not simulated death also! Man becomes so powerless that he cannot alter the social process. In the Nietzschean nihilist tradition, the society is bedeviled with evil and peril from which he cannot liberate himself. His fate is already predetermined by a higher power beyond his control. Therefore in such society, marxism goofed to have anticipated a 'paradise' where the proletariat would dictate. According to Spencer (2001), the optimism that characterised modern era disappeared, and in its place, pessimism and hopelessness engulfed the twentieth century postmodern era. While modern thinkers see the past as alterable, postmodern thinkers view it with disdain and hopelessness:

But in the latter part of the twentieth century something has changed in the very nature of tradition and in the way that we relate to the past. Every aspect of the past is made accessible, available. But it is made available: mediated, packaged, presented and represented. Postmodernism could be described as that variant of modernism which has given up hope of freeing itself from the ravages of modernity or of mastering the forces unleashed by modernity (158).

This pessimism envelops the society and is given impetus by the capitalist oppression and inhumanity in a postmodern world.

Expectedly, pessimism influences conservative writers and critics, particularly those of Western extraction. A case worthy of note is the reactionary submission of American neo-conservative critic Francis Fukuyama. Fukuyama has argued unconvincingly in his *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) that world history has peaked with the realisation of liberal democracy and its attendant freedom and 'justice' in America! Although resistances, struggles and strives are inevitable in the society, Fukuyama believes no nation can undermine America's capitalist and democratic aspirations. Her hegemony would continue unabated in this globalised world! He anchors his argument on the belief that though America is bedeviled with internal and external aggressions, none is capable of threatening her corporate existence to the point of causing her disintegration. Since history is fast approaching its end, any innovation now can only assist to

reinforce America's capitalism and strengthen her liberal democratic norms! America's spreading of 'gospel' of "free-market liberal-democratic values" to the Middle East and the developing world is Fukuyama's reference point. In fact, he advises the entire world to fully imbibe liberal policies because it is sufficient to address some of its challenges. Failure to do this can cause eventual disintegration of some nations *a la* former Soviet Union or retrogression towards theocracy, military rule, and dictatorship! However, the socio-political reality of the world, especially in non-Western nations, is clearly at variance with Fukuyama's 'evangelistic' tone. In many African nations for example, the adoption of America's version of liberal democracy has not translated into good governance and infrastructural development! Instead, the continent is enmeshed in chaos and instability caused by leaders whose actions and inactions are aimed at perpetuating themselves and their cronies in office, albeit with the active connivance of their local and foreign collaborators. Even when people are allowed to vote at election, do the votes count? Are the 'elected' leaders accountable to them? Therefore, bearing Osama bin-Laden's al-Qaeda's activities in mind, we argue that the imperialistic and exploitative nature of globalisation exposes it to barrage of criticism, repudiation and outright rebuff particularly from the Middle East and other developing nations.

In the same vein, it can be said that Fukuyama's position runs logic on the head when viewed against the backdrop of empirical evidences of injustice and oppression even in the West. Evidence abounds that inequality and segregation are not peculiar to Africa and the Middle East but dominate the class-conscious Europe and America. In this vein, Malpas (2005) concludes that Fukuyama's submission cannot but fail empirical test:

Fukuyama's argument might seem immediately falsifiable on the basis of empirical evidence such as the growing inequality between rich and poor, the fact that in Britain and America fewer and fewer people bother to exercise their democratic rights, the illiberality of our treatment of refugees trying to enter the West, or even the occurrence of particular events such as the terrorist attack on the USA on 11 September 2001 (92).

Thus, Fukuyama's effort with his "resoundingly postmodern message that liberal democracy and consumer capitalism would soon have finally taken over the whole world thus completing human history and bidding a last goodbye to the claims of any socialist or radical critique of the capitalist system" fails to take other nations cultural and socio-political peculiarities into cognizance. It also uncritically assumes that with free-market capitalism, political emancipation is inevitable. In this

light, Easthope (2001) sees Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994) as a book that exposes the weaknesses in Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man*:

Derrida has little trouble (in *Specters of Marx* (1994)), first, in evidencing massive gaps and omissions in Fukuyama's version of the 'good news' - not all states are moving towards liberal democracy with the suave inevitability Fukuyama supposes, the free market does not necessarily produce political freedom (oh yes, and 'two world wars, the horror of totalitarianism'). Second, Derrida asserts that Fukuyama's evangelistic tone invokes a narrowly 'Christian eschatology', that he constantly slides between actuality and an ideal, and that he assumes some universal definition of human nature ('man as man') (27).

Therefore, Fukuyama and his co-travelers should not stir the hornet's nest. They should be humble enough to realise and come to terms with their little knowledge, or no knowledge at all, of other people's socio-cultural idiosyncrasies.

Also, if pessimism is now the order of the day, we may have done away with the moral justification to query the oppression and inhumanity that pervade the contemporary capitalist world. Seeking an alternative is obviously the only way out. Doing otherwise is tantamount to surrendering man's natural inclination to ameliorate any tendency that is at variance with his pursuit of freedom. The danger inherent in allowing postmodern pessimism to engulf the world is that consequently, the quest for order, which informs modernist thinking, may no longer be perceived with certainty. Now that cosmic harmony has taken flight, man can no longer strive to capture nature and achieve personal and social development. He now takes solace in undermining the system. Without offering an alternative, he begins to query the veracity of scientific postulations. Postmodern thinkers are all out to create chaos and disorder in the society. This chaotic attribute of postmodernism is given credence by Lewis (2001:124) who posits that postmodern thinking is double edge swords which "disrupt the past, but corrupts the present too".

In its quest for a society devoid of any restriction or impediment to textual analysis, postmodern thinking undermines the importance accorded an author in the interpretation of his work. The implication of this is that authorial relevance is subverted for the realisation of diverse meanings. Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" frees the readers from the shackles of orthodoxy allegedly inflicted on them by modern thinkers to promote the indispensability of the author in textual analysis. Thus, postmodern philosophy liberates the readers from any traditional

orthodoxy! However, we observe that the so-called liberation of the readers is nothing but a deliberate smokescreen to perpetuate irrationality, indeterminacy and cast aspersion on hermeneutic theorising. If no meaning is considered appropriate, readers are now free to adduce irrational positions under the guise of postmodern philosophising to denounce even the author's position. If we are to stress the social relevance of literature against the backdrop of the writer picking his raw materials for literary works from the society, it then makes sense to assert that the author's significance is *sine qua non* in meaning-formation.

In a similar vein, we cannot but observe the danger embedded in postmodern so-called preference for the readers at the expense of the author. As the readers are no longer subjected to authorial control in meaning-formation, they are now at liberty to interpret a text as they deem fit. Henceforth, they are granted the 'license' to interpret a text anyhow as 'anything goes' in a postmodern world. They are free to go it all alone without been restricted by any totalising standard. This concept of individuality is the hallmark of capitalist economic system which encourages private ownership of means of productions and services. It eventually 'institutionalises' inequality and deprivation in the society. Unfortunately, no one is capable of effecting any meaningful change while working alone hence Marx advocates for a concerted effort from the proletariat to achieve positive change. According to Watson (2001), this overt support for capitalism further exposes postmodernism to barrage of hostile criticism:

Critics of the postmodern perspective have pointed out that it can lead to an unprincipled emphasis upon personal and individual gratification at the expense of our responsibilities to others. For some writers this represents the capitalist market economy taken to its logical conclusion (63).

Ironically, though postmodernism seemingly justifies the importance of the readers at the expense of the author, a discerning mind cannot fail to notice its disdain for the readers as well! A theory that promotes different varieties of meaning makes any "right reading" unattainable. Meaning has become 'relativised' to the consternation of hermeneutics. Therefore, if meaning is now meaningless because no knowledge is absolute and valid in all situations, even the readers' indispensability in meaning-formation is no longer credible! The propagation of diverse meanings does not encourage order in the society. In postmodern parlance, we can as well pronounce the readers 'dead and buried' also in the final analysis. Thus, "The Death of the Author" does not guarantee the existence of the reader.

Also, instead of advocating for a realist philosophical ideal, postmodern thinking encourages experimentation on a full scale. This is not inadvertent but consequent on the need to break barriers and 'stronghold' militating against artistic liberation. With experimentation in a postmodern society, gone are the days when writers and critics are restricted to stereotyped themes and styles of writing. Henceforth, they are at liberty to advance any theme under any style! A postmodern deconstructive activity ensures that established themes and restrictive styles are jettisoned while unconventional themes and styles are pronounced. According to Lyotard (1992:150), postmodern thinkers are not committed to the advancement of realist ideal but rather the articulation of its 'copy' because "it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented". A case at hand is Baudrillard's 'irrational' conclusion that the Gulf War is only a media event and not a war in the real sense of it! Expectedly, his position provoked hostile criticism from critics who are 'enraged' how anyone can experiment over such a sensitive matter. The danger associated with experimentation is that it gives deconstructionists the temerity to advance irrational philosophical positions to the consternation of the realists. According to Watson (2001), the desire to merely experiment may have informed Baudrillard blunt refusal to explain what postmodernism meant when *Independent on Sunday* offered him the opportunity of doing so. He is contented with creating a puzzle, not to seek an explanation to it. Thus, we aver that Baudrillard's submission merely elicits his desire to experiment so as to drive home his notion of the hyperreal. Therefore, Spencer (2001) posits that instead of criticising modernism, postmodernism is the 'evil' that should be exposed and condemned in its entirety:

Some postmodernists (Baudrillard is the obvious example) write in a style that is ostentatiously 'postmodern' when they write about postmodernism. The close fit between the tools of criticism and the circumstances criticized opens postmodernists to the accusation- which has been oft-repeated that their thinking is itself symptomatic of the ills that need to be diagnosed (159).

Expectedly, the major opposition to postmodern aesthetics comes from the marxists, because majority of postmodernists are "ex-Marxists and socialists" (Gibbins and Reimer, 1999:16). More importantly, marxist narrative tends to lose more ground than any other narratives if postmodern disdain for "metanarratives" is allowed to dictate contemporary thinking. In its quest for an egalitarian society, marxism lays the blame of social inequality and oppression at the

doorstep of capitalism in a class-structured society, with the conviction that a utopian society would emerge where the proletariat would dictate (John Frow, 1990; Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, 1996). Ironically, with technological advancement and globalisation in the contemporary post-industrial, postmodern world, capitalism becomes the order of the day. This economic order does not augur well for any alteration of inequality in the society hence it was roundly condemned by the marxists. They argue that postmodernism is primarily out to sustain the skeptic, nihilist philosophy promoted by Nietzsche and Heidegger. Rather than contributing to the utopia-seeking posture embedded in marxist philosophy, postmodernism denounces utopia as unrealisable. In fact, the quest for utopia is the defining moment, the point of divergence between the marxist and postmodern thinkers, “the cardinal sin of that modernism which postmodernism seeks to go beyond” (Spencer, 2001:164). It is only when it dawns on marxist thinkers that utopia is a mirage, “having tried to realize an unrealizable dream, or having tried to lay hands on utopia and to engineer it in real societies” that they begin to inflict the world with oppression. Therefore, Smart (1992) submits that the point of divergence between postmodernism and marxism is the former’s insistence on repudiating the latter’s claim to an all-encompassing ‘magic wand’ to interpreting socio-cultural phenomenon:

Postmodernism challenges Marxism on a number of counts. It questions its generalizing aspirations, its totalizing claims, and its emancipatory scenario(s). It problematizes its conception of both history and politics, and raises doubts about the pivotal move within Marxist discourse from denotative, or knowledge, statements—explanations and interpretations of the world—to prescriptive or political statements—proposals for changing the world (198).

In fact, Lyotard’s rebuttal of marxism to emerge as the most prominent of postmodern theorists is largely due to his disenchantment with the contradiction of marxism which was manifested when the French Communist Party gave overt support to the French government after the suppression of students and workers’ agitation during the May 1968 general strike (Grant, 2001). The tendency to undermine radical political reform exposes it to hostile criticism from some firebrand leftists. As postmodernism denounces the need for mass political action, the marxists conclude that it invariably justifies the inculcation of reactionary perspective into the mainstream of the body polity in support of the status quo. Although postmodernism may be a useful guide in the quest for a pragmatic realism, “a return to common sense” instead of “wilder utopia visions indulged in by

modernism” (Spencer, 2001:162), its impatience to jettison utopia makes it susceptible to accusation of acquiescence with the capitalist status quo. No wonder Cahoon (1996:19) quotes Jurgen Habermas as referring to postmodern critics as “young conservatives”. Similarly, Smart (1992:198) quotes D’Amico as chiding postmodernism for being a “decadent, self-indulgent, irresponsible” and “a subterfuge of late capitalist imperialism”. Also, Selden and Widdowson (1993:181) quote Terry Eagleton as discarding it for being “mischievously radical” but “utterly conservative”, while Jameson (1991) notices a synergy between postmodern culture and the implantation and sustenance of capitalist economic order. In the same vein, Tony Bilton et al (2002:533-534) identify Habermas, Giddens and Beck as marxist critics who advocate for a return to the Enlightenment period. They are of the view that postmodernism expands, promotes, sustains and justifies capitalism and its attendant injustice and alienation in contemporary society.

Besides the disclaimer by the marxists, feminist critics view the advocates of postmodern ideals with contempt and suspicion. Feminism is uncomfortable with anti-realist, anti-foundationalist, and anti-representationalist postures, features that are essentially the hallmark of postmodern thinking. Feminists wonder how postmodernism can be of relevance to their quest for freedom and equity if it repudiates these core tenets of the Enlightenment. They do not see how its jettisoning of ‘universalist assumptions’ can conveniently articulate the position of any oppressed group in the scheme of things in the social ladder, like feminism would have us do on the issue of gender inequality. They query why any theory can stand in the way of feminist resolve to alter the society devoid of gender lining. If feminist philosophy is a ‘metanarrative’ which postmodernism disavows, the best the feminists can do is to stay on its side to entrench their own “metanarrative”. Only this attitude can help the sustenance of the epistemological foundation of their philosophy. Doing otherwise is tantamount to accepting the demise of feminist ideology. In fact, Grant (2001:42) alludes to Sabina Lovibond’s claim that no one is fundamentally qualified to espouse feminist ideology unless he or she believes in gender-friendly “social reconstruction” in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Also while articulating feminist rejection of postmodern philosophy, Bertens (1995) identifies Sabina Lovibond, Nancy Hartsock, Susan Bordo, and Sandra Harding as key feminist critics who disavow the legacy of postmodernism for being anti-feminism. He quotes Lovibond (1990) as rejecting postmodern repudiation of Enlightenment ideals of rationality and “emancipatory metanarratives” when women have not been liberated from repression and injustice:

What, then, are we to make of suggestions that the (Enlightenment) project has run out of steam and that the moment has passed for remaking society on rational, egalitarian lines? It would be only natural for anyone laced at the sharp end of one or more of the existing power structures (gender, race, capitalist class...) to feel a pang of disappointment at this news. But wouldn't it also be in order to feel suspicion? How can anyone ask me to say goodbye to 'emancipatory metanarratives' when my own emancipation is still such a patchy, hit-and-miss affair? (202).

Therefore if feminist criticism is to remain “a social and political force, aimed at changing existing power relations between women and men” and thus become “an offshoot of ‘emancipatory metanarratives’ of Enlightenment modernism” (Thornham, 2001:41-42), its core assumption cannot but be at variance with postmodern thinking in its entirety. In fact, feminist ideology is a “metanarrative” in its own right. The best its ideologues can do is to help entrench their own ‘grand’ narrative to sustain its epistemological assumption. The paucity of feminist criticism of postmodern philosophy may be a ploy to keep at bay feminist critical voices.

Colonial experience has contributed significantly to shaping the thematic preoccupation of African literature in line with Western sentiment, thus, Irele (1982:11) asserts that colonialism “offers an image of our experience as one not only of cultural and spiritual disorientation but of moral decline”. In fact, Nkosi (1981:1) submits that anti-colonial disposition largely informs the insurgency and sustainability of “modern African writing”. This situation is given credence in African writings, and it consistently reflects the realities of colonial and neo-colonial African societies. The need to checkmate colonial ‘incursion’ in Africa informs the recourse to literature imbued with social prejudice. From the era of cultural nationalism, through the period of critical realism, to the time of socialist realism, the social prejudice of African writers is undeniable (Onoge, 1985; Uwasomba, 2000; Bamidele, 2000). However with the dawn of independence in many African colonies, postmodern philosophy still ensued to become a valuable tool in the decolonisation process (Afolayan, 2007)! Here, a discerning African mind begins to wonder where lays the *locus standi* of the West to advance a theory of cultural interpretation for non-Western society as such may amount to re-colonialism in disguise. Having noticed its political implication, Soyinka (1976) denounces any attempt to foist Western worldview on African culture:

When ideological relations begin to deny, both theoretically and in action, the reality of a cultural entity which we define as the African world while asserting their relevance even to the extent of inviting the African world to sublimate its existence in theirs, we must begin to look seriously into their political motivation ^(xi).

Here, Soyinka's position is anchored on the need to checkmate West-induced disdain for non-Western theoretical standpoint.

Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1956:75) have articulated the indispensability of the author in arriving at a credible meaning in textual interpretation, a development which makes an investigation of the author's personality "one of the oldest and best-established methods of literary study". Similarly, Graham Allen's treatise on intertextuality is in congruent with that of many African writers and critics. Allen (2000:4) has argued that the real meaning of a text can be deduced "from systems, codes and traditions established by previous work of literature". His submission is anchored on the premise that "the systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general" are germane to meaning-formation. Surprisingly, postmodernism does not see the interrelationship between literature and society, for it believes the former should be clearly separated from its context as the author is irrelevant in the scheme of things. This position is inconceivable to an average African writer hence it apparently hinders the popularity and acceptability of postmodernism on the continent. For instance, while denouncing "the theory of the death of the author", for literary concepts such as "intertextuality", "dialogism", "counter-discourse" and "cultural repository", Kolawole (2005:7) observes that postcolonial literary discourse is "preoccupied with de-centering culture, deconstruction and decoding of universalizing canons, resisting cultural imperialism, orientalism, and ghettoisation". Similarly, Zine Magubane (2005) wonders how postmodern repudiation and skepticism towards grand narratives can be meaningful to African scholars in their quest for identity, especially when the atrocities perpetrated with colonialism and neo-colonialism have neither been erased from their consciousness nor atoned for:

On the other hand, some Africanist scholars have rightly expressed skepticism about the fact that just as African peoples were making strides towards marking their own forms subjecthood, the West has declared the death of all subjects. Still others have expressed alarm about the challenges to effective political action posed by skepticism toward grand narratives. And still others have expressed

their dismay at the tendency of postmodern and postcolonial scholarship to detextualise, and thus perhaps trivialize, imperialist plunder and exploitation (viii).

To this end, Paul Zeleza (2005:26) posits that postmodernism does not tally with African historical realities, hence it should be restricted to Western society where it rightly belongs, and where its ideals are championed. In the same vein, Tejumola Olaniyan (2005:39) asserts that postmodernism has little or nothing to say to non-Western societies “upon whose backs that modernity was built and for whom it still remains a mirage today”. He agrees that since postmodernism is unAfrican, it fails to take into cognisance the socio-historical realities of Africa, hence should be discountenanced. He claims that after Europe and America have boxed themselves into a tight corner with “the contradictions of underdeveloped modernity”, they began to adopt postmodernism which promotes neo-colonial ideals as articulated by Western institutions and multinational corporations. He chides postmodern critics for justifying colonialism and neo-colonialism in different guise. However, he cautions that its positive inclinations, as evident in its readiness to undermine Western grand narratives that justify oppression and imperialism, should be imbibed and inculcated into Africa’s nationalistic struggle. Unfortunately, postmodernism does not support Africa’s liberation struggle either:

If postmodernism is hastening the heart attack of the Western Subject, we can only expect that the African will act on the side of postmodernism by blocking all calls to the emergency ambulance. But postmodernism’s deconstruction of the subject is both specific and general: it deconstructs not just the imperial European Subject but all claims to a subjecthood that would authorize or be the rallying point of knowledge or collective action or politics. This is where African critics interested in constructing a resistant subject or identity against unending Western imperialism part with postmodernism (40-41).

Similarly, Dennis Ekpo (1995:127) notices a synergy between contemporary African thinking and European worldview, a development he also attributes to colonial experience. He, nevertheless, submits that postmodernism is far from being “the salt of the earth, the measure and master of all things”, and enjoins African scholars to treat “the celebrated postmodern condition a little sarcastically as nothing but the hypocritical self-flattering cry of the bored and spoilt children of hyper-capitalism”. In the same vein, Irele (1999:7-8) calls postmodernism “the most insidious threat to the contemporary African mind” because it fails woefully to advance “a rigorous

scientific understanding of our lived universe”. Although its radical repudiation of the Enlightenment hegemonic thinking system tallies with African scholars’ quest for a theory that places African society at the centre-point of its critical discourse, hence it “is one that our historical experience predisposes us to understand and to rally to”, he posits that its ‘antirationalism’ exposes its contempt for African society. Also, Afolayan (2007:114) concludes that instead of incorporating postmodern thinking uncritically into African critical discourse, “postmodernism and all its cognates should excite suspicion in the African scholars,” while in the opinion of Osha (2005:vii), it is intended to expose “the iniquities of western society”. Similarly, Bruce Janz’s (1995) queries the rationale behind African scholars’ adoption of postmodernism when the modernism it claims to have superseded is never theirs. To this end, Fashina (2008:73) cautions African critics to be wary of West-induced interpretations of African texts as if such texts are appendages of “Western universal discourses”. His treatise is premised on the assumption that any attempt aimed at generating a credible theory of literary interpretation in Africa should be geared towards generating an alternative meaning which can serve continental purposes, in contrast to what Western critics would have us believe. This is because only this resolve can assist the continent’s developmental aspirations. Thus, postmodernism may not find a safe haven in African literary discourse owing to its ‘unfashionable’ tactics of not taking into cognisance Africa’s developmental yearnings on one hand, and failing to articulate Africa’s intellectual and practical needs on the other. This explains why contemporary African critics have no place for postmodern assumptions in their critical consciousness (Irele, 1982; 1999; Achebe, 1988; Ekpo, 1995; Isamah, 2002; Kolawole, 2005; Osha, 2005; Zeleza, 2005; Magubane, 2005; Olaniyan, 2005; Afolayan, 2007).

With the demise of colonialism in many African states from the 1950s, there began a determined attempt to carve an African-specific identity devoid of colonial dictate. From these independent states, African scholars started to lend their critical voices to development around them. In no time, their writings cannot but be counter- discursive. In fact Ketu Katrak (1995:255) outrightly seeks for a postcolonial theory which would “challenge the hegemony of Western canon”. Therefore, apparently bemused at the concerted effort by these scholars to articulate an African-specific critical standard to correct negative impression on African studies, Western critics, expectedly, react with a theory aimed at undermining their resolve to uphold the dignity of Africa. Postmodernism becomes their stock-in-trade strategically designed to counter

non-Western narratives embedded in ‘subversive’ disciplines like literature, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history and cultural studies. Although the new thinking repudiates Western ideal of development as espoused in the Enlightenment philosophy, and unequivocally challenges the alleged “supremacy of Western thinking” (Watson, 2001:58), it fails to contribute positively to Africa’s developmental pursuit. As Afolayan (2007:113) wonders if postmodern philosophy “can meaningfully explain existence for these independent postcolonial countries”, Isamah (2002:135) submits that non-Western nations are too development-conscious to have fallen prey to postmodern thinking, a theory that possesses “very limited applicability to the developing parts of the world”. It therefore becomes clear that African critics have no choice other than to jettison Western ideal of development and postulate an African alternative. If an ‘alien’ theorist can assert that “there is nothing like African studies” other than “a mere mental construct than a researchable reality” and that there is nothing specifically African in it, then committed African scholarship should be geared towards repudiating such anti-African, pro-Western polemic. No wonder Fashina (2008) avers that postmodernism is nothing but a Western bourgeois instrument directed at the bastion of African studies. Since it cannot dispassionately articulate cultural meaning in African critical discourse, he warns African scholars to be wary of incorporating it into their textual analyses:

When we therefore apply Post-structuralist theory to the interpretation of African Language texts, or texts cast in the new linguistic and post-colonial cultural contexts of Africa and African continuities, we reduce such texts from their historical, cultural and ritualistic essence ideals, thereby making them mere cultural orphans, or making them look grotesquely gothic and hence ridiculous in the prying eyes of the Western world. How may African/Black world distill a poetics of textual meaning and epistemology from a jaundiced reading that denies the work of its soul and life – its history, rituals, gods, and its ‘grand narrative’ of ideological praxis and propagation? (71).

In line with Fashina’s submission, African scholars like Gyeke, Aina, Altieri, Zeleza and Olaniyan condemn postmodern thinking in their quest for a beneficial and representative intellectual model in African critical discourse. Gyeke (1997) condemns the overt parasitic nature of postmodern thinking which merely intensifies critical disclaimer of Enlightenment philosophy without indentifying a radical discourse which can engineer a landmark alternative to the contradictions of the Enlightenment. This disclaimer, he argues, is ambiguous because it does not state whether

postmodern philosophy is out to undermine reason or promote its negative. Aina (1995:2) claims that no researcher can understand Africa's dilemma better than a scholar who sources his materials directly from the continent, where "no amount of post-modernist, post-industrialist, post-Marxist or post-'Nativist' conceptualization or discourse" can enhance understanding of African worldview. To this end, Altieri (1998:1) likens postmodernism to an orphan, a leper, whom no one "is eager to ally with". Similarly, Zeleza (2005:28) submits that postmodernism is only a face-saving mechanism by the Western 'super power' and the best an African scholar can do is to hasten its demise. He asserts that it has outlived its usefulness. It is "better off buried". In actual fact, its proponents and disciples have continued to diminish across disciplines. Therefore, African scholars should ignore the lure of postmodernism, fashion out a theory that situates African past in the right perspective and initiate a development-driven alternative in consonance with the yearnings of Africans. The simple reason that African nations are still groping with the scourge of under-development underscores the inadequacy of postmodern alternative to salvage their peculiar situation. Thus, the need to advance indigenous African-centred critical paradigms informs the quest for an alternative African theory by African scholars from the 1950s till date.

Unarguably, postmodern philosophical assumptions dominate contemporary thinking. Nonetheless, the fact that the world is transitory in nature foregrounds the assertion that postmodern rhetoric cannot endure forever. The wind of change has continued to blow on the society and postmodern philosophy cannot be an exception. Society has gradually continued to transforming from pre-modern era, through the modern period, to the so-called postmodern world. If postmodern thinkers agree that the world is transiting, we can then unequivocally conclude that their 'highly cherished' postmodern era would soon transit also in the spirit of unhindered social transformation. If they do not, we may begin to question the veracity of their claim that postmodern philosophy came as a negation of modernism. Head or tail, postmodern thinking continues to lose credibility in the final analysis. We can even afford to jettison its basic assumptions without fear of losing anything worthwhile. For it to be useful in social analysis, Landry (2000) calls for its total overhauling so as to address the contradictions it postulates on:

The suggestion is that the postmodernism debates need reconceptualization in order to address the new problems they present, as well as to be able to draw connections with the old problems alluded to above ⁽¹⁴³⁾.

It is simply because this “reconceptualization” has not taken place that Watson (2001:54) refers to postmodern philosophy as “a transitory and relatively insignificant phase in our understanding of contemporary experience”.

We are mindful of the fact that the adventurous project of the Enlightenment has its own limitations. Even die-hard modern thinkers, like Habermas for instance, appreciate the fact that modern epoch has not peaked. It is only a continuous process whose inherent features would later correct its anomalies, thus Spencer (2001:159) argues that “modernism is as much an antidote to modernity as it is to its party-programme”. Also, it is common knowledge that a discerning mind cannot but interrogate these limitations in the quest for a better and foolproof alternative. If Christian mythology was so rife during the Enlightenment period, anti-Enlightenment thinkers are quick to ask why modern era spurned myth and tradition but covertly espoused Christianity! Can Christianity’s ‘totalitarian’ world view guarantee religious emancipation which the Enlightenment advances? If marxist perspective is the requisite ideological framework on which the intellectual pillar of the Enlightenment is erected, has marxist utopia not being undermined with contemporary realities? With the suppression of all voice of dissent during communist regimes, can we still unequivocally hold on to the claim that communism is the requisite benchmark for emancipation and justice? Has the end of the ‘Cold War’ not sounded the death knell of communism? If science is the panacea for human and socio-cultural developments, was science not employed in a devastating manner during the World Wars 1 and II? Are the chaos and wanton destruction of lives and properties that characterised the World Wars not enough to cast aspersion on the optimism associated with the Enlightenment? How can Enlightenment thinking promise liberation from repressive tendencies but help sustain capitalist economy and its attendant inequality and alienation? Despite the advantages embedded in technological advancement, is technology not being employed to satisfy a Western socio-political end to the consternation of non-Western nations in the contemporary society? These posers, and more, have continued to agitate the minds of anti-Enlightenment thinkers over the years. In no time, it attained the status of a consensus and they began to jettison Enlightenment philosophy to seek a refuge in postmodern alternative. Nevertheless, we argue that the project of the Enlightenment does not see itself as a perfect, ideal philosophical ‘magic’ which is not susceptible to contradictions and limitations. It is ‘humble’ enough to realise its own limitations. However, postmodern canon is too weak and less ambitious to have qualified as a credible alternative. According to Spencer (2001:161), it “is much less a

programme or intellectual framework than it is a mood or *Stimmung* the *Zeitgeist*, a 'feeling in the air'. Instead of taking off as an alternative epistemological assumption, it is 'comfortable' with waiting in the wing to cash in on "the ambiguous legacy of modernity and of its late apologists, the modernists". This parasitic attitude does not portray it as a reliable critical model.

We have argued that the project of the Enlightenment evidently has its limitations and shortcomings. Even die-hard proponents of the Enlightenment have had occasions to come to terms with the weaknesses of the age. However, these contradictions should never translate to wholesale renunciation of Enlightenment's ideals on any account because the age possesses inbuilt mechanism for self-probing. This falls in line with Hart's (2006:1) advice to critics never to be carried away to the point of describing postmodernism in term of succession to modernism. Besides, it is not enough to jettison the valuable contribution of the Enlightenment to human development just because we are committed to repudiation of a totalising Western epistemology or in "a hopeless quest for innovation". If the ideals of postmodern thinking serve the 'overall' interest of the West, the same cannot be said of non-Western societies, most especially Africa where it has failed woefully in "advancing our interests in the modern world" hence for Africans, "Foucault, Derrida and their cohorts can be nothing other than false gods" (Irele, 1999:8). Corroborating Irele, Lewis (2001:122) identifies Sloan, Bradbury and Ruland as Western critics who are humble enough to observe the inevitable demise of postmodern thinking in the contemporary world. He quotes Sloan (1987) as positing that postmodernism "is now in its final phase of decadence" and Bradbury and Ruland (1991) as describing it as "a stylistic phase that ran from the 1960s to the 1980s". To this end, Spencer (2001:159) believes that postmodernism is "self-conscious" of its own inadequacies hence "subjects itself to the most glaring scrutiny and endless commentary" across disciplines. Despite this humble remark, Spencer still goes ahead to denounce postmodernism because modernity is synonymous with the contemporary hence has no place for any other imaginary era! Until postmodern thinkers are ready to explain how they intend to justify the existence of 'post' contemporary, or what Lewis tagged "post-postmodernist" thinking, the veracity of their argument continues to run out of steam. Even if we agree that the world has continued to witness tremendous changes, especially after the World War II, Onyeonoru (2002:289) submits that these changes are "not fundamental, massive or enduring enough to justify the assertion of a post-modern epoch". The modern era has recorded landmark achievements which cannot be dispensed with, no matter the 'suave' rhetoric or 'suspect'

sophistry of its 'belligerent' detractors.

2.5 Towards an Afrocentric Theory of Literary Interpretation

Apparently drawing inspiration from African American writings like Du Bois' *Souls of Black Folk* (1913), James' *Stolen Legacy* (1954), Williams' *The Destruction of Black Civilisation* (1971) and Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (1987), Cheikh Anta Diop's classic, *African Origin of Civilisation* (1974) attempts to reconstruct history and debunk Western hegemonic postulation. Since the main thrust of Eurocentric postulation on Africa is that the 'dark continent' had no history, no culture and no civilisation worthy of note (Graham-Heggie, 2009), Diop argues that ancient Egypt, then known as Kemet, is the cradle of world civilisation. According to Diop, Egypt had architecture, philosophy, medicine, astronomy, cosmology, geometry, and science and technology long before Greece. Also, the Greek word 'sophia' (wisdom) is derived from its African equivalent, 'seba', hence the practice of philosophy cannot be said to have originated from Greece. In fact, ancient Greek philosophers like Thales and Pythagoras actually came to Egypt to learn philosophy at the temple of Wennofer! Butressing his argument with critical opinions from Ben-Jochanan (1971) and Onyewuenyi (1994), Odebowale (2005) attests to the preeminence of Egyptian civilisation:

Before the conquest of Alexander in 332 BC, the Greeks had had sufficient contacts with Egypt through visits by eminent Hellenic scholars. Thales, the West acclaimed inventor of philosophy, studied in Egypt and was influenced to develop his doctrine of cosmic origin, geometry, and his political and epistemological theories. Herodotus and Diogenes Laertius write that Pythagoras, a native of Samos, was initiated into the Egyptian Mystery System in Heliopolis, Memphis and Thebes. He was taught measurement, medicine, the doctrine of metempsychosis and dietetics. He was reported to have sacrificed to the Muses after the secrets of the properties of the right angled triangle was revealed to him (111-112).

Besides, the ancient Egyptians were Negroid whose civilisation had peaked and had suffered series of invasions long before Herodotus 'visited' between 480 and 425 B.C (Asante, 1980; Chinweizu *et al*, 1980). Stephen Prickett (1990) attests to the grandeur status of Egypt as a nation whose cultural preeminence predates Greece:

When the ancient Greek historian Herodotus visited Thebes in Egypt, he gazed with awe at the list of High Priests of the

temple inscribed on its walls as he realized that the three hundred generations represented there took him back thousands of years before the dawn of Greek history and civilization (952).

These positions are given credence to by archaeological evidences which have it that the first architectural masterpiece, the Sakkara pyramid, was built in Egypt by Imhotep, the “earliest personality recorded in history” (Asante, 2000). Whereas Homer came in 800 B.C., the pyramid was completed in 2500 B.C. Unfortunately, the twin incidences of slave trade and colonialism further contributed to the denigration and distortion of African history. Chinweizu *et al* (1980) concur that African civilisation is not a derivative of its European counterpart:

Long before Caesar led his Roman legions to bring civilization to barbarian Gaul, to Celtic Britain, and to the Druidic German tribes of Vercingetorix in the 1st century B.C., the African Nile valley civilizations of Pharaohnic Egypt, Nubia, Kush, Meroe and Ethiopia had literate cultures-in territories where Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt are today located (26).

These experiences further help to sustain Western preeminence at all cost.

This daring reassessment of the African past has a long lasting impression on contemporary African and African-American scholars, hence their resolve to re-cast history in a manner that accords Africa the respect she deserves. To achieve this, they begin a quest for a theoretical standpoint which places Africa and her people at the centre of any historical or cultural appraisal about the continent. Suffice it to say that in the onerous task of developing the continent, an African-specific theory for literary interpretation is required. Chinweizu *et al* (1980) have articulated the need for African critics to redirect their critical sensibilities towards the advancement of an African-conscious theory of reading African literary texts:

Now, rather than a disorientive eurocentrism or a disorientive irrelevance, the task of our African critics is to formulate an African esthetic- which in the field of literature would include a poetics, a narrative rhetoric, and a dramaturgy—adapted to the needs of contemporary Africa (290).

No wonder as part of the decolonisation process, postcolonial writings have largely been redirected towards the appropriation of a cultural worldview or ideology that better suits the continent’s developmental yearnings. Fashina (2008) puts it aptly:

Recent discussions of post-colonial literary theories have not confined themselves to evaluating the practice of writing

in the new Englishes but to a consideration of how postcolonial readings of canonized texts might construct new meanings in the service of a postcolonial ideology (74).

After all, no one, according to Bernth Lindfors (2002), is better endowed with the analytical wherewithal to interpret other people's culture than those who are well grounded in the particular culture under probe:

Bearers of a culture are better equipped to interpret that culture than aliens who have experienced its realities only vicariously. Those who share a writer's background can more readily comprehend the full implications of his message (3).

Thus, the works of postcolonial African and African-American critics are tremendously influenced by the quest for an African-specific, African-centred theoretical canon that are of immense benefit to Africa, polemic from Western "arm-chair" critics notwithstanding. Leading Afrocentric scholars include: Molefi Asante, Theopilus Obenga, Zine Magubane, Paul Zelesa, Tejumola Olaniyan, Abiola Irele, Biodun Jeyifo, Chinua Achebe, Chinweizu and Toyin Falola. However, on account of prolificity and profundity in promoting an Afrocentric framework for world history, the name Molefi Asante stands out.

Under the generic name Afrocentrists, these scholars interrogate the core assumptions of Euro-American worldviews which pretend to be of universal benefit to all cultures of the world but is grossly impositional and parochial (Asante, 1987; Keto, 1994; Henderson, 1995; Obenga, 1995; Poe, 2003). This quest for a valid Afrocentric epistemology is premised on the assumptions that no 'alien' theory would be adequate to articulate a critical model that is in consonance with African scholars' goal of placing African culture at the centre-point of their creative and critical sensibilities. This would, invariably, serve as the launch-pad for the development of the continent. According to Henderson (1995: xi-xiii), rather than merely postulating "a knee-jerk reaction to European effrontery", Afrocentric scholars direct their critical attention to "constructing alternative, more appropriate, more accurate, and more relevant, social theory" to liberate the continent from Western theoretical postulation which is irrelevant to African cause. This is coming against the backdrop of the assumption that Afrocentrism offers "the most complete philosophical totalization of the African being" (Asante, 1987:25) which is aimed at "self-healing for some very deep wounds of the past" (Landry, 2010:2). This would invariably guarantee psychological, political, social, cultural, and economic change. Fanon (1968) has earlier enjoined African writers

and critics to produce a unique African contribution to global worldviews devoid of Western standpoint:

Humanity is waiting for something from us (Africans) other than such an imitation (of Europe), which would be almost an obscene caricature (315).

Fanon's assertion is premised on the realisation of the fact that what African people want from their writers is not the imitation of European canon, but a consistent articulation of the African alternative. This is because no imitation can be original.

Although it began with the activities of African-American scholars of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Afrocentrism attained its modern meaning owing to the consequences of Civil Right Movement in America. As an ethnocentric cultural worldview, it places Africa and Africans at the centre of African reality in history. Henceforth, African ideals should dominate any discussion on African culture because Africans are proactive subject in history, and not passive onlookers. While emphasising Africa's central role in world history, its deconstructive philosophical assumption is aimed at stimulating a credible African approach to theory formulation which would denounce Eurocentric postulation that justifies racial discrimination. At a time African-American intellectuals were seeking a rediscovery of African pride in world history, Afrocentrism emerged as a valuable ideological weapon to sustain an inversion of European standpoint and, according to Asante (2000: 2), "help lay out a plan for the recovery of African place, respectability, accountability, and leadership". Afrocentric worldview was given impetus by the 1980 publication of Asante's *Afrocentricity: A Theory of Social Change*.

Meanwhile, the quest for an all-embracing African-centred theoretical model which can provide an appropriate theoretical template to advance the philosophical and epistemological foundations of African worldviews gathered momentum from the 1980s. Hitherto, the fear of being labeled 'others' and denied publishing 'privilege' by the imperialist publishing firms, unilaterally controlled by Western hegemonic authority, is enough worry for African scholars. Thus, they dare not articulate an African-specific intellectual discourse that is not in congruence with Western standard! Nonetheless, African critics shake off the lethargy and challenge the negative perception of Africa which is aimed at legitimizing the socio-cultural preeminence of Europe, even if, according to Fashina (2009:7), they have not had the privilege of a "quality breakthrough in the search for fixed and systematic canons of reading and theorizing in African studies" till date. Although Western critics would have us believe that there is "a wide gulf of

hermeneutic knowledge” between Africa and the West, yet we aver that this is not due to any genetic disparity in both the physiological and mental make-up of Europeans and Africans. The West may continue in her ‘blind’ refusal to acknowledge the exigencies of African oral narratives, which is embedded in African literary culture, as this attitude does not foreclose their relevance in distilling an African epistemology. In fact, if Kalu’s (2000) position that indigenous African system of thought can only be appreciated from an African perspective is anything to go by, then the inability of Western critics to come to terms with non-Western cultural specificity becomes understandable. Kalu has argued that

African discomfort at inheriting two opposing worlds must not continue to mean Africa’s lack and /or inability to theorize from a viable knowledge base. Rather, most of the difficulty arises from the delayed recognition of the nature and relevance of African texts. Ancestral African thought may not have been written in great books but they were *written* in African traditions and minds (57).

However, Kalu’s optimism is consequent on “the acquisition of relevant oral narrative and performance skills”. Unfortunately, many African scholars have little or no grounding in African socio-cultural milieu, hence they resigned to fate and imbibed, hook, line and sinker, polemics from Western critics. Amongst others, Fashina (2009:7) adduces reasons for this to include the myth associated with “malevolent spirits and demons of the African ritual groves at the domain of the Ifa priest” and the need to keep at bay anything which could ‘taint’ ones “Christian status”. Unfortunately, many of those who are versed in African epistemology are largely illiterate in the Western sense. Ironically, majority of Western critics are obviously not committed to an empirical study of African culture and philosophical assumptions!

The conviction to reassess African literary scholarship against the backdrop of ‘hostile’ Western models informs the determination to articulate an African poetics of literary interpretation to suit contemporary African needs. Achebe (1988) has earlier warned African scholars not to be taken in by Western ‘jaundice’ perspective which is a ploy to denounce non-Western literature:

But, of course, it would not occur to them to doubt the universality of their own literature. In the nature of things, the work of a Western writer is automatically informed by universality. It is only others who must strain to achieve it. So – and so’s work is universal; he has truly arrived! As though universality were some distant bend in the road which you may take if you travel out far enough in the

direction of Europe or America, if you put adequate distance
between yourself and your home (51).

Even if Achebe's warning is not enough, Chinweizu *et al* (1980) enjoin African critics to, among other roles, serve as guide for creative writers in the promotion and sustenance of core African values. They, however, caution that critics can only attain this level if they are thoroughly grounded in African worldview:

To do this effectively, African critics must develop an African esthetic, encourage an awareness of African tradition, and play the role of critical intelligence guiding the transmission of African cultural values. Whereas the artist creates cultural artifacts, the critic evaluates them. Whereas the artist is a maker of well-made things, the critic is a maker of judgements (287).

Similarly, Kunene (2007:320) advises African critics to look in the direction of literary works written in indigenous languages if they are to be relevant in the society. He wants them to inculcate the habit of Western critics who "have established themselves as the foremost authorities in the scholarship of English literature". He also charges them to assert their own preeminence in indigenous culture by providing "answers demanded by the logic of our situation". He submits that only this would liberate them from the 'all-knowing' pretension of Western critics who discuss African literature "with pontifical authority"! Unfortunately, Chinweizu *et al* aver that many African critics have flagrantly discountenanced this "fundamental ground rule", barely turning works from African writers "into the procrustean beds of an alien esthetic". This "mentality of cultural inferiority" can be attributed to the inability to "develop a contemporary African esthetic" which can be discovered through a sustained investigation of African epistemology. In the same vein, while affirming the indispensability of oral narratives as an integral medium which can be positively employed to advance African literary theory, Kalu (2000:49) situates Africa's developmental yearnings on strict adherence to her tradition because "productive strategies should create change that must not disconnect us from our origin". Thus, Fashina (2008) warns African scholars of the dire consequences of articulating Eurocentric sentiments in the interpretation of African texts, all in a bid to contribute the so-called "African dimension of knowledge to the great Western tradition, and as a way of internationalizing their scholarship". This attitude amounts to mere chasing the shadow. It does the quest for an African-specific theory of literary interpreting no good:

There is, indeed, the need to receive with severe caution, the critical discourses that tend to police literary interpretation and theorization of African texts only in the direction of a particular 'post' such as post-structuralism, post-deconstruction, postmodernism, post-coloniality and so on, a situation which Niyi Osundare (1993, 2001) describes as an empty text-technology with no relevance to the nature of African knowledge (67-68).

If Fashina's 'note of warning' would suffice, an African alternative theory is required. Chinweizu *et al* are of the opinion that African scholars should begin an investigation into African epistemology. Their findings should be 'transferred' to African writers and their audience for the betterment of the society. The "paucity of available material" on African worldview should not deter them. It should rather be a source of encouragement for them to embark on a sustained investigation. Only this can guarantee the sustainability of the 'anticipated' theory for the interpretation of African texts.

The simple reason that Africa and the West ascribed different socio-cultural meanings to symbol, motif, ritual, values and cosmogony foregrounds the conclusion that if an Afrocentric theoretical alternative is required, a sustained investigation of African history, tradition and religion is the *sine qua non* (Chinweizu *et al*, 1980; Kalu, 2000; Fashina, 2008, 2009). Although Kunene (2007) and Ogundipe-Leslie (2007) opine that Africa may not boast of a unified, homogenous historical and traditional worldview, a development which is traceable to diverse colonial experiences, Fashina (2008:65) believes her "relative cultural homogeneity" underscores its unique credential as a veritable 'gold mine' in the quest for an African-centred theory for textual interpretations. While resisting the 'temptation' to lump diverse African societies together in a desperate bid to advance an all-encompassing African worldview, African scholars have no choice other than to promote the unity of Africa and reiterate the "unbreakable thread of cultural link" which unites the continent and the diaspora. This is in congruence with Soyinka's (1976: xii) position that even if no worldview is unique, man's existence "in a comprehensive world of myth, history and mores" elicits "the virtues of complementarity" which underscore the uniqueness of African culture. An incontestable instance of this cultural tie is given by Henry Louis Gates, jr (1988). Gates observes the cosmic relevance of the ubiquitous *Esu Elegbara* in the activities of the

Yoruba and the Fan in Nigeria and Dahomey respectively, as well as in Brazil, Haiti, Cuba and America. Thus, the necessity for African scholars to have a fuller understanding of African epistemology which encapsulates the totality of African worldview is non-negotiable. This awareness is indispensable if a credible Afrocentric interpretation of the cosmos must evolve. Henderson (1995) accords tradition a pride of place in African theory formulation:

Paradigm construction and theory building cannot simply exist as an academic exercise. We must wed our thought and practice in a novel, interpretative way that is well grounded in the tradition, reason, and practice of the best of our peoples and by implication the best of humanity. Emphatically, we maintain those examples are not to be found at present, in their entirety, anywhere in the world. We must build them and proceed in earnest to make these institutions and programs the centerpiece of our Afrocentric enterprise (197).

In the light of this, Chinweizu *et al* (1980: 290) urge African scholars to employ ‘orature’ to distill an African epistemology which is “grounded in an African sensibility,” while Fashina (2009: 15) proposes the exploration of Ifa corpus because of its cross-cultural ubiquitous nature in Africa and the diaspora. This would, invariably, become a legacy that can be presented as an African specific contribution to knowledge pool across the globe.

African history is replete with the anthropomorphic activities of gods and goddess, monarchs and emperors, heroes and heroines. Her oral tradition is peopled by daunting tasks and adventures of deified personalities whose actions and inactions justify their respective places in the world. The communal living and reverence for traditional cultural ethos are unparalleled. The unwritten constitution and succession principle of Benin, Kanem Bornu, Mali and Ghana empires are legendary. Long before any contact with Baron de Montesquieu, the French writer who propounded the theory of checks and balances for modern democracy, the checks and balances in old Oyo Kingdom had operated and ensured that the paramount ruler (the Aláàfin) discharged his traditional duties in a manner which promoted social development, else he could be ‘impeached’ by the legislative arm of the government (the Oyomèsi). To avert this ugly trend, the griots and bards employ their vast retentive memory to warn the kings of the consequences of their actions, thus promoting cosmic harmony. So influential is the artistry of these traditional poets that Fashina (2008) refers to them as “the unacknowledged sociologists and anthropologists of the African space of their time” whose records formed part of the materials employed by European critics for

modern literary interpretation:

The historians and poets were court officials. Although they were not appointed or designated by formal university tradition as research fellows and scholars, they never the less perform such roles and functions in their relative conditions, age and time as researchers in history, ethnography and culture (65).

It is now incumbent on African scholars to investigate this historic and cultural landmark from where an African epistemology can be derived. This makes the evolution of an African-specific theory for textual analysis inevitable.

Also, traditional tales and mythological accounts which uphold the dignity of African society are veritable tools at the disposal of theory-seeking African scholars. In order to privilege Eurocentric mythological accounts which are employed by Western critics to justify the preeminence of the West, African myths are denounced as barbaric and primordial! Although myth may be grossly inaccurate, subjective and contradictory, Ajayi (2005: 27) believes it contains “certain historical truth” which is transferred from generation to generation. Therefore, if the biblical account has it that the world was created by a ‘jealous’ omniscient God in His magnanimous benevolence, then it is incumbent on African scholars who are versed in Yoruba cosmology to promote Odùduwà to the status of the Supreme Being who barely delegated the task of creation to the arch divinity, Obàtálá. In the same vein, if Moses can ‘divide’ the red sea into two for the Israelites to pass unhurt, if Elijah would not see death but could only be ‘taken’ to heaven with “a chariot of fire”, if Joshua can cause the sun not to set throughout a day, if Jesus Christ can be ‘conceived’ without a man, feed five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fishes, heal the sick, raise Lazarus from the dead, die but resurrect on the third day, if Athena had no mother but only ‘emerged’ from the head of Zeus, what makes it less plausible for Odùduwà to have descended from heaven to Ile-Ife with a chain? Why would Obàtálá not be accepted as the creative essence? If Western critics like Cain Felder (1994), Grover Furr (1996), Mary Lefkowitz (1997) and Wilson Moses (1998) have concluded that Afrocentrism is “sensationalism”, “pseudo-science”, “pseudohistorical”, “racist”, “reactionary”, “bogus history”, “factually errant and theoretically flawed”, a manipulation of history and myth in a manner “sympathetic to African peoples”, can Eurocentric racial conclusions, particularly its unsubstantiated postulation on the mental make-up of Europeans and Africans, pass the empirical test? Can we ‘discharge and acquit’

Eurocentrists of these allegations? If Graham-Heggie (2009) regards Molefi Asante and Anta Diop as “extremists” who engage in “scholarship of dubious value”, are critics like Ann Roth, Mary Lefkowitz, Felder Hope and Wilson Moses less extremists? Cases worthy of note here are Roth and Lefkowitz’s suspect sophistry on Afrocentrism, a position which calls for serious scrutiny the veracity of Eurocentric rhetoric. Roth (1992) has argued that Afrocentric philosophy is targeted at “stressing the achievements of African civilizations, principally ancient Egypt”. She asserts that Afrocentrists make “extravagant claims about ancient Egyptian achievements”, and justify their positions by citing “authors of dubious credibility and outdated theories” to buttress their ‘unconvincing’ treatise on Africa as the cradle of world civilisation. In a similar vein, Mary Lefkowitz argues that the teaching of Afrocentrism among African-American students is aimed at poisoning young mind hence no one should waste “tax-payers money” on such ‘ill-conceived’ scholarship. She submits that no one should ever doubt the veracity of ancient Greek civilisation from where modern American democracy originated. This conclusion lays bare the fact that Eurocentric sophistry primarily sets out to articulate the preeminence of Greek and Roman civilisations over others. Myth remains a ‘credible’ means of social engineering and any attempt to undermine African myths amounts to a subterfuge intended to discredit African past. These myths are embedded in African oral tradition from where a theory of literary interpretation would evolve. Little wonder Chinweizu *et al* (1980:290) refer to African oral tradition as the “incontestably uncontaminated reservoir of African sensibility”. Perhaps, Lefkowitz needs to be asked about the source of Greek civilisation.

Afrocentrists have never assumed that African culture is monolithic and monolingual. Despite the emphasis on the pride of place Egypt occupies as the cradle of civilisation, Africa remains a continent, and not a country. The series of invasions and eventual annexation of Egypt gave rise to the influx of foreign cultures whose influence freely spread among the early Egyptians. The slave trade and colonialism became the final straw that exposed Africa to European languages and cultural domination. It is against the backdrop of the limitations of European languages to genuinely articulate African worldview that informs Nkosi (1981), Kalu (2000), Wali (2007), Ngugi (2007) and Kunene’s (2007) postulations that only indigenous languages can properly articulate African traditional worldviews in African literature. In actual fact, Ngugi has even gone a step further, choosing to publish works like *Ngaahika Ndeenda*, *Caitani Mutharabaini*, *Maitu Njugira*, and *Matigari Ma Njiruungi* in his native Gikuyu language. He

tenaciously holds on to the belief that only an African language, rooted in the proletarian cause, can genuinely articulate African cultural norms and values which are the *sine qua non* for continental emancipation. Failure to do so, he argues, these writers would only produce “another hybrid tradition, a tradition in transition, a minority tradition that can only be termed as Afro-European literature”. However, critics like Mowah (1997) and Anozie (1981) are quick to move beyond the emphasis on language as the central feature in literary analysis, arguing that style can be of tremendous importance too. Mowah (1997) concludes that only literary standard, not ideological predilection, can determine the literariness of a text:

For behind the firm ideological commitment to truth is the peculiar structure of literature that gives the truth of literature its particular or significant essence. T.S. Eliot has in fact warned that “we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards. In essence, the criticism of African literature demands a thorough scrutiny of the aesthetic framework of it. For the meaning of African literature to become bare, the mask of allegory, images, fables, symbolism, myth and metaphors in African literature must be penetrated (25).

In the same vein, Chinweizu *et al* (1980) submit that language alone is not capable of generating and appropriating cultural worldview in a different culture:

Given the fundamental differences in values and experiences which often appear between two nations who use the same language, it should be obvious that the fact that two works are written in the same language is far less than sufficient grounds for judging them by identical criteria (12).

Although language, among others, plays a pivotal role as “a means of expression of human cultural values” (Madubuike, 2005:326), the adoption of colonial languages cannot totally obliterate African values in African literature. For instance, the adoption of the English language by Tutuola and Achebe does not indicate that an understanding of the language translates to a full grasp of Yoruba and Igbo cultural worldviews expressed by these writers in *The Palmwine Drinkard* and *Arrow of God* respectively. Although Nkosi (1981) agrees that the accrued benefits of writing in indigenous languages “would prove overwhelming” as it would invariably eliminate “a situation of extreme cultural ambiguity”, as well as the inability of even “the most sophisticated and articulate of modern African writers” to employ indigenous languages, yet he asserts that the instrument of language is not the sole determinant to gain inroad into traditional African culture:

The relationship between language and national cultures cannot be too strongly emphasised. Like other peoples, black Africans possess a rich and living heritage in philosophy, ethics, religion and artistic creation, the deepest roots of which are embedded in the rich soil of African languages. To re-possess that tradition means not only unlocking the caskets of syntax, disentangling metaphysics from poetry and proverb; it also means extracting social philosophy and habits of moral thought from the rhythm, imagery, repetitiousness, sometimes from the very circumlocution of native African speech (3).

So pervasive are these heterogenous cultural values that a 'nativisation' of the English language is African writers' preoccupation in the textual exploration of African worldview in English. Even Ngugi, a hard-to-please advocate of African language for African writings, does not agree less.

Equally worthy of close scrutiny is the suitability of prose fiction to capture a quintessential traditional African worldview, in a manner desired by theory-seeking African scholars. Albert Gerard (1971: 379) is quick to assert that since the origin of the novel genre is the West, a society whose tradition is at variance with traditional African society, African writers would most likely encounter an encumbrance in articulating any worthwhile African values with the novel! Even the so-called hybrid peculiarity of African literature does not remove this bottleneck but, ironically, underscores a devastating influx of a domineering Western epistemology. This almost renders such literature 'impotent' and 'weak' at espousing the core African cultural sensibilities. Surprisingly as European theoretical postulations do not reverence African cultural specificities, some African writers even doubt the existence of African literature! Nonetheless, we aver that it is undoubtedly evident that Western prose tradition may not be the appropriate template to articulate African worldview which is ensconced in African literature. This rather hostile tradition informs what Nkosi (1981:5-53) aptly describes as generating "the feelings of dislocation" which beam its search-light on the Africa worldview "through a mirror which continually refracts African experience according to its own optical 'illusions'-if not actual delusions". He suspects the "double ancestry" of the modern African novel as partly responsible for its inability to "properly reflect African reality", and consequently becomes a reflector of "many cultures and genres, the accumulator of many styles and traditions". Although he finally

submits that the diversity, “the embarrassing mixture of styles and traditions is often a source of strength and vitality, not a cause of weakness and diminution of insight”, its import is not lost on a discerning African mind. A core African, non-Western alternative, which advances the value-conscious African traditional system of thought as articulated through the indigenous African story-telling narrative technique, is desired.

Unarguably for the ‘much anticipated’ African theory to have global credibility and acceptability, it must ‘liberate’ itself from any tendency to suppress or malign other cultural idiosyncrasies. If Eurocentric theory is ‘accused’ of totalitarian parochialism, its emerging alternative (i.e. Afrocentric theory) should not tow the same line, else parochialism becomes an albatross to theory formulation. It should not condemn an act, only to promote its alternative. It must ‘preach the gospel’ of freedom and liberation for mankind irrespective of cultural affiliations. The philosophy of Afrocentric criticism should, among other things, be “rooted in the reality that all culture groups have the right and obligation to, as Karenga notes, shape their reality in their own image and interests and speak their own special cultural truth” (Henderson, 1995:197). For this to be achieved, less emphasis should be placed on the alleged ‘superiority’ or otherwise of African culture. Rather, the core tenets of pragmatic African worldview should be espoused for all to see else, Henderson warns, “African-centered scholars will simply founder adrift on the castoffs of Eurocentric practice and ordering systems” (197). Also the distinctive cultural divergence between some African nations should not be relegated to the background else the gains of the anticipated Afrocentric theory become reprehensible in some communities. Okolo (2007) has cautioned against this:

The solution may not lie in adopting any of the proposals as an isolated variable. Aggregate acceptance of any of the ideology will obscure important differences across the continent. There is no need for homogeneity of political ideology among all African states. What is called for is an ideology or ideologies that will best promote the accomplishment of acceptable political goals with minimum political stress for a given African country. What may work best for one particular state may not be appropriate for another. Even what works for a particular state at one time may not work at another (137).

If cultural specificity is respected, and Fashina's "relative cultural homogeneity" is espoused for the world to appreciate, a consensus of opinion which would serve continental purpose is inevitable among African writers and critics. The global awareness of the basic tendencies in African epistemology which would ensue is expected to elicit global consternation and, invariably, respect for African values would soar. The 'journey' towards attaining cultural pride and continental development would have started.

Nonetheless, even if the enormous contributions of Africa to world civilisation would be espoused, Afrocentrists should not emphasize the preeminence of Africa over Europe. Instead, they should direct their efforts towards substantiating the thesis that Africa contributed immensely to global development. Since no culture is universal, Afrocentrism should not assume all cultures of the world would follow its dictate, because the particular should not be substituted for the universal. Besides, the superiority of a race over others should be discountenanced. In addition, Afrocentric treatise should not assume a homogenous African culture which is static and monolithic but rather come to terms with the reality that heterogenous but mutually exclusive African and Africa-American cultures are central to the Afrocentric enterprise. Similarly, Afrocentrists should acquaint themselves with non-racial Western critics who have advised on how Afrocentric postulation can be made beneficial to all and sundry. Ann Roth has charged them to employ a "source-based approach" to theory formulation which would, invariably, guarantee their postulations respect across the globe. It may also lead to a rethink of Eurocentric assertiveness by the West. Also, Hope Felder's cautious disposition towards a would-be Afrocentric thinker should be fully imbibed. Felder has advised Afrocentric thinkers to distinguish between friendly and hostile Western critics, instead of engaging in a wholesale demonization of all without exception. Among others, he also enjoins them not to replace Eurocentric mythology with another race-induced mythology. Doing so would be tantamount to vilifying a tradition only to sustain the other.

In this vein, theory-seeking African scholars should be humble enough to come to term with certain socio-cultural realities. Appiah (1995:120) has warned that it may be a mirage for African scholars to realise a distinct African identity devoid of European taint, particularly with the post-independent cross-cultural mingling between Africa and the West. He, thus, concludes that post-colonial theorising in Africa is largely an appendage of "Euro-American formation". Similarly, citing the hybrid peculiarity of post-colonial cultures as instance, Helen Tiffin

(1995:95) argues that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to create an indigenous variant of African culture like what obtained in the pre-colonial era because “pre-colonial cultural purity can never be fully recovered”. Also Fashina (2008:68) submits that European cultural standpoint has positioned itself as “the mega research methodology and data analytical tool that has regimentation in universities globally”, at least for now. This humility is not a weakness. It is rather an appreciation of the onerous task before them if an African-centred, African-specific, African-conscious alternative theory of literary interpretation must emerge. This obviously informs Irele’s cautious disposition towards the uncritical indoctrination of non-Western theoretical assumptions, particularly Afrocentric alternative, all in a quest for innovation. Citing Senghor’s Negritude as instance, Irele (1982:13) is not excited about the so-called ‘positive’ inclinations of the Afrocentric worldview. He faults the “fundamental pre-suppositions” of African philosophy, wondering what it holds for “African development”. He warns that an uncritical commitment to African worldview, in the name of cultural nationalism, is likely to limit one’s potential because “to stress one’s distinctiveness is to set oneself apart, and this is an attitude that contains equal possibilities both for cooperation and for conflict”. In his opinion, “excessive valuation of tradition” amounts to conservative rhetoric which is capable of sustaining reactionary tendencies. If Irele’s treatise is anything to go by, we can then deduce that Afrocentrism, Orientalism, and even the ‘almighty’ Eurocentrism cannot articulate fool-proof scientific paradigms. They are means to an end, not an end on their own. Their inability to ‘overcome’ scientific scrutiny is enough to undermine their postulations and cast aspersion on their philosophical certainty. This reality, perhaps, informs Henderson’s (1995) posture that Afrocentrism should promote awareness of the fact that because worldviews merely imply theoretical paradigms which overtly may not pass scientific verifiability test, Afrocentric theoretical assumptions may not have immediate global acceptability:

Afrocentrists, in their zeal to attack the white supremacism that is manifest in aspects of Eurocentric thought and practice, have failed to develop scientific paradigms from their Afrocentric worldview. This has been attempted, as we saw earlier, by some Afrocentrists in various disciplines; however, this attempt has been absent from world politics

(191).

To this end, if Afrocentric thinkers fail to place their researches at the centre-point of “world politics”, their effort at theory formulation becomes suspect and inadequate to project a credible

Afrocentric alternative. It will merely produce “theory, programs, and policy that are as easily anticipated as they are ineffectual” (Henderson, 1995:197). Thus, Afrocentric critique should be tailored towards the attainment of a scientific paradigm which is situated within the confine of global politics. All the same, the fact remains that Afrocentric thinking has tremendously influenced global system of thought, particularly in Africa and the diaspora, so much that even hostile critics, like Ann Roth and Mary Lefkowitz, agree that its influence is enormous within African and Africa-American scholarship.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 Characterology and Inverted Morality as Postmodernist Existentialism in Okediran and Mowah's Novels

3.1 Wale Okediran: A Brief Biodata

Adewale Okediran was born in Iseyin on the 14th April 1955. He attended Olivet Baptist High School, Oyo between 1967 and 1972, and Comprehensive High School, Ayetoro between 1972 and 1974. He was admitted to University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) in 1974 to study medicine and surgery. He graduated in 1980.

There was never a dull moment in Wale Okediran's University life. He was the vice-captain of the university hockey team between 1976 and 1979; a team which won four medals at the Nigerian University Games Association (NUGA) events. This feat accorded him recognition hence he was among the first set of students to receive the coveted university sports scholarship which he enjoyed between 1977 and 1980. Besides sports, Wale Okediran was the president, Ife Medical Students Association (IFEMED) between 1978 and 1979, and president, Dolfak Club in the same year. He was also the editor, *Rip Off*, a campus magazine which relentlessly engaged in socio-political commentaries on campus.

After observing the mandatory national service (NYSC) in 1982, Okediran had a brief stint as a medical practitioner at University of Ife Teaching Hospital, Ile-Ife. He later established Cornerstone Medical Centre, Sango, Ibadan and became its Medical Director from 1987 till date. He also served as the secretary, Association of General and Private Medical Practitioners of Nigeria between 1990 and 1995. He was the chairman, Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Oyo State chapter and the national secretary of the same association between 1997 and 2001. He was elected member, Federal House of Representatives between 2003 and 2007 under the auspices of Alliance for Democracy (AD).

Armed with a diploma in writing obtained from London through correspondences in 1984, Wale Okediran shot into national limelight through literature. Among others, he has to his credit novels such as *Rainbows are for Lovers* (1987), *The Boys at the Border* (1990), *Storms of Passion* (1991), *Dreams Die at Twilight* (2002), *Weaving Looms* (2005) and *Tenants of the House* (2009). His *The Boys at the Border* was shortlisted for the 1991 Commonwealth Prize for Literature while

Dreams Die at Twilight was also shortlisted for the 2004 NLNG Literature Prize. It was also reputed to be one of the best twenty five books in twenty five years in Nigeria. Besides, he has several short stories and over two hundred and fifty newspaper articles to his credit! He has travelled widely to Europe and America.

Wale Okediran, a newspaper columnist, novelist, short story writer and politician, is happily married with children.

3.2 The Boys at the Border

In a quintessential postmodern tradition, evil predominates and cosmic harmony becomes a mirage. Societal maladies like smuggling, official corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, blackmail and prostitution have become the order of the day. Wale Okediran's *The Boys at the Border* (1991) reveals these tendencies. The text reflects on the illicit activities of smugglers in Nigerian border posts. It x-rays the nefarious deeds of smugglers who engage in this dastardly act in active connivance with the officers and men of Nigerian Customs and Excise Department. In a manner detrimental to the nation's economy, this unpatriotic act leads to a sharp reduction in the country's revenue while her expenditure profile continues to soar. This development is a sad commentary for a developing economy like ours which largely depends on proceeds from oil. The Head of State's complaint to the Director of Customs, Mr Emodi, is a cause of concern:

Cocoa and groundnuts are top on the list. Unfortunately, the activities of smugglers have not allowed the country to be able to export these commodities as much as we would have liked to. For examples, from cocoa alone, the country loses about sixty-thousand tonnes every year. This at the present rate of five thousand naira per tonne comes to about three hundred million naira. Same goes for groundnuts and other items like textiles, shoes and even refined oil which are being smuggled across the border (6).

He thereafter, gives Emodi a matching order to 'arrest' the tide of smuggling within three months or risk being replaced!

The 'unholy' alliance between the smugglers and custom officials does not translate to reverence for either of the parties. While the smugglers, led by the notorious Lati Baba, treat the

custom officials with contempt and disdain, the latter are barely interested in whatever pecuniary advantage the relationship holds. Both care less about their reputation, the danger it portends notwithstanding. For instance, Samuel Adigwe's is gruesomely murdered while Peter Ikoku narrowly escapes being killed with a native grenade. This arrangement becomes apparent in a secret talk between Ikoku and Lati Baba. Instead of arresting Lati Baba even if only on the ground of suspicion, he merely charges him to produce the killer instead. Lati Baba feigns ignorance:

Sam so it was Sam who was killed? But why?
None of my boys could have done it. We have no problem with you and we had already agreed on what to give you. I personally handed over the money to you last night ⁽¹⁰⁾.

Ikoku dares not arrest Lati Baba because he has also benefited from the largess meant to 'settle' custom officials at the border post. Such is the unwholesome arrangement between both parties.

Government institutions and corporations are not left out of endemic corruption and mal-administration in Nigeria. The Customs and Excise department is not immuned against these vices. In an organisation which is largely short-staffed, under-funded and ill-equipped, official bickering, ethnic sentiment, backstabbing and inordinate ambition are vices which do not give room for cooperation between the top echelons of the Customs Services. While Alhaji Jibo (Deputy Director, Enforcement), Mallam Hanayo (Revenue) and Alhaji Shamir (Inspectorate) are united to undermine their Director's effort, apparently an account of their ethnic affiliation, Dele Adepeju (Investigation) and Felix Chukwuka (Economic Relations and Planning) from the south are relatively behind the Director. When the 'northern caucus' wants Mr. Emodi to implicate the army, so as to land him into trouble, Chukwuka warns him of the consequence:

That's right. In fact, all the noise they are making about disliking the army is just a ploy to make you offend the president. Once you capitulate to their plans to antagonise the soldiers, they'll then spread the news that you don't like the military government ⁽¹⁶⁾.

Ironically, Mr. Emodi still falls prey to their ploy. He implicates the military and damns the consequences. Unfortunately for him, none of his deputies is ready to stick out his neck to save him. In fact, Alhaji Jibo indicts him further. Besides accusing him of incompetence, he vehemently denies any knowledge of Mr. Emodi's 'unfounded' allegation against the military:

Your Excellency, that is the most ridiculous allegation I have ever heard in my twenty-five years of service. Those who say such things are enemies of this country. If I were to be in your shoes, your Excellency, I would prosecute such people for treason (35).

The die is cast. Mr. Emodi has to face the consequence of his effrontery alone. Expectedly, he is dismissed from service without benefit! He ends up with cerebrovascular attack that leads to paralysis. What else should we expect from Alhaji Jibo who is inordinately ambitious and corruption personified. He has successfully set up Mr. Emodi and abandoned him at the Supreme Military Council meeting. He collides with his fellow northerners not to corroborate Emodi's allegation. Apparently to give a dog a bad name so as to hang it, he submits that bad leadership in the Customs Services is the major impediment to smuggling in the nation's border. As Emodi is dismissed from service, he takes over. Unfortunately for him, he loses the opportunity to further perpetrate corruption sooner than expected.

The announcement of Alhaji Jibo as the new Director of Customs Services further contributes, in no small measure, to the perpetuation of the illicit activities of the smugglers. Peter Ikoku's team arrests Lati Baba's convoy bearing smuggled items made up of different brands of cigarettes, shoes, textile materials, alcoholic drinks and imported wrist watches. Ikoku stands his ground despite Lati Baba's offer of twenty-five thousand naira bribe! When Baba's entreaties falls on deaf ear, he begins to boast of his connection in high places:

Nothing will come out of this. You can be sure that none of these boys will spend a day in detention. On the other hand, it might be you who would lose your job...Alhaji Jibo, my very good friend, is now your director (51-52).

Baba's statement is prophetic as he and his men are released after agreeing with Controller Arobo to part with twenty five percent of the proceeds from the auction of the items. Ikoku's 'reward' is immediate transfer to the personnel section at the headquarters in Ibadan! He has to resign his appointment in protest to pick up a job as a journalist in Daily Press.

Meanwhile Mrs. Emodi vows to avenge the injustice meted out to her husband. She becomes more daring and determined on receiving a letter ejecting her from the Director's official residence. She finds a willing accomplice in Peter Ikoku who also wants to get back at Alhaji Jibo and Lati Baba on account of the premature end of his blossoming career. Through the assistance of

the secretary, Maria Fernandez, Jibo's conversation with Lati Baba is recorded. Although Alhaji Jibo tries as much as he can to give the scandal ethnic colouration, the Head of State remains unconvinced. He arranges 'a safe landing' for him, allowing him to resign with full benefit. Controller Arobo is so scare stiff that he sends a message to Lati Baba to go underground.

Having accomplished the task of masterminding Alhaji Jibo's fall from grace to grass, Mrs. Emodi sets out to nail Lati Baba by all means. Against her recuperating husband's wish, she goes to Abata and establishes Crossroads Hotel. Through the assistance of Bayo Adeli, Lati Baba and other smugglers are introduced to the hotel. After a drinking-spree, Baba's request for a call-girl makes Mrs. Emodi to act fast. She introduces Ajo whom she has specially trained to poison Baba, though without letting her know her real intention. However, although the girl actually poisons Baba's drink, he has enough 'traditional protection' to escape. His magical ring from Agadagidi saves him. This does not dissuade Mrs. Emodi who goes ahead with her plan to kill Lati Baba at all cost. She secures the service of a hired assassin to do the job. Unfortunately for her, Lati Baba, once again, overpowers the man and kills him in the fight that ensues. Mr. Baba's investigation reveals why Mrs. Emodi wants him dead. He reconciles with her and promises to leave smuggling. He also purchases Crossroads Hotel from her.

The Boys at the Border offers an eloquent commentary on the cankerworm of corruption, nepotism and moral laxity ravaging the nation, in line with the postmodernist celebration of societal vices. All these have negatively affected the nation's development as a whole. The activities of smugglers can be nipped in the bud, or reduced significantly, if the officers and men of the Customs Services are patriotic enough to ponder on what the nation stands to benefit economically if the smugglers are kept at bay. Apart from promoting locally-made goods, thereby enhancing the sustenance of small, indigenous industries, the nation's earning from imported goods would soar considerably. Besides, substantial revenue would accrue from the exportation of commodities like cocoa, groundnut and refined oil. Unfortunately, official corruption has made nonsense the yearnings for increased revenue. Omobowale (2001) quotes Soley's graphic description of corruption among very senior custom officers:

A very top officer smuggled an expensive car into the country in a container declared as containing essential food items. Two young but efficient custom officers (young idealistic university graduates) wanted to make an example of this important officer in order to show that those who

make laws must themselves obey the law. The boss of these young officers appreciated their loyalty and devotion to duty but warned them against confronting V.I.P. who obviously had the power to influence their dismissals from their jobs...A week later, the highly placed officer sent a substantial gratification in Naira to the boss and the boys

(359).

Evidence abounds in the text to buttress Soley's position on endemic corruption ravaging the Customs Services. On one of Lati Baba's trip to and fro Nigeria, he is so sure he would be able to pay his way to Nigeria that he has already earmarked six thousand naira to 'settle' men of the Customs Services. When Peter Ikoku refuses, he even promises to increase it to twenty-five thousand naira. Another instance of official corruption being perpetrated at Customs Services is revealed when Controller Arobo negotiates with Lati Baba to collect twenty percent of the proceeds on behalf of the Director of Customs Services, Alhaji Jibo! Besides making his own five percent from the bargain, Arobo shameless agrees to auction the goods and give the largess to Lati Baba, even at higher price. Nemesis however catches up with Alhaji Jibo as his conversation with Lati Baba is taped. Even if it is said that Ikoku acts uncharacteristically of customs men, we aver that he cannot be absolved from corrupt practices either. In fact, he has collected bribe from Lati Baba on several occasions. No wonder Mr. Baba has the effrontery to accuse him of corruption before his recent 'holier-than-thou' attitude:

Ha-ha-ha- Peter. I have always told you that too much education is bad for the head. See how much English you're talking now instead of begging me for pocket money. You talk of punishment for my crimes as if you were not part of the game all along. I can tell you that you and your boys have made nothing less than fifty-thousand naira from me during the last two years. Now...you-you talk of punishments (68).

Perhaps he only arrests Lati Baba because the latter wants to kill him with a native grenade. Also one cannot but wonder why he chooses to resign in protest after being posted to a 'redundant' office assignment at the headquarters in Ibadan. Would he have resigned if he is still at Abata? He actually tells Mrs. Emodi that he resigns because of his new 'unattractive' posting:

It's due to this kind of thing. I arrested the ringleader of the smugglers, not knowing that he was in league with the

director. I was therefore transferred immediately from my post to an obscure job. That was why I resigned (71-72).

Also, if he can help Mrs. Emodi to lodge counterfeit money in a bank, then his integrity becomes questionable.

Besides corruption, ethnic sentiment is a major determinant of people's action and inaction in the nation. Since the northern group (made up of Alhaji Jibo, Mallam Hanayo and Alhaji Shamir) are united in opposition to the southern group (comprising of Mr. Emodi, Mr. Adepeju and Mr. Chukwuka), the organisation largely suffers from the fate that awaits a divided house. Mr. Emodi prefers to confide in Mr. Adepeju and Mr. Chukwuka while Alhaji Jibo continues to fight his succession battle with Mr. Emodi with the active connivance of Mallam Hanayo and Alhaji Shamir. Although Mr. Adepeju cannot speak for Mr. Emodi at the SMC meeting, he, like Mr. Chukwuka, has earlier warned him to be very careful of what he says. In fact, he is the first officer to express his solidarity to Mr Emodi after the meeting. This is in sharp contrast to the northern officers who have resolved not to support him. Even Alhaji Jibo has the temerity to blame his misfortune on ethnicity occasions by his being of northern extraction:

It's them sir, the Southerners. That is what they are always trying to do-tell the whole world that we, northerners are incompetent. They hope by slandering me I would eventually be removed from my job so that they could take over but...(86).

When the Head of State dismisses his excuse and reminds him that the two most senior officers of the Customs Services after him are of northern extraction too, he goes ahead to accuse Mallam Hanayo for his predicament:

You see sir, I believe that some southern politicians have bribed Hanayo to set me up and my feelings is that once Hanayo gets to the post, they will do to him what they did to me and...(87).

Unfortunately for him, the Head of State does not see the logic in his position. He rebuffs Alhaji Jibo's claim:

Jibo? I find your story highly ridiculous and to say the least very illogical. You've always gone about flogging this your tribal sentiment as the basis of everything that happens in

this country. I am not saying that some amount of tribalism and sectionalism does not occur, but this time, I think you've over flogged the issue (87).

At last, Alhaji Jibo has no further defence to put up. He owns up to the offence. Omobowale has warned of the danger in adducing ethnic colouration to activities of the Customs Services.

On his part, Lati Baba is all out to feather his own nest, irrespective of the consequence on the nation's economy. He prides himself as the President of the Traders' Association. Apart from being a shrewd 'business man' who goes to any length to amass ill-gotten wealth, he keeps to terms of any dealing he has with people. He 'settles' the customs officers regularly for his 'trips'. He 'negotiates' with Controller Arobo and collects the money from Alhaji Jibo. He calls a meeting of his association where a ten thousand naira bribe is arranged to be given to the new Director of Customs, Mallam Hanayo, after Alhaji Jibo's unceremonious retirement. He is so 'generous' with cash reward, particularly to women and prostitutes. He is considerate else he would have killed Ajo and Mrs. Emodi who have plotted to kill him. However, his ploy to eliminate Peter Ikoku with a native grenade made from his baby's placenta shows him as a mean person who can go to any length to protect his illicit trade. Notwithstanding, we aver that he is merely a product of a society where lawlessness and official corruption have permeated the societal psyche. No wonder he is ready to leave smuggling and become the new proprietor of Crossroads Hotel.

Ostensibly, Mrs. Emodi is presented as a loving and devoted woman *par excellence*. She is ready to avenge the injustice meted out to her husband on one hand, and the untimely death of her brother, Samuel Adigwe, on the other. Having got rid of Alhaji Jibo, she is determined to eliminate Lati Baba. Unfortunately for her, Lati Baba's protective ring from Agadagidi saves him on two occasions. She however succeeds in talking Baba out of his illicit trade. However, a deconstructive reading of Mrs. Emodi's personality elicits in her the 'devil' in a woman. Although she can be praised for her unalloyed love for her husband even when he is bedridden, her resolve to engage in blackmail and murder to have her way is appalling. Whereas African women are noted for their submissive nature, Mrs. Emodi's nature is to the contrary. No one can persuade her to have a rethink once she has made up her mind. Peter Ikoku, who should know better, warns her of the danger she would face on her revenge mission to Abata. Her recuperating husband also tries

unsuccessfully. If a woman can lure a man and almost have him poisoned, if she can employ prostitute and hired assassin to commit murder, we cannot but wonder what has become of the 'woman' in her. How on earth would she have handled the backlash? What if her true identity has been discovered early enough at Abata? What moral status would she hold on to if she can 'employ' prostitutes to achieve her objectives? Even if she can end Alhaji Jibo's career unceremoniously, is she immuned from the fate that awaits blackmailers? Would Lati Baba not go back to smuggling? If he goes back to smuggling to meet the self-inflicted financial burden on him because of his large family of five wives and twenty children, has she not 'labour' in vain? Perhaps Mrs Emodi's determined mien merely confirms the so-called patriarchal thinking that behind the veil of meekness and submissiveness, women are full of deceit and treachery. Besides, morality claim has never been associated with postmodern philosophy. While Lyotard (1996) articulates postmodernist's "incredulity towards grand narratives", Sim (2001) argues that the main thrust of postmodernist theorising is its skepticism towards socio-cultural truth and morality claim. Therefore, adjudging Mrs Emodi as worthy in character and moral may be antithetical to postmodernist depiction of morality and truth claim. Its theorists have never failed to advance its 'antifoundational' and 'antirational' rhetoric.

The top echelon of the military is peopled by officers who are unpatriotic and corrupt. Although Mr. Emodi is unable to substantiate the allegation that some unpatriotic officers in the army smuggle or connive with smugglers, no one is left in doubt about the nefarious dealings of some military personnel. It amounts to act of official irresponsibility for some members of the Supreme Military Council to leak official secret to Alhaji Jibo, perhaps to cover their track. In fact, even Lati Baba boasts of his connection at the Supreme Military Council. An instance of this is revealed in the bias nature of the decisions taken on both Mr. Emodi and Alhaji Jibo. While Mr. Emodi is dismissed for leveling 'false' allegation against the military, Alhaji Jibo, who is caught red-handed negotiating with a notorious smuggler, is retired with full benefits! This double standard casts aspersion on the mental capacity of the officers that make up the Supreme Military Council.

Also, in a manner reminiscence of postmodern articulation of Nietzsche's nihilist philosophy, the leadership of the nation lacks the political will to arrest the ugly tide of corruption. Apparently bereft of ideas to tackle the menace of smuggling, the Head of State barely pays lip

service to the task of ending smuggling. Although he agrees that security reports have indicted the military officers of smuggling, he does not do anything to purge the military of the act. He does not show himself as a dispassionate leader in the manner he dismisses Mr. Emodi. His decision to commute the dismissal to retirement and readiness to foot Mr. Emodi's medical bill abroad can be seen as an afterthought. What would he have done if Mr. Emodi had died from his ailment? Would he have given him a post-humous pardon or award? Why does he allow Alhaji Jibo to retire with full benefit despite the damning revelation of his illicit connivance with Lati Baba? Does that not amount to double standard? No one is left in doubt that military leaders are ill-equipped to govern a nation. Of late, even in Africa and other developing nations, pariah status is assured for any nation governed by the military.

One is moved to pity about the cerebrovascular attack which Mr. Emodi suffers after his dismissal. However, he does not come to mind as a man who commands the respect of his senior officers. Also he should have read between the lines to know that most of his Deputy Directors are plotting against him. Unfortunately for him, he lacks the mental capacity to take decisive decisions which, perhaps, could have saved him. He does not acquaint himself creditably. Alhaji Jibo and Mallam Hanayo capitalise on his suspect leadership acumen to advise him wrongly. Both, however, let him down when the chips are down! It is expected that his deputies would deny him if he indicts the military. Suffice it to say that his fate serves him right.

Wale Okediran's *The Boys at the Border* exposes the dastardly act of smuggling at the nation's border. Although smuggling drains the nation's resources, more worrisome acts are perpetrated by other government agencies. Official corruption has become the order of the day in our capitalist society where high premium is placed on wealth, even when such wealth is ill-gotten! It is only when wealth acquisition is deemphasised in our national life that nefarious activities like smuggling, armed-robbery, prostitution and drug trafficking would stop. No wonder Lati Baba has the effrontery to equate smuggling with more heinous crime like abortion and official corruption:

People say that our profession is not honest, that we break the rules of the country by smuggling. But let's face it, in which professions are rules not broken?. Look at the doctors for instance, abortion is illegal but it's an open secret that many doctors made their fortune from it. What of politicians

who squandered our money. Are they not still gallivanting about with their ill-gotten wealth? Or the military...? How much does a major general earn that has made many of them millionaires overnight? (138).

Thus, we aver that re-orientation of national psyche to promote good above evil is expedient if the nation must develop. The likes of Lati Baba, Alhaji Jibo and Controller Arobo would not thrive in such clime.

Amorous relationships between successful men and ladies of easy virtue have become a pastime in Nigeria. Men flaunt their ill-gotten wealth and promiscuous ladies are quick to make a go for it. Alhaji Jibo has hardly become the Director of Customs when he is caught in illicit romance with a lady right in the office! This untoward action is at variance with the work ethic of any organisation. Such moral debasement among wealthy men is what Mrs Emodi capitalises on to quickly 'arrange' Ajo for Lati Baba. The latter, along with his colleagues, has requested to have a prostitute for the night after a drinking spree. On these occasions, Wale Okediran does not conceal romance and sex away from the prying eyes of the readers. He describes the romance between Alhaji Jibo and the girl in a manner that leaves sour taste in the mouth! As if this is nothing but a child's play, the sexual scenes between Lati Baba and Ajo are graphically depicted without a modicum of decency! This is antithetical to the writing tradition given preeminence by earlier writers. Moral laxity has become the order of the day.

Professor Baki's disposition and arrogance do not portray him as a worthy ambassador of medical practice. Although he is up to the task as a surgeon, his proud and pompous gait is unethical in medical practice. Nobody matters to him in the medical theatre as he 'barks' out order to anyone in sight. Such aggression is characterised of persons who suffer from inferiority complex. His short height is a psychological let-down for him thus he prefers to command obedience if he cannot earn it. He nearly 'kills' Mr. Emodi.

Whereas Agadagidi is given prominence in *The Boys at the Border* as a fiery, evil medicine man, a closer look at his activities would show that he is not bad after all. If mention is made of his providing Lati Baba with a native grenade to kill Peter Ikoku, one should not underestimate his magnanimity for pardoning Atere who probably would have died for his refusal to confess his murder of Samuel Adigwe. Besides, but for his protective ring, Lati Baba would have been killed by Mrs. Emodi. His provision of "àwíse", "àwátí" and sex-stimulant aid the smugglers' trade. As

another herbalist who is called to unravel the mystic native grenade accuses him of working for the smugglers, one is awestruck how one herbalist exposes the ‘secret’ of another! Such is unheard of in Ifa divination where it is said that “*ètě awo ni idùnnú ôgbêrì*” (i.e the shame of the initiated amounts to joy for the uninitiated). In a private conversation with ‘*omo awo*’ Ìshòlá Fásehun Ôjètúndé of Dásófáyô Compound, Igbó’pê in Òkè-Ògùn Area of Oyo State, it is revealed that a well-trained *babaláwo* will never engage in evil because he knows the consequences of his action which, at times, may be fatal. “*Onisègùn* may perpetrate evil but a true *babaláwo* dares not”. His assertion is given credence to by *Odù Ôwönrínsikà*, one of the 240 minor *Odù* in Ifá corpus. The abridged rendition of its verse goes thus:

<i>Ôkára, Òkoro:</i>	Okara, Okoro
<i>Omi nú Ìgbín ògbe:</i>	The water in a snail dries not
<i>A dífá fún Olóòtító:</i>	It divined for the righteous
<i>Tí sawo Òde Órun:</i>	Who divined in heaven
<i>Òtí tò balê, ò di omi:</i>	Righteous comes down and becomes water
<i>Ìka balê, ó di yangì:</i>	Wickedness comes, it becomes sedimentary
<i>Ìfě òtító ni ê bá jě ámáa se:</i>	Let us endeavour to do good
<i>Ení sòtító, á máa bótító rìn:</i>	Righteousness exalts the doer
<i>Ení sèkà, á máa bá ikà wolê lo:</i>	He who does bad perish with it.

The lesson to be learnt from this verse is that people would definitely reap whatever they sow. Similarly, Ogbè Méjì enjoins people to be honest in all their endeavours. The shortened version, as given by Ayo Salami (2002:4), goes thus:

<i>Olóòótó tí n be láyé</i>	The upright that are on earth
<i>Wqn ò pógún mö</i>	Number less than twenty
<i>Sikàsikà tí n be nìbê</i>	The wicked ones therein
<i>Wön pô</i>	They are so many
<i>Wön sì ju egbààgbèjè lo</i>	They number many more than one forty thousand
<i>A díá fún Órúnmilà</i>	Cast divination for Orunmila

Nijö ôrô gbogbo ò mo dùn ún nínú

On the day he would be saddened by all compelling incidents

Ifá pé òótö ni ká möo so

Ifa enjoins us to be honest

Irúnmolê ò ní jè à so òótú nù o

The Deities would not allow us to compromise the Truth

Wön ní kí won ó möo rúbo kí Olóòótö ó pô

They were asked to always offer sacrifice so that there would be many upright men in the world

Wön bá rúbo

They offered the sacrifice

Olóòótö bêrê sí wà láyé

Thereafter, honest men started to be in the world

Ayé bá à gún.

Life then became well organised.

Thus, *Ogbè Méjì* is unambiguous about the consequences of being upright and wicked. Ironically, a dangerous trend among Western critics and uninitiated African scholars is the penchant to erroneously arrogate evil deed to the personality of the herbalist (*babaláwo*). The fact remains that Agadagidi is less guilty compared to Lati Baba who gives out his child's placenta.

The overt reliance of Africans on the Supreme Being for the interpretations of nature and mystery has been stressed, particularly in indigenous African religion. Fatokun (2005:131-133) observes that despite having "a great pantheon of gods", the Mende, Akan, Yorùbá, Bini, Isoko and Igbo believe in the Supreme Being. However these communities worship Him in diverse ways. For instance, while the Ashanti have temples, altars and priests for him, the Yoruba worship him in the open because of the belief that He is "limitless and could not be confined into space". Therefore, the Yoruba society has a belief system which encompasses deference to divinities like *Ôrúnmilà*, *Qbátálá*, *Sàngó*, *Ògún*, *Qya* and *Èsù*, who are worshiped through their priests. The priest of *Ôrúnmilà* (*babaláwo*) consults the deity on behalf of the people and offers appropriate propitiation. Fatokun opines that this belief system regulates man's conduct in the world. In this vein, a proper understanding of the personality of Agadagidi depends on the awareness of Yoruba tradition and belief. Nwachukwu-Agbada (1990) has earlier quoted Achebe thus:

There are people in my village, today who can claim aspects of my work because it is their story. My parents can claim part of it. But what is even more important is our tradition,

which can claim 90 percent of it, because that is the tradition that has created the framework in which this sort of thing can happen (122).

Suffice it to say that Lati Baba's regular consultation of Ifa priest for protection is in compliance with Yoruba belief system. Bolaji Idowu (1962) supports the indispensability of Ifa before any venture is undertaken in Yorubaland:

It seems absolutely impossible for a Yoruba whose soul is still fettered to his traditional belief to attempt anything at all without consulting the oracle by Ifá...Before a betrothal, before a marriage, before a child is born, at the birth of a child, at successive stages in man's life, before a king is appointed, before a chief is made, before anyone is appointed to a civic office, before a journey is made, in times of crisis, in times of sickness, at any and all times, Ifá is consulted for guidance and assurance (778).

Thus, if Peter Ikoku (a non Yoruba) does not know what to do on discovering a native grenade on his bed, a fellow custom man, who is a Yoruba man, summons another *babalawo* to help out. The efficacy of Ifá in man's affair has been stressed.

In all, *The Boys at the Border* reflects on the menace of corruption, backstabbing, ethnicity and mal-administration that have become a pastime in contemporary Nigerian society, most especially in public corporations and institutions. It also x-rays the decadence that permeates our national life. However beyond the catalogue of woes, a discerning mind cannot but see a ray of hope in personalities who stand above board despite the societal rot. No matter how little these restorative tendencies are, the nation's developmental yearnings rest on them. Uncritical polemics on the negative side of the nation amounts to mere rhetoric which does the nation no good. This restorative agenda should, henceforth, dominate the literary *oeuvres* of development-seeking African writers and critics. Its gains for the continent are enormous.

3.3 Dreams Die at Twilight

To further underscore the futility of order in a postmodern world, Wale Okediran's *Dreams Die at Twilight* (2001) presents the nefarious activities of medical personnel in Nigeria's medical establishment. It is a fictional testimony of the atrocities perpetrated at medical institutions by

medical doctors and other medical personnel. It exposes the rot and decadence that have permeated medical establishments, institutions that are supposedly expected to be above board because of the social significance of medical practice. It also reflects on the gloom that is evident in a society which celebrates mediocrity at the expense of merit. It however warns of the peril in engaging in acts that are inimical to public good. It foresees the inevitability of nemesis catching up with the perpetrators of heinous crimes over time.

The text centres on the life and career of a brilliant but partially cripple, squint-eyed doctor in trainee, Lamidi Bello. With unsteady gait, heavy-orthopedic shoes and a scar on the forehead, Lamidi Bello looks so unattractive before ladies. He is so horrible that ladies cannot withstand his presence, let alone date him. Owing to his constant rejection by ladies, Lamidi Bello becomes frustrated and soon loses confidence to woo a lady:

Because of his unattractive profile Lamidi Bello was not popular with girls and had received a lot of rebuffs from them in the past. None of the girls could bear the thought of going out with the ugly doctor. His bullet-shaped head, the squint in his left eyes, the face deeply etched with long tribal marks and the big scar on his forehead which was from a childhood fire accident, created a grotesque appearance. All attempts by his friends to help him secure a girlfriend had been unsuccessful (7).

His friend, Jimoh Gomez, has to take over the task of 'arranging' ladies for him. However, Lamidi Bello still has difficulty in freeing himself from the inferiority complex he has whenever he comes across beautiful ladies! This 'weakness' is not helped by the attitude of Salome who turns down his offer of a visit to the cinema and, instead, prefers to go out with Dr. Bartholomew Boniface, the Consultant General Surgeon and Head of Surgery Department at the hospital. Bello watches in awe as the lady rebuffs him for another man:

Lamidi's heart suddenly sank at this revelation. And as he thought for what to say next, a Mercedes V-boot pulled up in front of the couple. The side door open and Salome made to enter the car. Seeing that the object of his effort and hard work was leaving him, Lamidi dashed towards the girl as she entered and closed the door...He did not complete his words because his eyes met those of the driver of the Mercedes

V-boot. It was Dr Boniface. As the car drove off, Lamidi became aware of the people staring at him. (11).

Besides the humiliating treatment he gets from Salome, he receives a slap for trying to fondle Dorcas Adeyi. As the information spreads within the length and breadth of the hospital, he becomes the subject of gossip. Not even the highly promiscuous Bisi Abass would want to have anything to do with him! He has no choice but to patronise prostitutes for a fee. Unfortunate, he is always too anxious before ladies hence he fails to ‘perform’ too soon! The only lady who can ‘tolerate’ him for her own selfish reasons is Agnes Uche. Eventually, he turns to a sex pervert who has no confidence to successfully have sex with women. It is either he fails to achieve erection or has premature ejaculation. Ladies make jest of him for being ‘impotent’. His weakness with members of the opposite sex is nauseating to him, particularly as it causes him further embarrassment with Gloria Etuk, Yemi Tella and Dr. (Mrs.) Sheri Mahuk. Entangled by low self esteem, he finds solace in unethical conduct quite unbecoming of a man of his social standing. It takes the intervention of a sex therapist, Dr. (Mrs.) Talabi, who tutors him to be confident with ladies.

Instead of facing his flourishing medical training and later medical practice, Lamidi Bello is too preoccupied with his physiological make-up to the detriment of his health. Although Jimoh Gomez tries so much to help him out of his predicament, his anxiety and exuberance whenever he comes in contact with ladies do not help his cause. His childhood history of being bullied repeatedly had negatively affected his feelings of self worth and confidence. Also the emotional trauma which ensued made him to bed-wet hence his sex life was badly affected. Besides, he had erectile malfunctioning which reduced his sexual prowess. In no time, he ‘derails’ to become a murderer. Agnes has brought her son to the Memorial Hospital for circumcision. Dr. Boniface performs the operation “under general anaesthesia” and sends him to the recovery room. There, Lamidi Bello sees him and suffocates him to death:

Suddenly, a wild, incongruous thought took hold of his feverish brain. The more he thought about it, the more his hatred for the boy increased. Suddenly something snapped in his head and the right part of his face started twitching uncontrollably. He found himself moving towards the sleeping figure on the couch as if dragged by unseen force. When, moments later, he walked out of the recovery room,

the twitching on his face had ceased. It was as if a heavy weight had been lifted off his mind (81).

The killing of Gloria Etuk is more gruesome. She has visited the Memorial Hospital with a friend to examine the lump in her breast. Ironically, she refuses to have herself examined by Lamidi Bello, whom she describes as “that horrible looking doctor in the funny cloth”. Moments later as she sleeps away under the influence of anesthesia in the recovery room, Lamidi Bello ponders about meeting her later at the cadaver room, where her pompous gait would have varnished:

Then his eyes drifted back to Gloria’s half-naked body on the couch. The sight now reminded him of the cadaver he had laid with a few days back. He suddenly wondered how nice it would be if the girl could take a place in the cadaver room. Then, he would be able to go there and do whatever he liked with the body. The more he thought about this idea the more he liked it. A strange thought suddenly exploded in his mind and his head began to spin...Seconds later, he took a few steps back, glanced at the still figure and suddenly felt happy. It was as if a heavy load had just been taken off his mind (88-89).

Also, he takes her pound of flesh from Yemi Tell who had earlier described him as “impotent” and “cripple”. The lady is in the Memorial Hospital to see the plastic surgeon over her amputated fingers, occasioned by a scuffle with Lamidi Bello. As she lies unconscious at the recovery room after the operation, Lamidi Bello decides to sniff live out of her:

As Lemmy stood by Yemi’s bed and stared into her face, the desperate idea that had flashed through his head earlier on while in the lift now took a gripping possession of him. The old hatred for the girl now continued to build up in him to a feverish level. Then he started shaking with indignation. He could no longer control the rage building up in him. Suddenly, the right side of his face started twitching and he felt himself moving towards the still figure on the bed. When he finally left the room seconds later, Lemmy was smiling and the twitching on his face had stopped (112-113).

It is therefore not surprising when he begins to sneak out at night to have sex with female cadaver! His first experience is appalling:

It was the body of a married woman who had died in her late twenties... He soon finished undressing and now stood naked near the cadaver. But, he could not get an erection. The body, however fresh it appeared, was not enough to arouse him...After a few minutes of waiting without any success, he tried to stimulate himself by caressing the cold firm breasts of the cadaver. Gradually, he felt a stirring in his crouch. The erection was coming...Gradually, he sought out the space between the thighs of the female cadaver...Moments later, he felt an intense feeling of exhilaration run through him as he reached the peak (84-85).

What else can one say about a doctor who commits necrophilia! This malfeasance is better imagined from a medical practitioner who is expected to be above board in his professional conduct involving both the dead and the living. Perhaps Dr. Bello's character may be Okediran's postmodernist ploy to denounce any claim to ethics, order and harmony in a postmodern society.

Jimoh Gomez, fondly called Jimmy, is a true friend of Lamidi Bello. Besides his readiness to provide his friend with girlfriends, he takes him for who he is. He does not mind Bello's repulsive mien and unpleasant personality, thus agrees to be his 'bestman'. He once advises him to change his name to Lemmy, put on good clothes, use a pair of tinted glasses, and see a plastic surgeon. He is so convince that if Bello can do all these, his grotesque appearance before ladies would soon become a thing of the past:

First and foremost, I know you're not so well off to afford some expensive clothes. However, your badly cut clothes and your heavy shoes make you too inconveniently conspicuous. I know a good shop near the Marina where we can get some good second hand clothes and soft shoes... The next important thing is to get a pair of tinted glasses which could obscure the squint in your left eye...The last and definitely not the least of your problem is that ugly scar on your forehead. It's the real culprit. If only we could get the plastic surgeon to take a look (14-15).

If Lamidi Bello is suspected but not implicated over the death of Milton John jnr. and Gloria Etuk, the death of Yemi Tell would not follow the same pattern. The media backlash gives rise to the composition of an Investigative Judicial Panel with the mandate to unravel the causes of series of death at the Memorial Hospital. Again, Jimmy is at hand to secure the service of a lawyer, Bayo

Oshodi, for the newly-employed Dr. Lamidi Bello. Barrister Oshodi successfully defends him at the panel. Although the testimonies of Agnes Uche, Lara Moses, Mrs Adeleye and Ada almost implicate Dr. Bello, his lawyer is able to save his neck through the assistance of the psychiatrist, Professor Alkali, who declares him medically unstable. Eventually, the panel agrees that even if circumstantial evidence nails him, Dr. Bello cannot be convicted of murder on this ground alone. It also concurs that Dr. Bello is emotionally unstable. The stage is now set for his release:

However, by the powers of section 230 (1) of the Criminal procedure Act, I hereby commit Dr Bello to psychiatric care under Professor Anwar Alkali for a period of at least six months after which is case shall be reviewed. During this period, he shall not be involved in any patient care in the hospital until he's declared to be mentally capable of continuing his medical practice ⁽¹³⁴⁾.

It is to Jimmy's relieve that Dr. Bello is only transferred to the Anatomy department to continue his medical practices.

Okediran's portrayal of Agnes Uche is startling. In her, we see a character whose past lifestyle continues to hunt. She finds solace in committing crimes. She is morally bankrupt, academically dull and emotionally unstable. She dates every man that can pick her bills and assist her academic pursuits. She has undisguised amorous affairs with Dr. Boniface because he is the Head of Surgery Department and Lamidi Bello owing to her academic deficiency. Apart from her numerous 'clients', she does not consider it a big deal to sleep with Milton John, who barely comes to Nigeria for a show! As she gets pregnant, she dares not consider the choice of abortion, especially having already perforated her uterus after five earlier ones! When her boyfriend, Larry Okon, bluntly refuses to have anything to do with the pregnancy owing to her promiscuous nature, she turns to Lamidi Bello. Although Jimmy is skeptical, he has to go along with his friend who is happy to have proved to everyone that he is not impotent. Agnes later marries Lamidi Bello in order to secure a job at the Memorial Hospital, cover her track over her illegitimate child, and escape public scorn. The bubble however bursts when the baby is delivered a mulatto. Lamidi Bello had come to the Memorial Hospital to see 'his' baby:

It took Lemmy Bello an extra moment to convince himself that he was actually looking at a mulatto baby and not a full Negroid...Leemy looked again trying to clear the log from

his mind. But, it was there-the almost yellow skin, the curly hair and...As he picked him up, the baby stopped crying and stared back at him with large blue eyes. Then it hit him fully in the face the resemblance was startling! The baby was a spitting image of that popular British musician-Milton John whose photograph he had seen many times in the papers (58).

Henceforth, Lamidi Bello becomes a shadow of himself. He has wasted his hard-earned resources and time on a venture that ends up in deceit and ignominy! He can never remain the same. He begins to have the erroneous inclination that everybody is discussing his plight. The matter gets to the head when a psychiatrist, Dr. Alkali, confirms he suffers from “a classical case of depressive psychosis”! To allow him ample time to rest and recover in a different environment, Dr. Boniface sends him to a conference of the African Surgery Association in Alexandria, Egypt. Ironically, his experiences in Alexandria are nothing to write home about. He is taken for a fool by two Egyptian youths and made to suffer the indignation of washing dirty plates at a restaurant to make up for the bill of “fifteen Egyptian pounds”. Also, a certain Dr. (Mrs.) Sheri Mahuk absconds with his paper at the conference! The frustration is so much that his mental condition relapses! He has to be sent back to Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Agnes Uche is not done with Dr. Bello. Having reunited with him at Dr. Gomez wedding party where they dance together, she offers to help him out of his sexual inadequacies by being readily available at all time. Dr. Bello is swept off his feet in appreciation. When she eventually sells the idea of providing her with an embalmed body for her drug trade, he has no choice other than to agree, albeit reluctantly. He is to make cadaver available while Agnes Uche would ensure that certain kilogram of cocaine is stored in the body to be sent to her baron abroad. In a confidential discussion with her former roommate, Folasade Olabisi Badmus, she reveals her ulterior motive for luring Dr. Bello back to her life:

In that case you’ll do well to keep it very secret. Lemmy works in the Anatomy Department where he has authority over some dead bodies that are brought in from government mortuaries to be used for dissection by medical students. I have done some calculations and I presume that if Lemmy could supply us with a body every month, we shall be able to take out all our consignment (155).

Besides, she is to register a hearse delivery van to shield her real intention from the prying eyes of law enforcement agents:

I'll register a hearse service and once in a month, a citizen of one of the West African countries resident in the country will "die". The relatives of the deceased would, therefore, request for the body to be transported home. That will be my alibi for getting the body out of the country...No problem. I have got expert forgers to work on that. And once I get outside the country's border, my agents will take over the movement of the drug to its final destinations (155-157).

Unknown to Dr. Bello, Agnes Uche has planned to employ blackmail to ensure that he supplies her cadaver on a regular basis. Although she capitalises on his sexual weakness to get the body at first, subsequent supplies are made possible through treat and blackmail. Having achieved her heart desire from a reluctant Dr. Bello, she blackmails him into conniving with her to perpetrate her cocaine business repeatedly, threatening to expose him if he stops:

Agnes took a glance at her wrist watch and said, Lemmy, don't let us waste time over this. I have an appointment in half an hour, and I know you too have your lectures to give. Supposing I write an anonymous letter to the University letting them know that you supplied the last body to us, do you think you'll like that? On the other hand, just to release another dead body out of the hundreds at your disposal might seem a more comfortable option to a long jail term. Think about this (179-180).

Also, Agnes Uche explores the corrupt nature of government officials to cover her track at the Licensing Office after her hearse service, The Evergreen Hearse Service, is detected by the Interpol to be an avenue for drug trafficking. As Kweku is arrested in Ghana, Agnes Uche tries to tidy up all loose ends:

She therefore decided to start seeing the necessary people in town just in case any investigation began. Her first port of call was the Lagos Mainland Licensing Office where she had registered the van. With a hundred naira tip, she was able to locate and destroy the papers with which the van was registered. And just to be doubly sure, she had placed a call to her Asian businessman boy-friend who was alleged to be a good friend of high-ranking officers of the Nigerian Police Force...She also took the time to visit her bank where she instructed the Manager not to send any letter to her until further notice (185).

Unfortunately, she meets her waterloo sooner than expected. Her fate serves her right as she is eventually killed by Dr. Bello before the police get at her. However, Agnes Uche would not have been able to perpetrate her illicit drug business but for the connivance of some highly placed government officials. If she can bribe her ways through medical school, are we still surprise that she is able to delete her van's registration number from the records at the Licensing Office? If the government officials that come in contact with her have done their work dutifully, perhaps she would have been arrested a long time ago. This would have saved Dr. Bello from her troubles. Unfortunately, the societal rot continues to aid her to further perpetrate her crimes. This also explains why her classmate, Bisi, is able to engage in the crime of currency trafficking unmolested.

Another character worthy of note is Dr. Boniface, the Head of Surgery Department. Dr. Boniface is a pervert who has the unenviable record of dating his students and other medical personnel who come his way. He is the first person to bruise Dr. Bello's ego when he takes away Salome whom he has a date with. Besides, he enjoys romance with Agnes Uche, Gloria Etuk and even Mrs. Dagogo. In fact, he would have married the latter but for his infidelity. He has soft-spot for ladies hence cannot reprimand Gloria Etuk for insulting Dr. Bello. The young doctor has complaint that Gloria Etuk is rude to him. Instead of protecting his younger colleague, he merely placates him and decides to perform the operation himself:

The surgeon took a glance at the girl and noticed that she was giggling. He knew very well that he couldn't reprimand her, so he quickly took the younger doctor aside... Thereafter, the surgeon went back to examine the girl himself. Lemmy was however unhappy that the surgeon couldn't reprimand the girl in his presence (87-88).

Besides, he suspects Dr. Bello for the killings of Agnes' baby and Miss Etuk but cannot implicate him, perhaps to cover up his own track. He is only worried because the two inquests might affect his professorial appointment:

Each of the inquests blamed me for one thing or the other. And as you know, my professorship appointment is two years behind... I want you to re-assess Dr Bello. He's a very brilliant man. I wouldn't want him to become a chronic psychiatric case. I also don't want him to cause any further problem for me. Remember, I told you my promotion is two years behind? (91-92).

Perhaps he could have ignored the series of enquiries but for their negative implication for his professional growth. Such a character cannot be relied upon in serious circumstances. He may not acquaint himself creditably.

Dreams Die at Twilight presents a gloomy picture of Nigeria's medical practices and institutions. Behind the 'mouthing' of slogan which depicts the institution as an ideal haven for succour-seeking patients, there lies a group of fun-seekers, professionally unfit personnel. Although Dr. Boniface is eminently qualified as a medical practitioner, his lack of self-esteem, particularly about women, does not portray him as a worthy practitioner. He descends so low to visit female hostel, goes to musical show with a female student, and finds it difficult to differentiate between pleasure and official duty when Gloria Etuk comes to remove a lump in her breast. This is clearly against the ethics of medical practices which frown at sexual relationship between physicians and patients. *Wikipedia- the free Encyclopedia* has warned of the danger in sexual relationship between a physician and the patient:

Sexual relationships between doctors and patients can create ethical conflicts, since sexual consent may conflict with the fiduciary responsibility of the physician. Doctors who enter into sexual relationships with patients face the threats of deregistration and prosecution. In the early 1990s, it was estimated that 2-9% of doctors had violated this rule. Sexual relationships between physicians and patients' relatives may also be prohibited in some jurisdictions, although this prohibition is highly controversial.

Therefore, Dr. Boniface's sexual relationship with Gloria Etuk amounts to grave violation of medical ethics. Perhaps his flagrant violation of medical ethics foregrounds postmodernist disavowal of ethical issues and conducts.

Also Professor Alkali's sense of judgment and evaluation is suspect. An academic cum medical trainer of his very high professional standing should have saved the society from having to condone a psychiatric patient as a medical doctor. Despite Dr. Boniface's testimony which implicates Dr. Bello of killing Agne's child and Gloria Etuk, he refuses to admit that he has become a psychopath. In fact, his revelation that Dr. Bello is under his medical examination provides Barrister Bayo Oshodi an alibi to save him. Also if he admits before the panel of inquiry that Dr. Bello is a psychopath, why does he deny same when Dr. Boniface takes him up? Why

can't he advise the hospital's board of governor to sack him and save the establishment from the harrowing experiences of scandals and enquiries? When does it dawn on him that section 28 of the criminal code presumes an insane person not liable for his action and inaction? Jonsen, Braddock and Edwards (1998) have argued that a profession reserves the "right to train, admit, discipline and dismiss" its members who have failed to meet the minimum standard requires in competence, duties and responsibilities. To this end, a physician is expected to be altruistic, accountable to the patient, professionally excellent, dutiful, possesses honour and integrity, and respects the feelings of patients, professional colleagues and medical trainees. Unfortunately, Professor Alkali's action contradicts this jealously-guided professional norm. His refusal to discipline Dr. Bello undermines his claim to professional altruism, competence, accountability and respect for the dignity of others.

Meanwhile, a close scrutiny of Dr. Bello's behaviour towards beautiful ladies reveals that he develops the attitude after series of neglect, scorn and disdain from them. After suffering relentlessly from Agne's antics and pranks, frustration is expected. Who could withstand the frustration of investing so much on a beautiful lady, only to be paid back with an illegitimate child? How else would he have handled Agne's blackmail other than to murder her? What moral justification does Gloria Etuk has to mock him in the presence of her friend, Lara? How on earth would anyone not be offended to be insulted by Bisi Abass and Yemi Tella? What is wrong in giving his conference paper to Dr. (Mrs.) Sheri Mahuk who shamelessly absconds with it? If everyone now discusses his sexual abnormality, is he not being 'pushed' to patronise ladies of easy virtues? Can we not have an understanding society where Bello's sexual weaknesses would be accepted or, at least, tolerated? Even if we cannot, is it right for ladies, medical trainees for that matter, to turn him into a laughing stock? These and more turn him to a psychosis that sleeps with prostitutes, kills patients at will, and commits necrophilia. The society, not Dr. Bello, should be blamed.

Similarly, African society accords high premium to hardwork and competence in all endeavour, especially at work. Unfortunately, Dr. Bello's brilliance is not appreciated more than being given the offer of a 'thankless' medical appointment. While a dull and carefree Dr. Jimoh secures better and more lucrative dual appointments with Federal Palace Hotel and MACO Specialist Clinic, Dr. Bello has to make do with less attractive appointment. To this end, Dr. Jimoh is able to leave a comfortable life while Dr. Bello resorts to borrowing. He cannot even afford a car until the largess comes from Agnes. Besides, he has an aged mother and a sick sister to cater for.

The fate which befalls him does not encourage professionally-minded individuals to be dedicated to their profession.

The personality of Jimi Gomez elicits the level of moral debasement and penchant for mediocrity that has become associated with Nigerian society. He explores the influence of his highly-connected and wealthy father to secure admission into Lagos Southern University despite his very weak academic status. Also with the assistance of his friend, Lamidi Bello, he manages to pass through medical school, though several years behind schedule. He barely makes up for his academic deficiencies with his popularity among ladies on campus. No wonder he tolerates Lamidi Bello no matter what befalls him. Okediran's conclusion on Jimi Gomez is apposite here:

He had remained grateful to Lamidi for helping him through medical school. Not being a brilliant student, Jimi's affluent father had used his influence to get the boy into the medical school of the Lagos Southern University which used the Memorial Hospital as its teaching hospital. Consequently, Jimi had to repeat almost every class. He was able to pass the last two years on first attempts due to special coaching from Lamidi when they became classmates, although Jimi had started medical school three years before Lamidi (8).

When a supposedly qualified medical doctor cannot interpret Electrocardiograms, it leaves much to be desired the manner of treatment he would administer on any patient who has the 'misfortune' of coming to him for medical attention! If Dr. Jimoh cannot make use of a sigmoidoscope, one cannot but wonder the manner of students being produced in our medical schools. In actual fact, his decision to cover up whatever Dr. Bello does is understandable, though it may lead him into trouble. He almost catches Dr. Bello pant down with a cadaver but still cannot talk him out of the shameful act. By so doing, he has violated medical ethics. Edwards, McCormick and Braddock (1998) have admonished even medical students to take up their resident if he or she is caught engaging in unethical conduct:

Ideally, you could talk with your resident about what you observed. Everyone has a unique perspective and your resident may have a rationale for his behavior that was unknown to you. Approaching him honestly, with simple questions, may allow him the benefit of the doubt and open up a dialogue between you. The nature of the observed 'unethical' act determines what your obligations are. In

simpler cases, it can be a matter of treating it as a negative lesson in how NOT to be a physician. In more complex instances, patient care may be in jeopardy and you may have an obligation to report the resident's behavior if he refuses to discuss it with you directly.

Perhaps, Dr. Bello would have turned a new leaf if his friend can scold him. Besides, the fact that he is willing to assist a friend gets the sexual fulfillment he seeks does not come from any genuine intention to help. Even if he deserves credit for persuading Agnes Uche to pay the two thousand naira bill for Dr. Bello's sex therapy, yet we aver that his action is borne out of a resolve to pay back a 'benefactor' who assists him to graduate from medical school. Despite his suspicion of Bello's recent countenance and actions, particularly on seeing him with a wet-trouser coming out of cadaver room, he finds it difficult to talk his friend out of necrophilia. Even when the bubble burst, he advises Bello to quickly proceed on sabbatical to allow fray nerves to calm down. He can arrange girls for Bello and take him to a sex therapist but do not have the effrontery to hurt him by speaking the truth. He can sense danger in Bello's union with Agnes but cannot stand his ground and call a spade a spade no matter his friend's disposition, particularly after the lady has perforated her uterus. Besides, the consequence would have been devastating if he is caught persuading Dr. Bello to provide a sigmoidoscope to help remove cocaine from a lady's anus. He even uses the largesse from Agnes Uche to establish ADA clinic! This portrays him as a selfish individual who knows but ignores the peril in assisting a criminally-minded friend. His nefarious activities lay credence to the danger embedded in according mediocrity a pride of place in our national life.

In all, Okediran's *Dreams Die at Twilight* presents characters that are less guilty of their heinous crimes compared to the society that promotes monstrous personalities. Dr. Bello's incessant rejection and ill-luck, particularly with beautiful women, leads him to crime and necrophilia. Perhaps he would not have become a psychopath but for his awful appearance caused by his poverty-stricken background and sexual inadequacies. In fact his brilliance and academic astute would have endeared him to people, women inclusive, such that his mates would envy him. Besides, if the two senior colleagues, Dr. Boniface and Professor Alkali, have taken the bull by the horn and recommended him for dismissal, perhaps the hospital would have been spared the indignity of several probes and attendant media backlash. The same professional ineptitude accounts for Dr. Jimoh Gomez's progress and eventual graduation as a medical doctor despite his overt medical inadequacies. Worse of all, even Agnes Uche passes out in flying colours!

Therefore, we can conclude that Dr. Bello, Dr. Gomez and Agnes are all victims of a morally debased society, administrative ineptitude and official corruption. Apportioning blames to them, outside the context of contemporary Nigerian society, may not promote corrective measures which can be adduced to serve societal goal.

Besides, the social importance of medical practices has been stressed. It is a well known fact that medical institutions are indispensable in the promotion and sustenance of people's wellbeing in the society. Although some undesirable elements may have constituted themselves into a clog in the wheel of progress for the establishments, core professionals abound in the system. Despite their weaknesses which underscore the fact that medical officers like Professor Alkali, Dr. Boniface, Dr. Bello and Mrs. Dagogo are merely human, no one is left in doubt about their mastery of their chosen career. In the same vein, none of Dr. Bello and Agnes Uche goes unpunished. The victory of good over evil is foregrounded as Dr. Bello kills Agnes Uche before he is eventually arrested by the police. Therefore, behind the postmodernist depiction of gloom and despair, there lies a ray of hope for the society.

3.4 Tenants of the House

Tenants of the House (2009) is a graphic reflection of a writer who has witnessed the intrigues, intricacies, horse trading, and blackmail that are the hallmark of Nigeria's politics. This fiction satirises the higher echelons of the nation's body polity who, ordinarily, should provide the much needed direction for national developments, economic emancipation and socio-political rebirth. It does not fail to expose the greed, avarice and ostentation of the political class. It also chides the sycophants, praise-singers and bootlickers in government.

After ignoring the dictate of his conscience by paying for the services of party chieftains, thugs, hangers-on and other political jobbers, Samuel Bakura is elected to the nation's House of Representatives to represent Kaduna South Federal Constituency. He narrates his ordeal before and during the election:

But I found that most of the dirt in the dirty game was about money, not merit. Also, the godfathers ignored merit; they were in it for money...And the money! Every step of the way it was more and more and more money. Money for the chieftains; money for the constituency moguls; money for

party stalwart; money for party thugs; money for the polling agents...⁽⁴⁻⁵⁾.

On getting to the House, the company of Honourable Elizabeth Bello from his state further exposes the mind of many Nigerian politicians. Honourable Bello encourages him to maximise this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and make money on all fronts. This would uplift his financial status even among fellow parliamentarians. Also the availability of money would enable him to settle power brokers that would 'arrange' his second-term bid:

Huge loads of fertilizer is what you need. Money, money, money is the fertilizer of politics. Sam, don't be a small boy. How much do you earn here as a Member of Parliament? Peanuts...peanuts that godfathers and constituents swallow up as quick as chickens devour maize...How many Reps make it backs? Only two out of ten. Sam, Sam, Sam, and how many times did I call you? You want to make it back? Take the money; make the money, from anywhere, everywhere. Prepare for the raining day. Politics can be good for you. In this Nigeria, life outside parliaments is hard, hard, hard ⁽⁶⁾.

True to her conviction, Honourable Bello soon introduces him to the 'movers and shakers' in the parliament. So desperate is the lady that she carries a gun in her hand bag! Her political philosophy is represented in her common refrain "to kill is a crime; to kill at the right time is politics", meaning that she can kill if the occasion warrants it! She can even use her body to achieve lucrative political ends. She once lures Honourable Bakura with money to support the impeachment of the Speaker. She is a shrewd politician who often acts as a mole to gather information to nail the speaker.

Meanwhile, the attempt to impeach the speaker, Honourable Yaya Suleiman, elicits the insincerity and unpatriotic nature of many of the so-called Honourables in the House. Honourable Wenike wants the chairmanship of the lucrative committee on NDDC. His inability to get it puts him on collision course with the speaker. His spurious allegation against the speaker is therefore a ploy to feather his own nest. He claims that the speaker violates House Rule Order VII Section 10 (a) and (b) in appointing Honourable Ojebode who had 'settled' him with one hundred thousand dollars to bag the chairmanship! For the onslaught, Honourable Bello is to serve as a mole. She picks vital information from the speaker's camp and divulges it for the Wenike's group. She gets ten thousand dollars for Honourable Bakura for the 'project'. As the plot thickens, the contradiction in the major players of Nigeria's constitution is revealed. While the basic provision of 1999

Constitution of Nigeria upholds the principles of separation of powers between the executive, legislature and the judiciary, the reverse is the case in Nigeria. The executive infiltrates the legislature effortlessly with financial inducement. President Dominic Oneya mandates his Presidential Liaison Officer, Senator Kayode Smollet, to mastermind the speaker's removal and, invariably, soften the ground for his tenure-elongation agenda. As the uproar generated by the speaker's refusal to allow Honourable Junaid to present a petition leads to commotion, Honourable Kasali, "a former chairman of the drivers' and conductors' union" from Oyo state, forcefully takes the mace away. The PLO later explains to the president the rationale behind the 'removal' of the mace from the custody of the House:

Your Excellency, the absence of the mace has put the Speaker and his group on the defensive. The whole nation knows that the mace is the symbol of the authority of the House. If they don't do our will, we can form a parallel House (28).

When the president asks about how to secure the required two-third majority as stipulated by the constitution, the PLO demands for money to prosecute the deal:

It has been done before, Your Excellency. Fertilizer! We shall spread the muck and woo enough Members to our side...Your Excellency, success costs money. The strategy is pure and simple: hit them, hit them hard; give them what they dare not reject. Sir, we must remember it is a contest of wills and resources. It's a tug of war: naira for naira, dollar for dollar. Money is the name of the game; Your Excellency (28-29).

The plot may not have been imagined but for cash reward which the PLO makes readily available to willing Members of the House. The president has no choice other than to release a substantial amount of money for the plot. The speaker's private and official residency is to be bugged by the security agencies.

Expectedly, the speaker begins a 'fight' to hold on to his exalted office. He goes to Honourable Bakura's official residence apparently to talk him out of the plot. He persuades him to offer himself for patriotic assignment and not mingle with unpatriotic, selfish and ill-educated Members of the House. He assures him of his readiness to collaborate with like-minds to move the nation forwards through the passage of bills that have direct bearing on the masses. His long

speech speaks volume of a drowning man who is desperate to cling unto anybody for survival, even when he is aware his conversation is being recorded:

As you are aware, we all came into this National Assembly from different backgrounds and with different intentions...Despite this, I know that with your brains, charisma and drive, there are other important duties I can saddle you with. There are very important bills, motions and legislative activities which you can help to organise...With due respect to them, I still believe that you are too superior in educational and moral background and should normally not be conniving with the likes of Wenike, Lasisi and Muktar to unseat me...You and I know why Wenike and his group want to get me out of my seat. It's just the first step in the long-term plan to install a Speaker who is the President's lackey (52-54).

Even if he can't match the president's largesse, he gives Honourable Bakura a token for his time. As the speaker takes his leave, Honourable Bakura is transformed. He remembers how he had vowed to his late father to study law so as fight the causes of the downtrodden, most especially to assuage the injustice meted out to his people by Fulani herdsmen. He refuses sexual overtures from Honourable Bello and offers to refund the money he had earlier collected. He has to join hand with like-minded parliamentarians and the speaker at a media conference to denounce the impeachment moves. The president is jolted. Although the Wenike group attempt to suspend dissentient members of the House, thereby securing the required two-third majority as stipulated by section 50, subsection (c) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria through the back door, the plot falls like pack of cards. The heroes are the mass of the people like the students, labour unions, market women, journalists, diplomats and other patriotic Nigerians. They rebuff the security threat, teargas and arrest. President Oneya has to quickly call for a truce between the presidency and the belligerent legislators. The deputy speaker does not mince words as he showers encomium on the people for their relentless defence of the nation's democracy:

Today you have established beyond all doubts the power of the people, their collective will and wisdom, moulded and merged together in synchronizes movement, is indeed mightier than the guns of tyranny and the tanks of oppression. ..you have, by your staunch opposition to a conniving captain-of-state and his conspiratorial minions,

restored hope and confidence to millions of Nigerians and re-established the truth now ringing all over the world that there is hope for the black man... This parliament will erect a plague that will symbolize today's victory at this very site where the battle against nepotism, avarice and totalitarianism was bitterly fought and won (120-121).

Ironically, the interest of the people is not taken into cognizance when the leadership of the House throws its weight behind the president's bid to extend his tenure beyond the stipulated two-terms!

Although the botched plan to impeach the speaker and make way for an executive-friendly legislative house shows the limitation of money, especially on sensitive political issues, president Oneya fails to read between the lines. He pursues his self-perpetuation agenda vigorously. He earmarks mouth-watering amount of money, mostly in foreign currency, for the onslaught. He surprisingly recruits the speaker, thereby confirming the maxim "no permanent friend in politics, only permanent interest". On his part, the speaker, as well as the leadership of the House, is to persuade Members of the House to support a proposed Constitution Amendment Bill. If the said bill is allowed easy passage in the House, the president assures him of presidential support for him to become the governor of his native Borno state. Other parliamentarians are to secure automatic ticket for their return bid into the House:

Perhaps, my dear Speaker, we could get you into the Governor's lodge at Maiduguri? How about that?... You see, the opposite of continuity is not change. It is discontinuity, instability, chaos. But we want continuity, stability, order and peace. Even political scientists know that a rapid change of government can disrupt things. A term is four years, all right. But you and I know it takes that number of years just for a government to settle down (137-138).

The speaker is not easily convinced. He wants the president to clear the air on how the parliamentarians will be lobbied to support the agenda. He also foresees opposition from the mass of the people, the ever critical press and, most importantly, the northern group. Eventually, his inordinate ambition to become governor beclouds his sense of judgement. He buys into the plan. He instantly supports Honourable Bakura's proposed Conflict Resolution Bill. Honourable Bakura only requests for five million naira to prosecute the bill. He gets seven million naira without much ado! However, Honourable Bakura is not someone to be swayed from the path of honour. After he

had been denied access to the speaker and the House leader, the deputy speaker bears his mind on what informs their support for the bill:

Honourable Samuel, politics is not arithmetic. One plus one may not always equal two. In this country clean politics is a loser's game. How do you want to survive? To be a good politician you must think of your survival, of yourself first. How much did you spend to win your seat? Election expenses will continue to rise. If you come across an opportunity to return to your seat at little cost, will you not jump at it? Sam, answer me now ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾.

He nonetheless meets his match in Honourable Bakura who defiantly stands his ground because of the belief that it is now the turn of the north to produce the next president:

DS, I beg to differ. It is painful that just a few weeks ago you and I were on the same side fighting a common cause as worthy comrades. Now we are on different sides. Let me tell you point blank: the cause you are promoting is a lost one, a hopelessly lost one ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾.

His resolve does not convince the deputy speaker who only enjoins him to join the Members who are supporting the bill whenever he has had a rethink.

Even if the speaker has any reservation about the Tenure Elongation Bill, the promises of cash reward, gubernatorial ticket and automatic support for members' re-election bid sway him to back the president. In the name of continuity, he puts his own reputation and the integrity of the parliament on the line. He tries to convince Honourable Bakura unsuccessfully. Neither president Oneya nor governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Salisu Mohammed, could persuade him too! The desperate speaker ensures that Honourable Rimi is suspended for exposing the corruption and insincerity in the House. After extensive deliberations from Honourables like Yahaya, Olurin, Shehu and Oguka, Honourable Rimi is suspended for one month in the first instance, before the Ethics and Privileges Committee suspends him for three month without pay. All these nevertheless prove abortive. However, the speaker has to battle with the determined opposition from the Arewa Group and the threat of impeachment and harassment by the state-sponsored anti-graft agencies.

The anti-self perpetuation legislators take up the gauntlet against the president. They take their campaign outside the shore of Nigeria. They seek the support of African leaders in Kampala, mobilise Nigerians to oppose the bill, and reject a bribe of two hundred thousand dollars each. Led

by Honourables Kalkulus, Socrates, Bakura, Ogochukwu, Chuks, Angel, Yellow, Ibrahim and Dantata, opposition to the bill soars. Under the banner of the 2007 Group, they sabotage an attempt to buoy the president's image with a Vote of Confidence Bill. Others united in opposition to the bill include the press, the Northern Governors Forum, some retired generals and the mass of the people. The stage is nonetheless set for the presentation of the Tenure Elongation Bill. However, when the bill is presented at the Senate, it is overwhelmingly defeated. The speaker has to quickly suspend further deliberation on it.

Expectedly, the Tenure Elongation Bill infuriates Nigerians from all walks of life. The Arewa Group feels slighted at the president's attempt to jettison zoning arrangement which favours the north. The group does not hesitate to mobilise for the president's impeachment. In a delegation of the group to the speaker, its leader Ambassador Shehu Dalhatu chides the House for its role in the Tenure Elongation Bill. He however calls on the House to commence impeachment move against the president. He warns the speaker not to undermine the process in any way:

When everybody from the North was fighting against the tenure prolongation plan, we have evidence to show how you hobnobbed with the President to get the Bill through. In fact, if the Senate had not thrown out the Bill before the House aborted it, it is very unlikely that you could have stopped it...we have it on good authority that the President wants to punish some top political leaders and businessmen in the country whom he blames for blocking his Bill...In order to forestall this move, the Arewa Forum, in collaboration with other political and business leaders in the country, have agreed with the Honourable Members to start impeachment proceedings against Mr. President ⁽²⁶⁸⁾.

Even the vice-president cares no hoot what befalls the president, after all he is the direct beneficiary in line with the constitutional provision as stipulated in section 143, subsection (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) of 1999 Constitution. He therefore ill-advises the president to stay on and damn the consequence even when other members of the kitchen cabinet advise him to resign. He enjoins the president to do the usual: bribe the legislators even "if it needs emptying all our 5-billion-dollar foreign reserve":

Mr. President, we are all politicians and we know that it is never over until it's over. My advice therefore is for us to fight this matter to the last. Democracy, they say, is a game of numbers. While it is true that one-third of the Members of

the National Assembly should sign the notice of impeachment, section 143 subsection 9 states that ‘the final decision must be taken by not less than two-thirds majority of each House of the National Assembly’. Mr. President, if we move quickly, we can make sure that the two-third majority is not achieved ⁽²⁸⁰⁾.

On their part, the president’s wife and the PLO encourage him to play the last joker. Senator Smollet is to send twenty million dollars to the National Assembly through Senator Julius Kanu and Representative Elizabeth Bello. Unfortunately for him, he is recorded and shown presenting the bribe on a private television station! As the president’s impeachable offences increase, his fate is better imagined.

President Oneya is an example of corrupt, despotic African leaders. He is so desperate to hold on to power though not for public goods but for personal aggrandizement. He has allies in corrupt politicians, shrewd businessmen and a section of the press like The Clarion, The Ambassador and The Clean Broom. He once directs his PLO to ensure that all federal, state and local government ministries, parastatals and agencies pay for a full-page congratulatory advertisement bearing the photograph of his mother on her birthday! He abuses his office so much that he cannot imagine life after office. His determination to extend his tenure in office against the general provision of 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria depicts him as a desperate man who neither respects the constitution nor the Oath of Allegiance he sworn to uphold on assumption of office. Section 137, subsection (b) of the said constitution is clear on the disqualification of any person to the exalted position of president in Nigeria. Among others, it disqualifies anyone who has hitherto been elected to the office “at any two previous elections”. Therefore, since he is statute-barred from perpetuating himself in office, his action is in flagrant violation of the provisions of the constitution. This “gross misconduct” is an impeachable offence.

The determination to set aside or amend section 137, subsection (b) of the constitution exposes the beast in president Oneya. Since the leadership of the House of Representatives is hostile, he seeks a change in the leadership. He goes for the ‘jugular’ of the speaker, desiring to replace him with a lackey who would do as bidding. A tidy sum of one hundred million naira is committed to bribe two hundred and forty Representatives who make up the required two-third of the House. Despite the adoption of federal might, however, the speaker is able to garner the support of ‘patriotic’ Members of the House, media practitioners, students’ groups, market women

and labour unions to foil the plan. Honourable Bakura has to back out of the ploy after being convinced of the 'genuine' intention of the speaker for the nation. Even the stealing of the mace does not help the course of the 'dishonourable' Honourables from the Wenike Group. As the plot fails, the level of corruption in the National Assembly, where decisions are taken not for altruistic intentions but for self-enrichment and personal aggrandizement, is exposed. While some Representatives support the removal of the speaker because they feel alienated from 'juicy' committees, the president is able to penetrate the House because he has unrestrained access to public fund which he dispenses at will! Even the speaker knows the influence money can generate in the parliament hence, he gives Honourable Bakura undisclosed amount of money to further convince him. Nevertheless, the fact that the plot eventually fails is a good commentary on the commitment of patriotic Honourable Members and the generality of the people. It shows that beyond the gloom that envelops Nigeria's body polity, no one, no matter how highly placed, can take the people for granted. It gladdens the heart that none of the presidency-backed bills see the light of the day.

The speaker, Rt. Honourable Yaya Suleiman, is an inconsistent personality. He is a vacillating politician whose actions and inactions are unbecoming of the occupier of such exalted office. Having escaped the ploy to impeach him through the skin of his teeth, we are taken aback by the speed with which he quickly switches allegiance to the president, the man who hitherto wanted him out of office. Besides conceding some lucrative committee chairmanships to the Wenike Group, his unreliable personality gets to the head when he becomes the arrow-head of the Tenure Elongation Bill, apparently to facilitate his emergence as the next governor of his native Borno state. His reckless approval of seven million naira, instead of five million, for Honourable Bakura's Conflict Resolution Bill is a Greek-gift meant to sway him to his side. No wonder the chairman of Arewa Group, Ambassador Shehu Dalhatu, enjoins him to follow the House rule to the letter in the proposed impeachment of the president. Ambassador Dalhatu also chides him for supporting the botched Tenure Elongation Bill, not minding the constitutional bottleneck. If not for his ignominious role in the bill, why does he still think the president should be spared, despite the position of the senate president to the contrary? Fortunately for the nation, no one can save president Oneya now that his PLO, Senator Kayode Smollet, has been caught red-handed given bribe on his behalf to the parliamentarians. It is good that his clandestine move and dastardly act have been revealed to the generality of Nigerians on air.

Whenever senator Smollet's scheming and style of politics comes to the fore, what readily come to mind is the activities of sycophants, boot-lickers and praise singers that dominate Nigeria's political space. Having served as a senator before his present appointment as the PLO, senator Smollet obviously understands the intrigues of law-making. He knows that decisions are taken to feather the nest of some powerful legislators and their backers outside the parliament. He does not believe any legislator can take a principled stance against any issue once 'fertilizer' is available. He argues that everybody has a price. Instead of following the dictate of his assignment to liaise with the parliament for the presidency, he becomes the conduit pipe to siphon money from the president to willing parliamentarians. He milks the president so much that the latter once threatens to replace him, calling him unprintable names. He prefers to tell him whatever he thinks he wants to hear. However, his crude tactics of persuading the president to bribe the legislators whenever any issue crops up do not work for once. The cash-induced Representatives merely collect money but can neither effect the speaker's impeachment, see the Tenure Elongation Bill through, nor abort the ten-count charges of impeachment leveled against the president. It is to the credit of the National Assembly that the legislators do not pass these bills, even when majority of them have collected money from senator Smollet.

Ordinarily, Honourable Samuel Bakura should represent the hope and aspiration of the nation. Having trained as a lawyer to nip in the bud the hostility and destruction meted out to his farming community by the Fulani herdsmen, he comes to the National Assembly with youthful zeal and determination to help mankind. Unfortunately, the company of fellow parliamentarian from his native Kaduna state exposes him to the scheming, lobbying and nocturnal activities of the House. Honourable Bello enjoins him to possess a gun for political expediency and relate with the power brokers in the House. She also introduces him to Honourable Wenike. This increases his rating so much that he is admitted into the inner caucus of the group out to impeach the Speaker, despite his membership of the official opposition party. It is also from Honourable Bello that he discovers that successful women patronise "gigolo", i.e men who they pay for 'services rendered' with no string attached! However, when it dawns an Honourable Bakura that the president wants the speaker impeached to prepare the ground for his self- perpetuation agenda, he backs out of the arrangement and retraces his step. He discountenances Honourable Bello's threat of blackmail, murder and unsolicited offer of sex! He also offers to refund the money he has earlier collected out of conviction to support a worthy cause. He is active in the public mobilisation which eventually

saves the speaker. Even when the speaker recapitulates to put his weight behind the Vote of Confidence and Tenure Elongation Bills, he refuses to be dissuaded from the path of honour, pecuniary gain notwithstanding. He collaborates with like-minds to sabotage the Vote of Confidence Bill and stands his ground against the Tenure Elongation Bill despite entreaties from the speaker and the president. Even his state governor fails to convince him. Nevertheless, if Samuel Bakura is said to be a conscientious and patriotic Nigerian, some incidences in his legislative career may have casted aspersion on his glorious adventure in office. He is expected to have defined his relationship with Honourable Bello, particularly having seen a gun on her. He should have read between the lines when Honourable Wenike gives him a dirty job towards removing the speaker. He agrees to do the job, collects ten thousand dollars cash, and only back out when the speaker visits, gives him money and reminds him of the calibre of Representatives in Honourable Wenike's camp. Besides, does he think the speaker's monetary assistance on his trip to United Kingdom is for nothing? How about his lustful affection for Honourable Bello whose character he knows to be questionable? Would he have supported the bill to impeach the president if the removal would affect his own bill? If he uses his privileged position to beat hard-fighting Gidado to the hand of naive Batejo in marriage, does the attack from Gidado's compatriots not serve him right? These and many more expose Honourable Bakura to insinuation and cynicism. He may not be above board after all. Perhaps the crude manner employs by Honourable Wenike, Honourable Kasali and Honourable Bello is due to their low educational attainment. However, when a lawyer cannot decipher between right and wrong, the end result can be untoward.

From all indication, Wale Okediran's *Tenants of the House* provides an eloquent representation of the postmodernist intrigues and clandestine activities which have become the hallmark of Nigeria's parliament. It unequivocally reveals the unpatriotic dispositions which inform many actions of the said Honourables. It does not mince word on the determination of the executive to infiltrate the House and influence its decisions to feather the nest of the power-that-be, irrespective of the tenet of the constitution which clearly upholds the principle of separation of power between the three organs of government. It satirises the despotic and sit-tight inclinations of Nigerian leaders in their desperate bid to perpetually remain in public office, even when their presence in office is no longer for public good. Although the actions and inactions of these leaders are inimical to development and societal growth, the activities of credible personalities, in and outside government, are enough to point towards development for the nation. For every Oneya,

Suleiman, Wenike, Kasali, Bello and Smollet, the nation can boast of eminent parliamentarians like Bakura, Kalkulus, Socrates and Chuks. As the president employs federal might to compel obedience, the press, the masses, labour union, students union and market women form a strong bond to defend the constitution. It is to their credit that the nation is saved the ignominy of ‘tolerating’ a recalcitrant and despotic president.

3.5 Frank Uche Mowah: A Brief Biodata

Frank Uche Mowah was born in 1954 in the former Bendel State of Nigeria. He was educated at universities in Lagos and Ibadan and obtained a B.A (Hons), M.A (Literature) and PhD degrees respectively. He joined and rose through the ranks to the position of senior lecturer at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma in the present Edo state of Nigeria.

A social crusader, essayist, literary critic, writer and teacher of note, Frank Uche Mowah’s versatility and profundity have endeared him to lovers of art and the press. Besides being a newspaper columnist, he got published in reputable and peer review journals. His published works include *Eating by the Flesh* (1995), *Psychology and African Literature* (1996), *The Poetry of the Egwu Ota of Asaba-a Mytho-Historical Experience* (1996) and *A Structuralist Discourse on African literature* (1997).

Unfortunately, Frank Uche Mowah had a rather bizarre marital life. He later died in 1998 of asthma-related complications. As evident in the glowing tributes by eminent writers like Aliu, Sam Asowata and Wale Okediran, the art industry had lost an icon and a rare gem in the demise of Frank Uche Mowah.

3.6 Eating by the Flesh

Eating by the Flesh (1995) presents a vivid account of governance during the successive military regimes in Nigeria. It is a graphic reflection of activities that characterised military adventures in Nigeria’s body polity. In a nation bedeviled with escalating economic and socio-political misdemeanour, the military seize power for personal aggrandizement, corrupt enrichment and lust for power. The ruling military officers amazed ill-gotten wealth while the masses only make do with available crumb from their tables. Although military officers enjoy their loot and the attendant paraphernalia of office, officers and men of the Armed Forces suffer

deprivation in silence. Little wonder post-independent Nigeria's history is replete with the adventures of military officers in the nation's political landscape, all in a bid to have a share in the proverbial national cake.

Military incursion in Nigeria's politics has never been for altruistic intention. Although successive military regimes in the nation flaunt their revolutionary credentials, hardly had they settled down in power when they began to manifest their oppressive and totalitarian tendencies. Military personnel are fond of treating civilians with contempt, hence the negative reactions they receive from the generality of the people. Majority of them are so unpatriotic that they engage in dastardly act like smuggling, drug trafficking and corrupt practices in flagrant violation of their professional ethics.

Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* depicts military incursion in politics as an aberration which further exposes the nation to gloom and despair. Although the Head of State, Colonel Moses Azuga, is determined to salvage the nation from her economic and socio-political travails, his revolutionary fervor brings him on collision course with his fellow 'comrades' and colleagues in the Army. His bosom friends, Colonel Sale and Brigadier Danladi, plot against him and eventually succeed in overthrowing his government in a palace *coup de'tat*. However the peril which awaits the nation is underscored by the inability of the coupists to understand the real intention for taken over. Mowah's treatise, according to Aliu (2000), depicts the "upper echelon" of the military as intellectually naïve and ideologically up-start:

He dramatizes the situation effectively by focusing on its upper echelon. Pre-eminently, the fearless novelist reaches the disturbing conclusion that the Nigerian Military in particular, is intellectually hollow and bereft of worthy ideas save those of mischief, intrigue, mutual distrust, blind and arrogant penchant for self projection and political positions

(41).

How better can we describe a cabal who merely takes over the mantle of leadership without a well-articulated blue-print for economic growth and political re-awakening?

Heavily bank-rolled by foreign elements and local collaborators, Brigadier Danladi emerges as the new Head of State without a clear-cut vision for national development. Ironically, a

true patriot is lost in Colonel Azuga while a corrupt, morally bankrupt and intellectually inept Brigadier Danladi takes over. Expectedly, the nation continues to retrogress in an unprecedented scale as hardship and stagnation remain:

Why would anyone in his right mind want a messiah, a selfless leader like Azuga out of the way? Well, life is like that. Messiahs have never been known to last long... Well, life is like that. Life will return to normal, it will return to its normal swing of hardship and tiredness. We are used to hardship, we are used to struggling on our own without the guidance of self-proclaimed leaders (119).

This has been the lot of the nation since the first military *coup de'tat* on the 15th January, 1966.

More importantly, an assessment of the inaugural proclamation of successive military regimes in Nigeria becomes expedient. Having capitalised on the mis-rule, corruption and ineptitude of civilian governments, the military take over only to soon betray the real intention of their adventure in politics. In no time, oppression, brutality, corruption, self-perpetuation in office, and professional misconduct become a past time in the land. Recent examples of such regimes are that of General Buhari, General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha. While General Buhari came to power on the heel of public outcry over corruption and mal-administration associated with the administration of Alhaji Shehu Shagari, General Babangida seized power with a self-proclaimed resolution to alleviate oppression and brutality associated with the regime of his predecessor, General Muhammed Buhari. In the same vein, General Abacha claimed his government is “a child of necessity” occasioned by the annulment of June 12 Presidential Election and the judicial declaration of the ill-fated Chief Shonekan’s interim government as illegal. He therefore promised to stay in power for a “very brief” period. Ironically, hardly had he settled down in office that he began to manifest a self-succession ploy! Like these three ‘reluctant’ leaders, Brigadier Dankoso Danladi ‘reluctantly’ accepts to lead the nation after the death and arrest of Colonels Azuga and Sale:

My dear compatriots, as you have already been told, the heavy mantle of leadership of this country has fallen on my reluctant head. I shall do my best with divine guidance and direction. A new Armed Forces Revolutionary Council has been formed. We shall continue with the policies of our

fallen hero, we shall try to follow the footsteps of Col. Azuga (118).

Unfortunately, he lacks the administrative acumen to effect quality legislation and purposeful leadership. As if this absurdity is not enough, Tamund, who had earlier been indicted for cocaine trafficking under the regime of Colonel Azuga, assumes a new role as economic adviser to the president and commander-in-chief! Only God knows the quality of advice such a character would offer.

Colonel Sale is a study in treachery, perfidy, opportunism and betrayal. He is equally an ingrate who epitomises corruption and insatiable lust for power, women and even food! He desires power for personal aggrandizement and not for public good. He despises the poor and ignores their yearnings. He seeks Wura's wife lustfully and has to set up his compatriots, Brigadier Danladi, who beats him to her. His morbid obsession for food and beer is legendary as he 'devours' large quantity of food and beer voraciously. Besides conniving with Tamund in the drug deal, he solicits and gets the support of foreign agents and the powerful Kaduna Mafia to overthrow his bosom friend. His co-conspirators include Alhaji Dankerifi (a traditional ruler), Dr. Mafiri (Chairman, Association of Commerce), Mr. Philip (a drug baron) and Major Markson (Military Attache to American Embassy). Ironically, he recognises Colonel Azuga's high sense of devotion and selfless service to mankind. Although he is also aware of his own limitation and ability, yet he wants power. On a second thought before the *coup de'tat*, he wonders why he wants Colonel Azuga's populist regime toppled:

Why do I conspire against Azuga, my mentor and benefactor? He wondered. What do I stand to gain? Nothing, nothing, for whosoever aspires to rule Nigeria gains nothing whatsoever. In my own case, it is pure inordinate ambition, a meaningless lust for power, for futility. Futility because now, as the second in command, I am as powerful as ever can be. I am even the most feared man in the country and not Azuga. So, what am I up to? (102-103).

Therefore if Colonel Sale knows that Colonel Azuga's regime, not his, would benefit the nation more, yet goes ahead to participate actively in the *coup de'tat*, then we can conclude that he deserves his fate after the military putsch. Despite Azuga's humane role of given him opportunity to survive after his parents abandoned him to alms-begging in the cold northern harmattan, despite

being raised and nurtured by Azuga's parents, despite knowing Azuga's revolutionary potentials from their time at Sandhurst in England, he still goes ahead to stab him at the back!

Also, Brigadier Danladi is presented as an opportunist who hides under the pretext of advocating for general wellbeing of the masses to cut corners. He mingles with the people, buys them food but has ulterior motive of wooing Wura's wife. He sneaks back to meet the woman only to be injured by a trap. His limping after his misadventure with Wura's wife is a metaphor for his resolve to inflict the nation with corruption and bad governance, such that everyone would suffer and 'limp'. He plots with Colonel Sale to overthrow Colonel Azuga's regime, only to have Colonel Sale arrested and accused of killing Colonel Azuga. As his government 'spreads' poverty, armed-robbery, infrastructural decay and promiscuity, violent uprising becomes inevitable. His cabinet is made up of social misfit like Tamund who had hitherto been indicted for drug peddling. He however mows the masses into silence! Although he recalls the fond memory of Colonel Azuga, he goes ahead to suspend his decrees, replacing them with more dictatorial ones. His sexual inadequacy which leads to unholy alliance between him and his uncle, Awodu Dauda, makes him to despise every man and woman. He sets out from the outset of his regime to malign and oppress people, the real reason why he enlists in the army. He once instructs his minister of culture to humiliate people through a macabre dance, "something fascinating enough to give me a hard on and a place in history". Chandu views his regime with contempt:

My laughter hung in the air of my room like a stench of fear.
This fear which was gripping the entire land was the fear of
yet another uncertain beginning. A beginning built on lies
and straw...But, gradually, I started hearing this slow
mournful music of pain and hopelessness, the much which
started since that morning when Brigadier Danladi presented
the nation a rhetorics of lies (120).

Chandu is prophetic as Brigadier Danladi is determined to inflict pain and confusion on the nation.

Nigerian creative writers have had occasions to reflect on the nuances of the military in power. Unfortunately, such reflections have depicted the adventures of the military in a repulsive manner. In the genre of poetry, none of Clark-Bekederemo's "The Cleaner", Odia Ofeimum's "The Messiahs", and Niyi Osundare's "Siren" depicts the military in glowing terms. They all come to agreement that military intervention in the polity is an aberration full of deceit, corruption,

insensitivity and mal-administration. In the same vein, Soyinka's *Madmen and the Specialist*, *A Play of Giant*, and *The Beatification of Area Boys* reveal military misrule and retrogressive leadership style in the genre of drama. Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen* is equally a study in treachery and perfidy that are inherent features of military rule. In prose fiction, Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* readily comes to mind. Therefore, it can be deduced that creative writers of Nigeria's extraction have always view the military with disdain, scorn and resentment.

Although military officers often betray their unpreparedness for political offices, Colonel Moses Azuga is an exception. From his youthful days, he has always comported himself as humane, selfless and revolutionary-minded personality. As a youth, he saves Sale from the neglect of his parents whose poverty-stricken livelihood almost costs him his life. His determination to redirect the nation from the path of perfidy encouraged him to seize power from the "long-capped, heavily-embroidered agbadaed men who had built a conduit pipe between the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Dumping Vaults of Switzerland", politicians who mastermind the looting of the nation in an unprecedented manner. He does not 'remove' himself from the reality of the nation hence he disguises and drives out alone at night, sometimes to his village, Atuma-Gaskiya. He does not allow traditional sentiment to becloud his sense of reasoning hence he debunks the assertion that his wife, Agnes, is a witch. He elicits his sincerity of purpose right from his days as a trainee in the military. He orders Tamund to be placed on surveillance so as to have first-hand information on his narcotic dealings. He does his best to promote a patriotic Toubi and other loyal officers such that even if he dies in the *coup de'tat*, the revolutionary spirit would not abate. Unfortunately, he is overthrown in a bloody *coup de'tat*. Despite his shortcomings, his character is worthy of celebrating.

Colonel Azuga is not alone in the struggle for economic growth and political rejuvenation. He has an ally in Toubi, a journalist. Expectedly the two of them suffer the same fate from a society which abhors the truth. Toubi is poisoned by his estranged wife, Fani, who now works for the coupists! He actually sets out to unravel the truth surrounding the history of Nigeria and Tamund's ignominious role in it. His death arising from this perilous adventure makes a statement about the professional hazard a journalist faces in the discharge of his duty. Besides the death of Kris Imoudibe of *The Guardian* and Tayo Awotusin of *Champion Newspaper* in war-torn Liberia,

Dele Giwa was killed with a parcel-bomb during Babangida regime. Others have had their freedom curtailed while practicing their profession.

Besides the interrogation of theme of perfidy in a military regime which forecloses the so-called corrective tendencies of the military class, Mowah tells his story in *Eating by the Flesh* in a quintessentially postmodern fashion. In place of the traditional chronological plot structure, the story is told in a loosely disjointed narrative style without recourse to order. The exploration of this postmodern fragmented narrative technique further enriches textual aesthetics so much that Garuba (1996:137) praises Mowah's "remarkable grasp of craft and technique" in the creation of what Aliu (2000: 43) describes as "a multi-layered universe". Employing the symbol of treachery to a great effect, the novel presents Colonel Sale and Brigadier Danladi, two high-ranking military officers, who pretend to be friends but stab each other at the back. As Brigadier Danladi beats his colleague to the adulterous game over Wura's wife, the turn of events in the course of the story begins to unfold. The pyrrhic victory of Brigadier Danladi symbolises his impending triumph over Colonel Sale in their treacherous ploy to overthrow Colonel Azuga.

After the 'prologue', the story line digresses to and fro, beginning from Colonel Azuga's determined resolve to salvage the nation. This is achieved with the employment of "diegesis", in postmodern parlance. Without a word on his ascension into office, it shifts to the witch-doctor, Dambe, who enjoins Colonel Azuga to act fast before he is overthrown by his military colleagues:

My duty is to warn you...However, if you can trust your friend so much, then you are a greater fool than I imagined. You are simply a sitting duck for martyrdom...I am thus telling you for the last time, Sale is a vulture (22-23).

Also from Dambe's admonition, the story moves to the botched meeting of the Ruling Military Council. It is on this note that it presents Colonel Sale as a sex pervert whose lust for pleasure and power knows no bound. His actions bring to the fore the morally repulsive role he is to play as the masterminder of the impending *coup de'tat*. Another "diegesis" occurs without notice as Colonel Azuga 'sneaks' out at night, only to be assaulted by armed-robbers!

Meanwhile the character of the ubiquitous Chandu is note-worthy in driving home the import of Mowah's stylistic thrust in *Eating by the Flesh*. In his dual role as the narrator and active player in the unfolding events in Nigeria, Chandu alludes to events in a futuristic manner, presenting the doom and pestilence that herald Brigadier Danladi's government, even when the

narration has not presented the fall of Colonel Azuga. This flexible narrative structure violates the traditional sequential ordering of events in a narration. Aliu (2000) puts it succinctly:

This is rather per-emptive of events that are to occur later in text...By this narrating and drawing conclusions from events that are yet imperceptible to the reader, Chandu's narrative approximates to a direct reversion of the traditional narrative order which prioritizes a sequential patterning of plot (48).

This 'disharmony' marks a decisive postmodern turn in the narrative. Furthermore, as Colonel Azuga hallucinates on getting to his village, the metaphor of banality, the myth surrounding the near 'earthquake' in his village, the 'vision' of Gogo, Nana and Tashi, as well as a retrospective revelation of Lily's miscarriage all underscore the doom which awaits the nation. Also, the discovery of the corpse of Colonel Saluhu portends danger, hence, Ejembe admonishes Colonel Azuga to be wary of friends. The forward and backward narrative device employed in the text ensures that the narration is told devoid of structural harmony. As the epilogue re-opens the narrative, when ordinarily it should end it, the logical arrangement of a text from the beginning, through the middle, to the ending is undermined and outrightly subverted. Aliu (2000) submits that the "structural discord" embedded in Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* stands it out as a postmodern text "with claim to fame":

The fame derives from the fact that the text cannot be read in an organicist fashion. The reader arrives at the end of its story only through sewing up the bits and scraps of metanarratives (56).

This non-conformist stylistic posture marks Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* out as a credible addition to the long list of postmodern African texts. Its preferred style is in line with the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique.

A deconstructive interpretation of thematic and stylistic preoccupations of Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* interrogate some events and characters as textualised by the author. Colonel Azuga is fictionalized as a revolutionary-minded character that sets out from his earlier days to secure power for public goods. He is a dedicated and patriotic Nigerian unlike some of his colleagues and adversaries. He is so passionate about effecting positive change in the nation so much that all his actions, and inactions, are tailored towards the betterment of the nation and her people. He despises the corrupt nature of the politicians who had amassed ill-gotten wealth which they stashed

away in foreign banks. He is so transparent that nobody, not even Colonel Sale and Brigadier Danladi, ever doubts his commitment to national development and his resolve to rid the nation of corruption, inept leadership, administrative lapses, infrastructural decay and moral laxity. This attitude presents him as a credible alternative for leadership role in a nation bedeviled with evil machination of corruption. However, a discerning mind is not unaware that Nigeria has never been known to produce such a patriotic military leader. Successive military regimes in the nations had always come to power in a messianic fashion, eager to flaunt their development-seeking revolutionary credentials. A gullible nation, overtly desiring progressive development, a virtue which the politicians lack, is often ready to encourage and welcome them into power. Unfortunately, hardly had they settled down in office when they begin to betray their unpreparedness for political offices. As they compel obedience and uncritical reverence for public offices, retrogressive and reactionary governance come to the fore. Political leaders are hounded into detention or forced to go underground. Press freedom is undermined in the name of national security. Self-perpetuation in office becomes a 'national agenda'. According to Adeoti (2003:9), sooner than expected, "the erstwhile saviours" transform "into the realm of vampires, and whose total exist from power became mandatory if the country was to make progress". A few examples would suffice. Besides Generals Obasanjo and Abubakar who handed over power to 'democratically elected' civilian presidents, others have curiously developed cold feet whenever they are to leave public offices. General Ironsi was killed in office; General Gowon was overthrown; General Buhari lost power in a palace *coup de'tat*; General Babangida had to "step aside" when danger loomed; while a *deus ex machina* prevented General Abacha from transmuting to a civilian president! If Colonel Azuga is not toppled in a palace coup, who knows if he would seek to perpetuate himself in office under the pretext of completing his revolutionary agenda! If he does, he would have justified Fawole's (2001:61) position that the military has "a predatory mechanism for plunder" because they are "generally contemptuous of people's rights and freedoms, and consequently have elevated sheer lawlessness and banditry to a norm". Besides, evidences in the text have it that people like Agnes, Pa Itogha, Ejembe, Colonel Saluhu and Colonel Dembe have warned him on a number of occasions to beware of Colonel Sale and Brigadier Danladi. His inability to take a proactive measure to prevent the *coup d'état* exposes him to danger. Also, he is expected to have taken decisive action on Tamund who had been indicted for

drug peddling. Perhaps he pays the supreme price for his inability to take decisive step in the nick of time.

Also, Toubi becomes a target of assassination because of his professional misconduct. He takes side with Colonel Azuga whereas a professional journalist is expected to be a watchdog for public officers. If he had discharged his professional duty without bias towards Colonel Azuga's course, he may not have suffered the attack from the enemies of the regime. Professionalism in journalism ensures that journalists go about their duties independent of the executive arm of government. When a journalist flirts with the government, the consequence can be untoward. On one of such occasion, Colonel Sale has to publicly express his displeasure at Toubi's knowledge of state matter, being a journalist:

I don't have anything against journalists or against Toubi for that matter. But you know as well as I do that it is dangerous to allow them so much power. Real blood flows in their pens. If we allow them, they'll simply write us out of power the way they did our predecessors. Anyway, to be specific, I like Toubi as a person but I don't like him as a journalist (32).

In fact, it soon becomes obvious that both Colonel Sale and Toubi know each other too well even before the latter's invitation to dinner. Therefore, if Colonel Sale does not want his power-seeking agenda to be derailed, Toubi has to be eliminated. That he survives the *coup d'état* which topples Colonel Azuga's government is due to mother luck.

If Colonel Azuga and Toubi 'deserve' their fates, the story of Tamund leaves much to be desired. Here is a minister of petroleum who connives with unpatriotic members of Supreme Revolutionary Council, as well as local and foreign cartels, to peddle drugs. He relishes in wealth and connection in high places thereby undermining the nation's economy. He amasses so much wealth which he employs to prosecute the *coup d'état*. Unfortunately, such a character still emerges as an adviser in Brigadier Danladi's regime. Little wonder he has the temerity to attempt to publish his doctored biography while in power. But for Toubi's resolve to write and publish the true account of Tamund's ignominious role in office, the public would have been fed a falsehood. Biography and autobiography are generally known to largely suffer from half truth, subjectivity and fallibility of human memory. They have become exercises at self glorification (Oriaku, 1990; Adeoti 2003).

Although Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* largely depicts the military as an institution which produces officers who seek public offices either for good or bad, we aver that good or bad governance is not an exclusive preserve of one institution in Nigeria. Experiences have it that the nation had produced benevolent military leaders who contributed immensely towards national growth. These officers and men were responsible for the provision of order from the disorder and mal-administration associated with civilian leadership. In fact, the institution saves the nation from disintegration during the civil war fought between 1967 and 1970. Nevertheless, military incursions in the national life of Nigeria have untoward consequences for nation growth and development. Its regimented training is not in congruence with the liberty associated with civil rule. No wonder military rule is viewed with contempt and perceived as an aberrant political misnomer. In fact, successive military regimes in Nigeria are always eager to announce their transition agenda to civilian rule as soon as they come to power even if they would renege later (Igwe, 1994; Ezeani, 1994). Therefore, the articulation of benevolent or populist policies does not foreclose the conclusion that military rule is anti-people, anti-democratic, and a violation of every legal document. In this vein, the nation would be better off if Mowah's Colonel Azuga, Colonel Saluhu, and Colonel Dembe keep their revolutionary credentials within the confine of the barracks.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 A Nation in Comatose: Nihilism in Marinho and Arthur-Worrey's Novels

4.1 Tony Marinho: A Brief Biodata

Anthony Olatokunbo Marinho was born in Dublin, Republic of Ireland in 1947. He attended St Gregory College, Lagos between 1961 and 1967. In 1968, he gained admission to University of Ibadan to study medicine. He graduated with distinction in Anatomy in 1974.

After the one year national service in 1975, Tony Marinho joined the service of University College Hospital, UCH, Ibadan. His busy schedule at University College Hospital between 1975 and 1981 did not prevent him from serving as Chief Consultant, Oluyoro Catholic Hospital, Ibadan. He later established St. Gregory Specialist Clinic and Ultra-Sound Diagnostic Services and became its Medical Director in 1981. Among others, he is a fellow, Medical College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist and also West African College of Surgeon. His book *Handbook of Obstetrics and Gynecology* was published in 1978. He established Educare Trust, an enlightenment and philanthropic centre saddled with the task of educating and creating awareness for the public on socio-political and cultural matters.

Tony Marinho is a novelist, poet, playwright, fiery social crusader, political activist and a much sought-after newspaper columnist. Among other texts, he is the author of *The Victim* (1984), *Deadly Cargo* (1986), *Objection* (1986), *The Epidemic* (1992), *Bobo learn to Fly* (1994), and *Why UI?* (2003).

Tony Marinho is married with children.

4.2 The Epidemic

Tony Marinho's *The Epidemic* (1992) is a classic reflection of the treachery, insincerity, sycophancy, perfidy, cover-up and blackmail that have characterised Nigeria's odious march towards under-development. It x-rays the nation's retrogressive governance and visionless leadership. It highlights the unpatriotic resolve of her leaders to hold on to power no matter whose ox is goored. It elicits the knack for corrupt enrichment and self-perpetuation in office, tendencies which cast aspersion on public officers' claim to integrity. It exposes the manner by which public officers abuse their offices and cover up their track under the guise of protection of state interest. It also chides the citizenry for being lily-livered hence suffer in silence and bear the brunt of mis-rule. It rebuffs the people for lacking the gut to take their destiny in their own hands. It,

however, commends the patriotic adventures of her scientists and researchers for their determination and resolve to engage in researches for public good. Their trail-blazing scientific discoveries, despite the scorn and disdain from a non-appreciative government, amount to good commentary for the nation. It also projects the image of the nation which had been smeared by government directionless leadership.

A deadly epidemic ravages the nation. So fatal is the epidemic that it kills without notice. It strikes its victim, overpowers him, makes him unconscious and defies any attempt to revive him. It accounts for the loss of over eight thousand lives and has the tendency to continue if not checked! Unfortunately, the origin and cause of the epidemic is unknown while the vaccine to either stop or alleviate its scourge in the country is not readily available. As the nation continues to wait for government intervention, the Council of Ministers holds regular executive sessions with the president to discuss the way forward and unravel the causes and cure of the epidemic. The minister of health does not mince words on the devastating nature of the epidemic:

The epidemic affects the different parts of the country; the North, South, East and West. Everywhere. Over two thousand deaths have been reported in each of these areas. We do not know the origin of the disease. The number of deaths is increasing daily and is compounded by our non-existent emergency services and low stocks of useful medicines. If something is not done soon the chances are that the population shall be decimated (1-2).

To prevent further death and expected public outcry, he enjoins the Council of Ministers to call for international assistance in form of “intravenous fluids, drugs, and personnel”.

The submission of the minister of health exposes the beast in the members of the council on whom the fate of the nation rests. While the minister of external affairs rebuffs the suggestion on account of its alleged implication for the nation’s international reputation, the minister of economics and planning would have none of it because he perceives that if the national calamity should come to the awareness of the world, it may lead to a decline in the value of the naira! Even the finance minister is against any decision which would invariably lead to increase in the budgetary allocation to the ministry of health, even if it is meant to fight the epidemic. Expectedly, the president is encouraged to jettison the advice of the minister of health. He orders the denial of the epidemic because in his opinion, private and party interests should take preeminence over public interest:

When we make decisions here in this room, we make them primarily in the interest of this government and secondly in the interest of the people of this great Nation of ours. Our party interest must of course guide the interest of the government...I agree with the Minister of Health that one would save a few thousand lives by getting what he is proposing. But the relative gain in that direction would be far outstripped by the relative loss in public image, credibility, earnings and bargaining power and of course political advancement for the government (6-7).

This is quite unbecoming of a civilian president who rides to public office on the back of the electorates.

A cursory look at the actions and inactions of the ministers reveals that they are not worthy of the public offices they hold. Many of them are merely interested in the influence and the paraphenalia of office at their disposal. Consequent on this, they dare not disagree with the president who has the power to hire and fire. They so much cherish their 'hard-earned' offices such that they must concur to whatever the president says, either they hear him or not! They care no hoot what becomes of the nation once their bank accounts swell. At the risk of losing his exalted office, the vice-president has to be seen supporting his boss. He shouts the minister of health down when the latter objects to the regular reduction in his ministry budgetary allocation:

Look here, Honourable Minister of Health. Everyone has a job to do. I mean we are all trying to do our jobs. But there have to be checks and balances...It is the Minister of Finance's task to check and introduce balances. He did not know there would be the epidemic (3-4).

Even the recalcitrant minister of health has to mellow-down when he is faced with blackmail over his past misdeeds in office, particularly his role in "the drug important scandal". He has to chicken-out completely when the secret file on him shows that he is far from being a saint he professes. Besides other evidences of his loot in office, the president blackmails him into submission when his 'secret' is exposed:

He was surprised that they knew about the Medical equipment supply company that he had set up and given about thirty million naira worth of contract to...He wondered if they knew about the account in Budapest. They did...As if that was not enough, the President read off a list of houses, flats and even a mansion...the President read out a list of contracts for which the Minister was expecting a Peugeot 505 Saloon Car, a cheque for one hundred thousand dollars, a free ticket to fly around the world and complete

furnishing of his newly built chalet at Tarkwa Bay, a holiday resort across the lagoon ⁽¹⁴⁾.

This revelation finally forces him to change gear.

Also, if the minister of health is perceived to be sincere in his determination to investigate and solve the menace posed by the epidemic, further revelation exposes his inadequacies. He is not genuinely interested in fighting the epidemic but wants to drag the government into acknowledging its existence for him to have more funds, locally and internationally, to feather his own nest. He has counted on local and international donations to fight the epidemic, funds he would have diverted to personal use. Every natural occurrence or public policy has been maximised immensely to his benefit:

What really had upset him was the fact that since the Government refused to acknowledge the epidemic it could not set up a relief fund. No relief fund meant no Government donations and more importantly no external donations. He remembered how much he had made during the Sahelian drought and more recently during the expulsion of aliens from the country ⁽¹⁸⁾.

His position therefore is self-serving and not for altruistic intention. As a face-saving measure, he has to quickly organise an official trip to government medical institutions as a smoke-screen towards the official cover-up. Since he has to be seen as working, he employs crude tactics of commanding obedience from the staff in his ministry. He orders a memo, which completely 'obliterates' the sign of the epidemic from their memory! However, he protects himself and his 'privileged' team on the trip to the rural clinic. In fact, he embarks on the trip in the first instance to garner funds to travel outside the shore of the country, check on his foreign bank accounts and escape the epidemic with the members of his family. Nemesis however catches up with him during the trip.

Like their counterpart in the health ministry, other ministers have to play along with the president so as to keep their respective jobs. So myopic is the quality of their advice that a discerning mind begins to wonder if they actually love the country or the president who appoints them in the first place. Since they must act according to the president's body language and understand his line of thinking, they liberally read several implications to the upsurge of the epidemic to convince the president of their genuine concern for the nation. Although they wear protective masks to the cabinet meetings, the minister of transport still blames the Americans for the epidemic while the minister of aviation heaps vituperation on the Russians. On his part, the

minister for youth and culture casts aspersion on the South Africans for the country's woes. None has the effrontery to speak the truth they know so well. Such is the character of people at the helms of affairs in Nigeria.

Besides the ministers, even the president does not comport himself as a patriotic leader worthy of emulation. Instead of arrogating to himself the onerous task of ameliorating the plight of the people who are ravaged by the epidemic, he resolves to deny its existence as a matter of fact. He coerces the ministers into following this path of perfidy. He blackmails the equally corrupt minister of health to deny the epidemic in the face of several deaths. He believes once he keeps his office, nothing else matters in life. To achieve this, he keeps a security file on his ministers who can only oppose him at their peril! He even arranges electronically teleguided prepared speech which the minister of health 'reads' on air to a bemused nation. He is so callous and evil-minded such that he 'arranges' a road accident for a University of Toro Medical team on a fact-finding mission. He orders the immediate transfer of Dr. Ahmed and Professors Aliu and Nwafor to the Archives Department of the health ministry for revealing information on the epidemic to the nation. He ensures that this decision is gazzetted with immediate effect. He instructs the Police Force to raid, close and burn uncooperative media houses! To him, the people's lives are nothing compares to the benefits that accrue to him on account of his exalted position. He so much enjoys the paraphernalia of office that he holds daily cabinet meetings where deliberations centre principally on how to deny the existence of the epidemic. He is so gullible that his ministers capitalise on his weakness to tell him only what he wants to hear! He even proposes to travel to Greenland when the entire nation gropes in fear and affliction. He unilaterally votes fund to purchase drugs without recourse to the National Assembly. He readily comes to mind as a sit-tight dictator whose major concern is self-perpetuation in office.

Professor Abubakar, Head, Department of Medicine, University of Toro, is a sad man because the affliction of the people multiples as the epidemic ravages the nation. He enjoins fellow professionals, like Professor Adenuga and Professor Agah of Statistics and Anatomy Departments respectively, to assist in researching into the cause and prevention of the epidemic. Although these researchers get a clue from their investigations that a victim of the epidemic has blisters and rashes at the mouth and feet, their inability to get a survivor hinders their efforts. Fortunately, an intellectual discussion between Dr. Darna, a rural medical doctor, and Dr. Patkin, a veterinary doctor, gives insight into the likely causes of the epidemic and those that are prone to or immuned

from it. Dr. Patkin suspects the epidemic has link with rinderpest epidemic which ravaged the animals at a time. He submits that the cattle-rearing communities may have been immuned from it because of their earlier encounter with rinderpest virus through their cattles. This, he further suspects, may have accounted for its devastating consequences particularly in non-cattle, rinderpest-free urban communities! The rising death rate in the rural areas is largely due to urban-rural migration and the attendant mingling of the people. They also conduct an empirical survey of some rural areas to have accurate statistics of the death rate. Convinced about their discovery, they agree to send it to experienced academics at the University of Toro.

Meanwhile, the research team at the University of Toro is on the verge of having similar discovery. Professor Adenuga's research has revealed that little or no cattle-rearer is afflicted by the epidemic. Professor Nwosa, Head, Veterinary Department, does not agree less. Their research findings tally with the information from Drs. Darna and Patkin thus, they agree to send their findings to the government for prompt actions and interventions. However, when their discoveries do not produce the desired government interest and attention, Professor Abubakar sends it to the prestigious English Medical Journal for publication. Research interests now shift to the discovery of antibodies from survivors or the immuned. Drs. Okon and Amadun collaborate with British officials to discover antibodies meant to fight the epidemic. These antibodies are taken from the minister of health whose plane has been quarantined. They work perfectly. Professor Abubakar's team continues its investigation by vaccinating several people. The result is good hence, it is again sent for publication.

The beast in the president is let loose again! Since he can no longer convince the nation that the epidemic is non-existing, he owns up at last. He however blames foreign 'adversaries' for it. He orders a security search and surveillance on offices and homes of members of the research team. They are to remain silent for ever else the government would further humiliate them. Even the people soon forget them. Ironically, while they suffer humiliation at home, Professor Cummings is celebrated and even knighted in England! It takes the acknowledgement of their findings abroad for them to be accorded the desired respect and accolade. Also a change in government restored their honours and privileges.

Tony Marinho's *The Epidemic* depicts the societal ills bedeviling the nation. It chides a non-responsive government, enmeshed in self-glorification and corrupt enrichment, as the bane of the nation. It satirises the naivety of the personalities who relish in the 'good fortune' of holding

public offices. It exposes their perfidy and treachery but warns of the peril which awaits them. The minister of health merely supports the need for government intervention to fight the epidemic so as to have access to relief fund from government and international agencies. He has to play along with the status quo, knowing the consequences of not. He, thus, has his ways and takes his family abroad at government expense. Unfortunately for him, the epidemic he runs away from at the rural clinic eventually inflicts him with fatal consequence. He becomes an 'item' for scientists who require the antibodies to fight the epidemic. More importantly, his loot ends up in other hands. While his foreign accounts are seized by the banks, family members and relatives are engrossed in 'battle' to have their share. *Marinho's* testament on this attests to the futility of wealth acquisition:

Wisened to the fact of his death by the news of the epidemic, all the big international banks had checked their files to determine if the late minister had been on their client list...Those that found him on their lists were cautiously delighted. They at first checked the contents of the safety deposit boxes and balances in the accounts. Then they had to check the mode of making a withdrawal. That meant that the banks were free to close that account on the demise of their customer and utilize the money or valuables for their own, usually the manager's use (114-115).

With this reality, one can only wonder if there is any benefit in ill-gotten wealth which ends up in other people's hands.

The novel, once again, brings to the fore the age long 'animosity' between the town and gown. The town is a euphemism for the society while the gown is a symbol for the academics. While the former prides itself as the policy executor, the latter is committed to research, experiment and policy formulation. Ironically, it depends on the former for political-will to have its policies implemented. Unfortunately, most Nigerian leaders are not favourably disposed to academic researches. They seek immediate gain in most of their endeavour. They are self-centred and intellectually naive to know that researches have long-standing benefit for the society at large in the long run. They therefore earmark insufficient fund for researches in the various institutions and government agencies. Little wonder Dr. Darna and Dr. Patkin's research interests do not enjoy government attention and support. If the entire medical team on a fact-finding mission can be 'sacrificed' on the altar of a self-seeking public interest, if senior academics, like Dr. Ahmed, Professors Aliu and Nwafor, can be made redundant for revealing information on the epidemic to

the public, if hardworking academics, like Professors Abubakar, Adenuga, Agah and Nwosa are humiliated, dehumanised and silenced for publishing their research findings in a reputable journal, then no one should be left in doubt about the utter neglect in which characters like Drs. Darna and Patkin practice in the rural areas. The power-that-be does not bother about the fate which befalls them, the commitment they put into their works notwithstanding.

Also, the people are expected to serve as check on the government. Even if government desires to betray the confidence repose in it, it is incumbent on the people to call the men and women in public offices to order. African history is replete with the resolve of the people to alter government policies that they consider inimical to public goods. Evidences have it that victory over injustice is assured, though it may not be achievable on a platter of gold. Unfortunately, while those in government continue to play politics with a matter of life and death, the people ignorantly believe whatever the government tells them! Even if the government derives satisfaction in denying the existence of the epidemic in the text, its reality ought to have compelled the people to react and confront the government. This inaction encourages the minister of foreign affairs to publicly deny the existence of the epidemic even after media attacks on the demise of the health minister. If the people have protested the transfer of Dr. Ahmed, Professor Aliu and Professor Nwafor to the Archives Department, if they have reacted angrily to the humiliation meted out to Professors Abubakar, Adenuga, Agah and Nwosa, perhaps the government would have turned a new leaf. Once these academics are ‘silenced’ and made redundant, the people soon forget about them, especially when the epidemic has subsided. No wonder Dr. Darna is pessimistic about any meaningful change emanating from the people.

Meanwhile, a sustained investigation of Tony Marinho’s *The Epidemic* does not elicit an all-round catalogue of woes. Although the politicians are casted in bad light, the text presents a ray of hope in the nation’s scientists and researchers. For every mis-directed politician, there is a researcher whose effort is geared towards promoting and sustaining the overall wellbeing of the people. Researchers like Drs. Darna, Patkin, Okon, Amadum and Professors Abubakar, Adenuga, Agah and Nwosa are committed to their researches despite the hostility from the government. Dr. Darna’s mobile clinic does not present itself as a comfortable, well-equipped medical ‘institution’, yet he does his job diligently and conscientiously. Although so many deaths are recorded on a daily basis, apparently due to the ill-equipped nature of the clinic, his medical expertise is never in doubt. He successfully performs a craniotomy on a pregnant woman to Dr. Patkin’s delight, though

she eventually loses the baby. His role in conjunction with other researchers in discovering the causes and vaccination for the epidemic is commendable. Besides Drs. Diana and Patkin, other researchers from University of Toro deserve accolade for their significant role in stopping the epidemic. Even if they suffer humiliation from their government, the foreign recognition is pleasing to the ear! Sir Cummings does not mince words in praising them lavishly, calling for a standing ovation in appreciation of their enviable scientific attainment. This foreign respect has impacted positively on the new government who reinstates them. Perhaps in saner clime, they would have been individually bestowed with a Nobel Prize. Such is the import of their research efforts.

Finally, the fall of the government and the reversal of fortune for its members signal the fate which awaits anyone, no matter how highly placed, who tramples on the collective will of the people. The end of the government is predictable because the interest of the people cannot be forsaken on a permanent basis. No wonder its policies and actions are soon jettisoned and repelled. The reinstatement of the members of Professor Abubakar's research team is enough to signal the inevitability of light at the end of the tunnel.

4.3 Fola Arthur-Worrey: A Brief Biodata

Born and bred in Lagos, Nigeria, Fola Arthur-Worrey works and lives in Lagos. A Barrister at Law, Arthur-Worrey devoted all his professional life to the service of Lagos state government. He belongs to the core civil service.

A social commentator, political analyst and welfarist, Arthur-Worrey rose through the rank to the exalted position of Permanent Secretary and Solicitor General, Lagos State Ministry of Justice. He was also a one-time Commissioner of Lands in the state. In all his public activities while in office, Arthur-Worrey discharged his duties meritoriously and dispassionately until he eventually retired voluntarily in 2006.

An appreciative public would not allow a golden fish an opportunity to hide hence Arthur-Worrey was soon called back to public office on the 7th November, 2007. At present, he manages Lagos State Security Trust Fund in his capacity as the Executive Secretary. This position of authority enables him to collaborate with eminent personalities like messers Remi Makanjuola, Waheed Kassim, Reuben Abati, Apollos Ikpobe, Kehinde Durosimi-Etti, Jide Sanwo-Olu and Lanre Balogun on the board to supervise the collection and disbursement of fund for security

matters in the state. Henceforth the task of provision of security equipments would no longer be the sole responsibility of government and the Police Force.

Fola Arthur-Worrey has published books like *The Prosecutor in Public Prosecutions* (2000) and *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* (2004). The latter has enjoyed diverse critical attentions which foreground its acceptability as a concise testament on Nigeria's socio-political realities from someone who has seen it all. No wonder it made the last list of books shortlisted for the maiden NLNG Literature Prize in 2004.

4.4 The Diaries of Mr. Michael

Fola Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* (2004) is a novel which gives a vivid account of Nigeria as a nation bedeviled with societal menace like corruption, infrastructural decay, administrative ineptitude, moral laxity, ethnic chauvinism and religious bigotry. It depicts the nation as assemblage of people whose actions, and inaction, are tailored towards retrogressive and reactionary tendencies. It presents Nigeria as a nation which is designed to fail from inception, hence finds herself grappling with untoward yet debilitating angst from which survival seems an uphill task. Although it appreciates the odds and challenges the nation faces, apparently owing to her historical and socio-cultural backgrounds, yet it chides her leaders for dearth of administrative savvy and intellectual wherewithal to direct the nation on the right path. Without sparing the masses for the penchant to rationalise the nation's comatose economic and socio-political realities as divinely-ordained or colonial inflicted, it rebuffs the leaders for their inability to articulate "an exit strategy" from the nation's myriads of woes and misdemeanours. If Uche Mowah's *Eating by the Flesh* heaps the blame for the nation's woes on the military in Nigeria's politics, Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* is set in the so-called democratic Nigerian society! Ironically like Tony Marinho's *The Epidemic*, it, more than Marinho's text, reflects on mal-administration, nepotism, ethnicity, decadence and rot that have since defiled solution. It sees Nigeria as "the land raven by anger, hatred, violence, failed expectations and fear for the future".

A certain European journalist named Mr. Michael pays a scheduled investigative visit to Nigeria. His fact-finding mission is geared towards having first-hand information on a nation on which so much have been said and written. His purpose is to acquire eye witness account of the political and socio-economic realities in the nation since the ascension into office of Nigeria's democratic leaders. He writes for "a well-respected weekly journals" in England.

On arrival at the imposing but dilapidated and ill-equipped terminal of the Murtala Mohammed International Airport, Lagos, he is surprised to see that neither the wall-clock nor the monitor is working! The hostile attitude of the immigration officers and others who demand gratification from him notwithstanding, he is set for an adventure into Nigeria. Who knows if this adventure would correct the negative impression about Nigeria and other African nations, an opinion not informed by empirical investigation of our socio-cultural milieu, but by ‘arm-chair’ polemic from Euro-American critics? Perhaps his quest for first-hand information would suffice.

After the airport and taxi-park scuffles, Mr. Michael is to behold the nation at a nauseating glance! Besides the encounter with policemen who demand and take bribe from Dede and other minibus drivers plying the road, he notices, to his chagrin, the badly-illuminated area network, malfunctioning street-lights, unkempt environment and “ill-fitting” police uniforms on unfit policemen. In a conversation, Dede educates him on the filthy environment and its causes:

This is Oshodi, probably the worst place in Nigeria. Too many people in one spot because a major bus top, a train station and a street market all meet in a place. That is the worst combination you can have...The result is total confusion. There are no control. In the day time traffic can drive you mad. In fact, it defies description. At night, gangs of miscreants swarm out of the motor parks where they’ve been drinking and smoking marijuana all day to harass and rob people at will or to forcefully collect protection money from the traders and bus drivers, right under noses of the police (33-34).

Also, Dede chides the government for its inability to manage the nation’s transport system hence gives private owners of vehicles opportunities to have a field day. In no time, Mr. Michael is convinced of his great analytical mind such that he strikes a deal with him: Dede is to serve as his guide throughout his stay in Nigeria, albeit for a fee.

From his hotel at Sheraton, Dede takes Mr. Michael round the city of Lagos, beginning from the following day. However since he is unaware of events and happenings around him, Dede assumes an all-knowing disposition, employing his critical but analytical skill. Dede informs him, that the badly-maintained road network, the nonchalant attitudes of mini bus drivers who pick passengers on the road, the tangled electrical and telephone cables, heaps of garbage which litter the streets, ramshackle stalls and kiosks, the menace of beggars, the ubiquitous presence of cachet water which liters the road, the readiness and penchant of the minibus drivers and the policemen to

give and take bribe respectively, the nefarious activities of hoodlums, drug-peddlers, prostitutes and street-urchins popularly called *area boys*, are all evidence of system collapse occasioned by bad governance. He argues that a nation which places high premium on wealth without a corresponding emphasis on cultural values and social rejuvenation should expect retrogressive development. He is quick to chide the police who ‘benefits’ from the rickety vehicles plying the road, the feudal servitude which ‘institutionalises’ begging culture, and the poverty and moral declines which turn the youth to street hawkers, armed robbers and prostitutes. In another conversation with Mr. Michael, Dede identifies the ill-equipped Police Force and corruption as factors militating against the attempt to eradicate the menace of area boys and curb the ocean surge in Lagos respectively:

Those guys are called Area Boys, the quasi-criminal elements that inhibit virtually all public places in Lagos...The near total breakdown of the economic and social systems under the military mismanagement, especially the weakening to the police force, has encouraged their growth in number and spread... The government has made much noise about its determination to end the scourge. Billions have been allocated for the job and I doubt if up to ten percent of it has actually gone into addressing the problem (59-61).

Unfortunately, the government neither possesses the political will nor the intellectual capacity to nip these ugly tendencies in the bud.

Also, Mr. Michael notices that although average Nigerian is determined and resolute to eke out a living from the societal malady, yet he is at sea on why no one resolves to address the myriads of problem bedeviling the nation. Both the rich and the poor are condemned to a lifestyle of survival against all odds. The rich do not mind once their nest is feathered. In such ‘hopeless’ situation, the leaders turn deaf ear to the need to salvage a nation which provides opportunities for them to rise from humble backgrounds to their enviable status. Dede’s position here is apposite:

Our leaders are invariably not driven to success beyond personal aggrandizement...The sorts of people who have been thrown up by the system to exercise power, not lead, have hardly ever been committed to anything other than self enrichment...It is as if the elite feel threatened by the prospects of other people aspiring to better life...They are irresponsible; they resist any attempt to get them to pay

tax...And the pity of it is that many of these *nouveau riche* themselves come from very humble, if not wretched, background (74-75).

On another occasion, he chastises the leaders for their failure to provide qualitative leadership:

Failure of leadership has been one of the most monumental tragedies of this continent. The leadership has ignored the human element of the equation so vital to the progress of a people (312).

As the rich arrogantly flaunt their ill-gotten wealthy, disobey traffic laws and continue to lord it over the masses, the poor brazenly discountenance decency and orderliness at public places.

Michael is taken aback why people strive to justify “this level of unruliness as fact of life”:

Things seem to be so otherworldly here, at least by his own standards, that it appears almost an impossible task to find a rational basis for co-existence. And yet life seems to go on. Here he is, speaking with a perfectly normal and intelligent human being who gets on with his life, in spite of his own clear knowledge that things border on the extreme, that life ought not be so brutish and uncertain (84).

Mr. Michael’s discomfiture is premised on his conviction that even if every society has its ups and downs, as well as its self-imposed standard for social ordering, it should promote and sustain a standard it cannot go below, a benchmark of a sort. This shows that even among Nigerians, there is no doubt that there exists a moral consensus that has its roots in the acceptance of an ‘internationalised’ standard of human co-existence. The only problem is how to adhere to this standard.

A discerning mind cannot but wonder what on earth is responsible for this conundrum in Nigeria. In a market-driven economy like ours, capitalism is the norm. As the rich get richer, the poor continue to wallow in abject poverty in the midst of plenty. As inequality is ‘institutionalised’, corruption, infrastructural decay, ethnicity, red tapism, neglect of public enterprises and loss of cultural pride envelop the society. Successive Nigerian governments are so insincere to the extent that they pay less attention to the funding of institutional control mechanisms provided by the court, Police Force, Custom Services, civil services and others. Despite the abundance of resources in Nigeria, the nation has to grapple with teething problems. Expectedly, incessant change of government becomes a past time in an independent Nigeria. However, if the military regimes are adjudged incompetent and ill-trained for public offices, the

advent of civilian rule has not translated to progressive development as the much sought-after dividend of democracy remains elusive! Again, Dede's position is worthy of note:

In Nigeria, many people had hoped that our fresh democratic process would open up the political space for a new generation of younger leaders to emerge and challenge the old way of doing things and in the process, clean up public life, but it hasn't gone that way. In fact, for a lot of people things are getting even worse (250).

Omobowale (2009) has earlier identified "inept political leadership" as the bane of the nation's developmental yearnings. He sets a standard for would-be leaders in Nigeria:

They must eschew bitterness, rancor and embrace peace. They must not be motivated by personal gains while performing their official duties. They must also endeavour to do away with tribalism, nepotism and favouritism all of which have collectively been the bane of the Nigerian polity for the past several years (233).

It is because these standards have proved unattainable that the nation continues to produce misfit leaders.

Besides, the political history of Nigeria makes synergy between the north and south extremely difficult. The nation is polarised along ethnic lines hence ethnic chauvinism informs state policies. While the south, with its vociferous press, prides itself as the intellectual warehouse of the nation, the north resolves to cling unto political power with which it lords it over the whole nation. So prevalent is ethnic dichotomy that even the nation's constitution makes provision for federal character in the distribution of national offices at the expense of merit! Section 153, subsection 1(c) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria establishes, among others, the Federal Character Commission which it saddles with the task of preventing lopsided representation of member states of the federation in all government agencies, parastatals and executive bodies. Furtherance to this, ethnic sentiment dictates people's line of thinking so much that you dare not insult anybody ethnic sensibilities as the consequences may portend danger.

The rot of the nation is not peculiar to Lagos alone. The journey to Benin-City opens the eyes of Mr. Michael to self-inflicted chaos, anarchy and disorder. Apart from the toll fare which is not employed for any meaningful road projects, the overall condition of Lagos/Ibadan/ Benin expressway is appalling. Even Benin metropolis is not better. Evidences of decadence and aggressive lust for ill-gotten wealth are seen in the failed public transportation system on one hand,

and the mass exodus of Benin girls to Italy for prostitution on the other! The city has its own fair share of corruption, crime, drug addiction, drug peddling, prostitution and general confusion. However like Lagos, night-life continues with frenzy, depicting the fun-loving disposition of Nigerians despite the societal challenges.

Although Nigeria is a nation which is bedeviled with myriads of societal ills that threaten her cooperate existence, the fact remains that societal decadence and mal-administration are tendencies seen all over the world. History is replete with daunting cases of oppression and injustice meted out to the less privileged all over the world. The advent of capitalist economy is not without its attendant alienation and deprivation. In fact, the West cannot be exonerated from the continent's woes, from the era of slave trade, through that of colonial affronts, to the neo-colonial influx of alien values. In a conversation with William, Dede casts aspersion on the West for their intrusion into Africa's affairs:

But what do we do when Western nations prevent the development of Africa by supporting dictators when it suits their interests...and when they encourage wars so that they can take advantage of the instability and pay us peasants for our natural resources? And who is going to make up for the centuries of exploitation by the white man? (181).

Therefore, we can conclude that most of the problems in Africa are West-induced.

Besides, societal maladies like drug addiction, drug peddling, corruption, nepotism, ethnicity, infrastructural decay, poverty, and prostitution are associated with a developing nation, hence are not peculiar to Nigeria alone. In fact, even Mr. Michael concurs that corruption is prevalent in Europe too "as the recent revelations about the French president and the fact that Italy could elect as its premier a man facing criminal prosecution for fraud". Although a sustained effort is made to tackle the menace in the West, African leaders are mostly short-sighted to be able to devise a long term solution to these unethical conducts. Even if the inability of Nigerian leaders to imitate their Western counterparts is an eloquent testimony to their weakness, yet we aver that Western nations are not immuned to corruption and mal-administration.

From the prologue in *The Diaries of Mr. Michael*, Arthur-Worrey does not hide his disgust for the nation's leaders. He does not mince words in heaping the blame for the nation's woes on the dearth of visionary and focused leaders who have the interest of the people at heart. He does not fall for their ill-conceived developmental plans which are designed to fail from inception. He decries their penchant for wealth acquisition, lust for political offices, and inability to formulate

policies which are beneficial to the nation at large. He bemoans their utter neglect for public utilities, infrastructure, social amenities and recreational facilities. He accuses them of corruption and naivety in addressing the myriads of problem facing the nation. However, he betrays emotion by castigating the leaders only as if the people are blameless. Evidences abound in the text to buttress the assertion that the mass of the people are equally guilty as well. For instance, the attendants at the museum are interested in making extra tips from their official transaction with the people while the policemen have seen the collection of bribe as a way of life. People see no qualm in driving against traffic, dumping of refuse indiscriminately on the road, begging for alms as a means of survival, hawking on the road and constituting nuisance to others! Chuks identifies the tendency for the people to act contrary to expectation as due to lack of consciousness. In his words, the people are not aware of the duties the nation desires from them:

We seem not to understand how important it is to be conscious of certain things that need to be done or might not to be done... The way we drive, the way we park our cars in the most awkward manner without a care how it will affect traffic, the way we dump our waste on any available spot, the way we carry on our business on the streets, the way we piss and defecate without shame in any open place, the way we crash into railing and lamp post and just do not bother about repairs, all these actions reveal a *consciousness failure* at all tiers of our life (477-478).

While corroborating Chucks, Dede posits that government's intervention may be meaningless unless the people decide to make it works:

But the thing we can't run away from is the fact that for government policies and programs to have any effect, there must be a measure of awareness and support from members of the public. If government builds public toilets for instance, and the people, due to ignorance or just plain disregard for others, use them roughly and carelessly so that within a month, no decent person would go near them, then the extent to which government can change and control things is very limited (478-479).

Therefore, we can conclude that the bane of Nigeria's development is not government alone. The people cannot be exonerated.

Also, a close scrutiny of the character of Dede reveals a frustrated, disgruntled and unpatriotic Nigerian. His failure to secure a white-collar-job after graduation has badly affected his sense of evaluation. To him, therefore, nothing is good about Nigeria and Nigerians. He is an incurable pessimist who has lost all hope that the nation can be salvaged and redirected towards the path of honour. He willingly agrees to be a 'tool' in the hand of Mr. Michael to expose the nation, albeit from a subjective perspective. Without knowing Mr. Michael's mission in the country, he carelessly lets out information even to his chagrin. He portrays the people and government as misguided and misdirected groups whose actions and inactions are geared towards a retrogressive march to peril. Rather than appreciating the uniqueness of Nigeria vis-a-vis her socio-cultural peculiarities, he submits that nothing good can come out of the nation. He sees successive governments in Nigeria as comprising of leaders who have resolved to sustain the status quo. He is so disenchanted and disillusioned that even Mr. Michael, despite his own prejudice, still considers his outburst an exaggeration. He considers any attempt to fix Nigeria an exercise in futility:

If the operators of the rules are themselves corrupt, if every political arrangement has to be a makeshift compromise of deal making to allow space for all the diverse and competing interests, then nothing is going to change. It is what we conveniently call the Nigerian factors ⁽²⁵²⁾.

However, such pessimism does the nation no good. If everybody resigns to fate like Dede, then the nation has begun her journey to oblivion. Unemployment, corruption and infrastructural decay are all realities facing a developing society. Obviously, Dede is 'created' to espouse the pessimism of Arthur-Worrey about Nigeria. As much as he tries to hide under the character of Dede while reflecting on the realities of the nation, his pessimistic conclusion on the fate of the nation leaves much to be desired. His 'dangerous' analogy in the prologue, that God deliberately created people who would not be able to manage the nation's abundant resources for her, points to his frustration about Nigeria. He may not be able to escape "some post writing dialogue" because development-seeking African critics would not find his submission funny.

In the same vein, if Dede and his co-travelers concur that corruption is endemic in Nigeria, we are quick to argue that the menace of corruption has become a global phenomenon. Although Mr. Michael agrees that corrupt practices are evident all over the world, he does not see himself as a morally bankrupt and sexually pervert personality! He can count on Dede as a friend indeed but keeps his mission in Nigeria a top secret throughout his stay in the country! Who knows if Dede

would even appreciate it the more if he knows his genuine mission in Nigeria. Also, he lusts for Nigerian ladies, most of the time, at first sight. He desires to befriend Queen and actually has sexual intercourse with Nengi despite not been sure where the relationship would lead to. His actions do not portray him as a 'saint' who has just arrived from a 'saner clime'.

If Mr. Michael is a dispassionate commentator on Africa in general and Nigeria in particular, he should have observed and appreciated the survival instincts in Nigerians. Against all odds, Nigerians strive to make ends meet, defying any measure that militates against survival. Even Dede is an example of a Nigerian who is determined to eke out a living from the unemployment reality in the country. Collins, despite her 'infancy' educational attainment is relatively successful in his business dealings. Other Nigerians, one way or the other, struggle to earn a living from the hostile environment. Unfortunately, the bias attitude of Europeans on Africans, which overtly informs Mr. Michael's visit in the first place, beclouds his sense of judgment. He fails to commend Nigerians for surviving against all odds. On one occasion when Mr. Michael becomes overwhelm with the nation's myriads of problems, even the highly critical Dede, of all people, commends the survival instinct of the people:

You see, we've become so accustomed to things not working right, to governments never delivering on their promises that we've learnt to design our own responses and solutions to the problems...African leaders are not necessarily representative of their people and its people have learned to survive, even prosper in some cases in spite of their greedy and grasping political elite (137-138).

Expectedly, Western critics have turned the other way, refusing to commend or, at least, acknowledge the people's determination to wriggle out of a crisis situation. Although they have little or no knowledge of Africa and her people, Eurocentric critics assert their position on the superiority of Europe over Africa, and invariable, Europeans over Africans. Without having a credible explanation to justify the so-called preeminence of Europe, they argue that Africa is a land which reveled in pestilence, disease and plaque, conditions that are uncomfortable for decent human habitation. They see African leaders as "intellectual Lilliputians" with little or no administrative acumen to redress the social maladies. Foreign media are quick to depict the horror in Africa. The "dark continent" is often the subject of discussion on British Broadcasting Corporation and Cable News Network! Without identifying any natural defect in the physiological make up of Africans, they conclude that Africa is peopled by inferior beings that are sexually

perverse, unintelligent, heathen, primitive, savage and barbaric. According to Robert Miles (1989),

Africa was represented as exhibiting a potent sexuality. African women were considered to be especially desirous of sexual intercourse while African men were thought to possess an unusually large penis and to be particularly virile and lusty (27).

In actual fact, Mr. Michael originally comes to Nigeria to gather enough data to buttress the West's claim to superiority over others. However, African critics have since resolved to rebuff these racist remarks in their entirety. While Peter Kanyandago (2003:35) traces the foundation of Eurocentric postulation to the era of slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism, Chiedozie Okoro (2003:25) submits that only the deconstruction of Eurocentric sophistry can guarantee "rapid overcoming of most of the conflicts that bestride the globe". Achebe (1997:120) unashamedly challenges Eurocentric racist conclusion on Africa, wondering why Africa had to be civilized at all cost, if the land is perilous and unfit for decent co-existence. Therefore, Western postulation on Africa cannot be taken as the 'gospel' truth. Most of the time, this position is grossly biased and unsubstantiated.

In the same vein, sustained investigations of the continent could convince a discerning mind that a semblance of hope exists in Africa, despite the endemic corruption and infrastructural decadence everywhere. Rather than 'arm chair' criticism, an empirical survey would reveal the good in Africa. Mr. Michael becomes a 'changed' man because his encounter and conversation with both Dede and William have clearly altered his 'jaundiced' perspective about Nigeria and her people. He is now convinced of the fallibility of his people who merely write half-truth or outright falsehood about Africa. His task now is to correct this unsubstantiated perspective with his writings:

He intends to devote his article to more than a mere outsiders' usual patronizing assessment of Africa's difficulties and struggle. He must look under the surface and try to fathom, to explain, to educate, to generate empathy...It occurs to him that un-informed observations made from a distance have been the bane of reporting Africa and the Third world. He intends to be part of the process of reversing that ignorant and arrogant trend (178 -235).

Thus, henceforth, he would learn never to be "judgmental" especially when he discovers that some of the presumptions and stereotypes, which inform his thinking, lack validity and cannot pass

empirical test. He can now go back to England with a superior knowledge of Africa, unlike his counterparts in Europe who still delude themselves claiming they know Africa:

Michael feels extremely privileged to be exposed to these precious insights into the complex overtones of the African social system. He will not be able to avoid feeling a little bit superior when he returns home with this valuable body of knowledge to challenge the ignorant perceptions of his countrymen about the African way of life (440).

Perhaps with more sojourners like Mr. Michael coming to Africa, the continent would have been saved from misleading and ill-informed interpretations of Africa's socio-cultural milieu.

We are not unmindful of the unfortunate military interventions which have dominated the political space in Nigeria. Before the present democratic experiment in 1999, Nigeria has had to grapple with about twenty nine years of military rule. This long military incursion has negative consequences for national development and democratic maturation. The regimented professional training of the military is at variance with the liberty associated with democratic dispensation. In no time, military fiat, oppression, brutality, centralization of power and resources, press censorship, mal-administration and violation of human rights become part and parcel of our national life. When Mr. Michael confronts Dede with the nagging question of how the nation would have fared if the military had not truncated democratic rule in 1983, Dede has this to say:

I believe that key institutions like the courts, the police and the houses of assembly would have developed into much stronger and more relevant institutions if the military had not returned to seize power; and I also believe that we would have been a much less aggressive and violent people first because we would not have been exposed to the crude and physical methods the army used in its attempt to impose control...And life did not improve for the generality of the people under the military (287).

Even if the civilians have not fared better, continuous mistakes and corrections would have finally led to near-perfect, improved democratic governance. As nascent as Nigeria's democratic experience is, it has produced some landmarks enough to give it a pass mark. With press freedom, freedom of speech and association, and respect for human right, Nigeria can only get better. The liberalisation of the telecommunication industry has further lessened the burden in information dissemination. It has also created employment for a significant percentage of people in Nigeria.

The assertion that Nigerians are religious bigots and ethnic chauvinists has been discredited with recent realities. Although the zeal and commitment which inform religious and ethnic sentiments are unparalleled among non-Western nations, we have had occasions when religious consideration and ethnic jingoism are jettisoned for the adoption of reason in national discourse. On the 12th June, 2003, Nigerians from all walks of life rose in unison and voted massively for the Muslim/Muslim ticket of Moshood Abiola and Babagana Kingibe in a presidential election. In 2011, Goodluck Jonathan emerged the president of Nigeria despite being from the minority part of the nation! He secured more votes among majority of the ethnic groups in Nigeria. These are clear indications that Nigerians are not blind to merit when they see any.

Meanwhile the sub-regional importance of Nigeria stands her in good stead in the comity of nations. The regional power of Nigeria cannot be ignored in sub-Saharan Africa. More than any other nations, Nigeria has invested huge human and material resources in troubled spots in Africa in her bid to promote regional harmony. Nigeria's diplomatic role in apartheid South Africa, her military assignments in Liberia, Sudan, Serra Leone, Darfur and Somalia, and her commitment to peaceful return to democratic governance in Sao Tome and Principe (after some military adventurists seized power) are recent instances which lay credence to her sub-regional indispensability. This 'big brother' role is commendable both locally and internationally. It, perhaps, may have informed American's subtle and cautious diplomatic dealings with Nigeria even during her own experiences under the military.

Although we cannot but notice the unpatriotic activities of several Nigerians, either rich or poor, either the ruler or the ruled, we should be objective enough to appreciate the sacrifice and commitment of people who have imparted positively into the development of the nation. History is replete with the conscientious disposition of Nigerian leaders who fought for independence from the British. Although they suffered deprivation and stigmatization, they stood their ground until Nigeria became a sovereign nation. Even after independence, some leaders have contributed to national development in no small measure. This selfless contribution should be celebrated, instead of dwelling too much on the atrocities of the villain, because the feelings of angst do not translate to development for the nation. It may even amount to 'defeatist' politicking. However, such accounts should not merely be an avenue for self glorification. Adeoti (2003:8) has warned Nigerians to be wary of writings which tend towards self-glorification. In his opinion, the genre of biography and auto biography has provided some ill-fated Nigerian leaders an ample opportunity

to glorify their role in government, having been “goaded by the quest for acclaim and immortality”. Therefore unlike Mowah’s Tamund who strive to rewrite his own role in government in a biography, Dede seeks for Nigerian heroes who deserve accolade for their selfless contribution to national life:

I think of the great people Nigeria has produced, not those who are manufactured into relevance by praise singers and newspaper reports merely because they have been able to smuggle themselves into positions of political power or because they possess large fortune of indeterminate source, but true achievers, those who by dint of individual effort and extraordinary ability in their chosen fields, along with strength of character and force of personal conviction, have raised the profile of the country and challenged the status quo (292).

Justifying the reason for the shifting of his thematic preoccupation to accommodate heroes and heroines whose activities have positively imparted on us, Osofisan (2011) posits that readers should no longer be bored with uncritical reflection on corruption, criminality, deception, and so on. Instead, the heroes of our nationhood should be the subject of our recent discourse as they begin a journey towards immortalization:

So I thought that one of the things we probably should do is to try and begin to provide an image of the positive things of our lives, to begin to focus on the exemplary leaders rather than on traitors, on visionaries rather the looters. We need to point out that, just as we have these “opposite people”...so we also have truly positive ones (23).

Thus, true heroes and heroines should inform our critical endeavour, in line with Osofisan’s postulation.

It is a truism that Nigeria is bedeviled with problems of dangerous dimension. Nonetheless, Nigerians are generally fun-loving and enjoyment-seeking people. They visit club houses, musical shows and few recreational facilities in the country like the bar beach, motherland, film houses and parties. In the same vein, Nigerians are highly accommodating. Dede becomes accustomed to Mr. Michael without much ado despite being from different backgrounds. His family members warmly receive Mr. Michael, offering to ‘spoil’ him with the little they have. Chuks volunteers to take Mr. Michael and Dede to a friend in Benin-City so as to enable the former have knowledge of another city. The trio is warmly received by Collins who has not had the opportunity of meeting

them before! Yet he offers them accommodation, food and a lavish drinking-spree at the city's Hearts Hotel and Nightclub Annex. When Mr. Michael is suddenly inflicted by a bout of malaria, Collins takes him to the hospital where he is properly examined and taken care of. As Mr. Michael is put on a flight back to Lagos, even Ude regrets his inability to host the group the next day. Such is African hospitality that is unrivaled in other climes. Who knows if Mr. Michael would be able to do the same if the situation is reversed?

Fola Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael*, no doubt, makes a statement about Nigeria and her inability to rise above board in the comity of nations. It presents a vivid account of the filth in Nigeria's socio-political system. It x-rays the nation's realities and concludes that Nigeria's myriad of problems are occasioned by plethora of bad leaders, many of whom lack the requisite administrative acumen and intellectual wherewithal to lead the nation on a progressive march towards the desired development. It presents Nigerians as a group of people who have resigned to fate and are barely interested in having their lion share of the proverbial national cake. However, as captivating and thought-provoking as the novel is, its pessimistic disposition is inimical to genuine and concerted resolution to alter the perfidy and mal-administration that have become the bane of the nation's socio-political development. A discerning mind can only wonder how the novelist's exposé on Nigeria, without a corresponding commentary on the positive inclinations of some Nigerians, no matter how little, can assist to redress the malady he eloquently reveals. In the same vein, the task of redirecting the nation back on track for progressive economic and socio-political rebirth cannot be left for the leaders alone. Here, the active connivance and cooperation of the entire citizenry are imperative. Unfortunately, Arthur-Worrey heaps the blame of the nation's woes on the leaders alone. Although the leaders are expected to lead by example in the quest for development, the significant role of the people in national rejuvenation cannot be over-emphasized. The fact that successive regimes in Nigeria have not got it right in the task of fixing the nation is enough testimony to buttresses the conclusion that all hands must be on deck if the nation is to be salvaged from her self-inflicted retrogressive tendencies. Therefore the task expected of our writers in this era is not to only document the catalogue of woes which are undoubtedly evident in Nigeria and other developing nations. Thus, Arthur-Worrey's *The Diaries of Mr. Michael* does not come to mind as a text strategically designed to posit a way out of the doldrums. Such pessimism is antithetical to development.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 Postmodern Aesthetics in Selected Biyi Bandele-Thomas' Novels

5.1 Biyi Bandele-Thomas: A Brief Biodata

Born in Kafanchan, northern part of Nigeria in 1967 to Yoruba parents, Biyi Bandele-Thomas had his early education and upbringing in the north. He later attended Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife where he studied Drama between 1987 and 1990. He has since relocated to London.

A multi-talented playwright, novelist, poet, short-story writer and theatre director, Bandele-Thomas won the British Council Lagos Award and International Student Playscript Competition with *Waiting for Others* and *Rain* respectively in 1989. He also won the Best Nero Play Award at London New Play Festival with *Two Horsemen* in 1994. He has written and produced works like *Marching for Fausa* (1993), *Resurrection* (1994), and *Death Catches the Hunter* (1995). Apart from writing several plays for radio and television, he has also adapted Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Aphra Behn's *Oronoko* for the stage in Leeds and London in the year 1997 and 1999 respectively. Besides, he is the author of novels such as *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* (1991), *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* (1991), *The Street* (1991) and *Burma Boy* (2007).

Biyi Bandele-Thomas has worked at several theatre organisations in London, particularly Royal Court Theatre and Royal Shakespeare's Company. He was the Arts Council Resident Dramatist at Talawa Theatre Company, London, between 1993 and 1994; Writer-in-Resident at Royal National Theatre in 1995; Judith Wilson Fellow at Churchill College, University of Cambridge between 2000 and 2001; Royal Literary Fellow, London College of Printing between 2001 and 2002; and Resident Playwright at Bush Theatre between 2002 and 2003.

Biyi Bandele-Thomas is still active on the London scene with a promising career which endears him to critics.

5.2 *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*

In *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* (1991), Biyi Bandele-Thomas presents a novel-within-a-novel where characters operate at rather absurd, erratic and supernatural levels to depict a nation bedeviled with escalating banality, corruption, violence and psychological dislocation. In tandem with the surrealist tradition, the text underscores the disillusionment

occasioned by dashed hope in post independent Nigerian society. It employs several metaphors to drive home its point on the tragic consequence of actions and events in the society. The kernel of its argument is premised on the assumption that Nigeria is a complex and hostile nation hence no one can 'navigate' through her unscathed. Its strength lies in the experimental technique of alternating between two novels, one between Lakemfa and Maude, and that of Bozo. Also the disjointed narrative technique is weaved masterfully by the novelist to make a whole. Despite his adoption of the stream-of-consciousness technique, Bandele-Thomas carefully presents well rounded characters who are allowed to develop fully.

An eccentric literature teacher, Maude, invites one of his mischievous students, Lakemfa, to his apartment. Since Maude has never invited anybody to his flat before, Lakemfa feels honoured and privileged to have been singled out. Maude does not bother what the people say about him hence he lives a solitary life. Although his intellectual prowess should ordinarily endear him to the students and colleagues, his free-thinking philosophical disposition does not stand him in good stead in an environment where religious chauvinism has become a way of life. In fact he would have lost his job because of his belief but for the intervention of the biology teacher.

On one of Lakemfa's regular visits, Maude reveals the horrible nature of his background to him. His grandparents were consumed in the political upheavals of the early sixties. Only his mother survived, though she became a social outcast on account of the family misfortune. She had to flee Lagos and settle in Jos where she became a prostitute to make ends meet. She lost her virginity at the age of thirteen and eventually died of breast cancer! Left with no one and nowhere to turn to, Maude abandoned school and took to the street where he did menial jobs to survive. He once brewed local gin (*ogogoro*), worked as a garbage collector, newspaper vendor, fast food vendor, 'shoe shine' boy, among others. He wandered about until he was arrested and sent on a three-month stint in prison. He later ran to Cotonou when a fellow thief was caught and lynched! Luck however smiled on him as a philanthropist rescued him on his hospital bed and offered him a job. His fortune had changed for good. Undaunted, Maude was determined to be educated. He sat for GCE A level in history, literature and economics and passed in flying colours. He enrolled and got a degree in Drama from the University of London as an external student. After the one-year mandatory national service, he secured appointment as a teacher.

Besides the story of Maude, the story of Bozo is a metaphor for the tragedy and banality that are prevalent in contemporary Nigerian society. Bozo had the misfortune of a rather difficult

birth. After a prolonged labour, a caesarian was performed on his mother, Mrs. Abednego. She also underwent a hysterectomy which foreclosed further child-birth. This enraged Mr. Abednego who, henceforth, could no longer have sexual intercourse with his wife! Bozo became 'guilty' of her mother's situation and his father despised him intensely, despite the fact that Mrs. Abednego enjoined him severally to either marry another wife or visit brothels to meet prostitutes! On an occasion with his sister, Moyo, Bozo complains about the estranged disposition of his father towards him:

So he does hate me, Bozo thought bitterly. So he hates me so much because I made him impotent. Me, make somebody, impotent? That's crazy; I don't have a magic wand! I didn't make anybody impotent. All I know is somebody's impotent and he can't reconcile himself with reality and he's making me the scapegoat. He's blaming me for something that happened before I was born. And now he wants to kill me. Now he wants me dead. Oh, God, wherever you are, I am tired of being a fall-guy (35).

Mrs. Abednego assumed the responsibility of father and mother as Bozo followed her to church.

Bozo had unrestrained access to several metaphysical books, ironically, courtesy of his mother. This helped to nurture his interest in philosophy hence in no time, he began to question religious orthodoxy, particular Christianity, to the consternation of his mother who was a catholic. His inquisitive nature led him to the point of searching for the inconsistencies in the bible. He later renounced his faith in Christianity in absolute defiance to his mother's position. When he tried to impress his new-found faith in the school, he was expelled in the last year! The authority saw an absurdity in his comparison of Mithras, the Persian god of light, with Jesus Christ. Such a character cannot be tolerated.

Meanwhile Mr. Abednego had been having an incestuous affair with his daughter, Moyo. Unfortunately for them, Mrs. Abednego eavesdropped on their conversation. She became so enraged up to the point that she killed both father and daughter. She was sentenced to live asylum. Consequent on the horror and loneliness occasioned by the family tragedy, Bozo took to drug. He had an ally in Mitchell Socrates who dealt in marijuana. Their relationship blossomed so well that he soon became a drug addict.

As the societal injustice and oppression became unbearable, Bozo began to nurse a revolutionary idea of altering the socio-economic decadence in preparation for an egalitarian

society. In line with the socialist tradition which forecloses private ownership of means of production and service, he yearned for mass action to redress perceived injustice. He was distraught by the glaring inequality in the society, wondering how the few acquired so much wealth while the poor wallowed in abject poverty. He despised the corrupt government officials and the policemen who mounted road blocks to extort money from motorists. In his 'ideal' state, offenders would be severely reprimanded with death penalty to serve as deterrent to others. In preparation for the impending revolution, he worked on a piece of land at Kafanchan where he planted marijuana seed.

Exactly two years after he had left for the countryside, Bozo came back to meet Mitchell. Both recruited ten men who assisted in harvesting the 'herb' for onward passage to a drug cartel in Lagos. He also recruited four men for the final onslaught towards achieving "an Alternative Society". The men agreed to play a part in the revolution though they doubted its workability. Under the aegis of the movement group, he combed the neighbouring cities of Kano, Kaduna and Jos and returned to Kafanchan with fifty under-16 *almajirai*. With this brain-washed, rag-tag 'army', Bozo hoped to change the society with articles of war like dane guns, daggers, arrows, bows and spears. Mitchell's was to help acquire bombs through the assistance of an army sergeant. Unfortunately for Bozo, the revolution did not even take off! Policemen raided the 'hideout' while he was away and arrested everyone in sight! Mitchell was shot and Maria managed to escape. Bozo came back to behold the frustration. The revolution had failed!

Distressed and highly disillusioned, Bozo took a sizable portion of marijuana. Heavily armed with "a brand new, menacingly shimmering, malevolently mute, forty-five-calibre colt automatic" rifle loaded with "150 rounds of ammunition", he headed straight for the Nigeria Police Force headquarters at Kafanchan. He successfully killed seven police officers including Steven Daniel. He effected the release of his detained 'comrade-in-arms' namely Kiss, Banjo Modupe, Moses Nkrumah and Odia Irabor. Later on, he committed suicide.

Although the story of the adventure of Bozo is nothing but fiction, it has a positive impact on Lakemfa who decides to turn a new leaf and abandons his thieving escapades with Yau earlier fixed for the night at the school poultry. According to him, "the system is rotten as it is. I don't want to be part of those who are making it rot". Therefore, the import of Maude's story is not lost on Lakemfa: he has dutifully discharged his duties as a teacher. Lakemfa has become a changed personality. Despite Yau's objection, he is reformed for good. He is now set to confess his 'sins'

no matter the consequence. The transformation of Lakemfa foregrounds the conclusion that Maude seeks a man who would belong to his “world” in him hence the unusual invitation. He eventually gets one in a transformed Lakemfa.

The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond is an ‘ambitious’ novel which underscores Bandele-Thomas’ familiarity with the postcolonial Nigerian socio-political reality where survival is of the fittest. It explores the symbol of Maude and Bozo as metaphors to depict the tragic nature of contemporary Nigerian society. With corruption, ethnicity, arms peddling, drug addiction, violence, armed robbery, prostitution and infrastructural neglect, the society is doomed. This fact which defies logical social ordering is however not lost on the novelist. His *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* clearly depicts him as a man still conversant with the hostile Nigerian environment, in contrast with works of writers who have removed themselves from the reality of their nations because of their vantage position as ‘privileged’ persons outside the neocolonial rots. According to Negash (1999:91), “the writings of Bandele-Thomas are less about exotic syncretism and more about the brutalities of exploitative systems”, unlike that of writers “who have subjectively separated themselves from national cultural resistance. Maude’s unpleasant background is primarily occasioned by the post-independent western region crisis of the ‘wetie’ era in Nigeria. This leads to the total annihilation of his immediate family and culminates in his near-tragic story. Despite the life-line offers by a certain hypocritical philanthropist, he still remains unfulfilled. His inability to ‘wriggle out’ of his unsatisfactory teaching career is a metaphor for the somewhat incapacitation of man to ‘triumph’ in a hostile environment, in line with Nietzschean existentialist philosophy. On his part, Bozo’s erratic father, who does not hide his disgust at the sight of his “sonofabitch” son, cannot but produce a defiant of a son. The family tragedy, after Mr. Abednego’s incestuous relationship with his daughter is discovered, further accentuates a society where cosmic harmony has taken flight. Also, the failure of Bozo to attain utopia is a stark reality which faces a revolution-seeking personality who intends to change a system with the employment of crude means. Finally the treacherous connivance of even Mitchell Socrates to dupe him of his entire ill-gotten wealth makes a loud statement on the games of deceit and arm-twisting that pervade the system. If his trusted ‘comrade in arms’ can betray him, the world is indeed hopeless.

Besides the theme of unprecedented corruption, narrative technique employs in *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*, more importantly, underscores its pride of place as a

quintessential postmodern text *extraordinaire*. Aliu (2000:27) attests to this position when he submits that though the novel can be read as a social document, yet narrative technique grounds it in the mainstream of African prose fiction tradition. In line with the Barthean deconstructionist tradition which overtly sets out to undermine the preeminent status of the author in meaning-formation, Bandele-Thomas's *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* promotes textual structural disharmony in a manner prefers in postmodern literature. The disjointed and diverse narrations are presented with recourse to fragmented narrative centres with characters like Maude, Lakemfa, Yau, Mitchell and Bozo adopting the position of narrators at one time or the other. This disconnected narrations are presented with what Aliu (2000:27) aptly tags "a multi voice consciousness" and multi various points of view. It shifts from the omniscient first person narrative point of view, to the third person narrative point of view, all in a bid to present diverse fictional worlds. The following examples of diverse narrative centres would suffice to present the strange character of Maude:

He walked like a wraith like a man in a nightmare... He was a man of very small stature, standing like the cob of a corn... He despised being greeted and would cock his unshapely head violently towards the north when attacked with greeting from the south ⁽¹⁻²⁾.

Swiftly, the narration shifts from the third person singular to the first:

I cannot say when or why he first invited me to his flat at the staff quarters, but I do remember that I was quite flattered, all the more so because I know that Early man had never invited anybody or student, male or female, to his flat before ⁽⁶⁾.

Although this fragmented technique evidently problematises the narrations in the text, its sense of plural disorder further justifies its place as an important addition to the postmodern textual tradition. It foregrounds Douglas Hofstadter's (1980) treatise on "diegesis" where events are submerged in other events to present a complicated disjointed narration where each "hypo" or narrative level is regularly subordinated with others to form Aliu's "cluster of diegesis". Aliu (2000) cannot agree less:

These passages constitute an evidence of the problematised angle of narration which is the hallmark of *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*. Apart for the multiplicity

of narrative angles in the text, there is equally a pluralisation of fictional worlds (28).

The “pluralisation of fictional worlds” with “diegesis” is a postmodern experimental technique to drive home the futility of order in Bandele-Thomas’ *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*. A simple straight-forward narration, involving the adventures of school students and their erratic tutor, is immediately submerged in another narration which centres on the ill-fated background of Maude. In no time Maude leads Lakemfa through the orgy of violence that characterised his childhood:

In legal and societal terms I was a bastard. A philosopher, of course would dispute that with you. I never knew my father and neither, I think, did my mother know who he was. You see, she was a prostitute...I used to be quiet ashamed of my mother, of her profession, but later I came to realize that I shouldn’t be ashamed. She was my mother (11).

Unfortunately, the death of his mother ‘sends’ him to the street where he does menial job until an encounter with a philanthropist on his hospital bed changes his fortune for good. Lakemfa is so awestruck by Maude’s stranger-than-life story that he begins to view him differently since then. Who would not be surprised how a reasonable man can leave a lucrative job in Lagos for a ‘thankless’ teaching job in Kafanchan. Lakemfa wonders:

They story of your life reads like a book, sir (20).

Futher “diegesis” continues the structural disharmony in the text. In a deftly superimposed epistolary narrative centre, Maude presents a manuscript containing the story of Bozo as told by his girl friend, Maria. It is entitled *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*. It presents the passionate discontentment of a railway worker, Mr. Abednego, with his estranged wife. As he finds solace in an incestuous affair with his daughter, the family is engulfed in a devastating crisis which eventually has a tragic consequence. Left alone, Bozo takes to drug and begins to nurse a bizarre revolutionary idea of altering the Nigeria system. Unfortunately the intended revolution does not take off as he is deceived and duped by his comrades. Enraged and frustrated, he goes haywire, killing several policemen before committing suicide. The futility of man to overcome the system has been stressed.

More importantly, *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* makes its mark through its seemingly dislocated structural technique, a postmodern feature which accentuates its morbid complexity and its inherent nuance of deliberate obfuscation of rational interpretations. As no

“correct reading” is possible, diverse interpretations are permitted, although these can be derived only from sustained attention to multi-various media of meanings, and not from a straight forward linear plot structure. This informs Aliu’s (2000) conclusion that the text

makes its artistic commands by its dislocated, illogical and chaotic structural outlay. It is a locus of complex motifs and meanings; and to construct a satisfactory interpretation of it, the reader must follow the complex web of cross-references and linguistic equivalences and repetition which function independently of, or in addition to, the codes of causality and sequence (32).

Besides the fragmented plot structure, the text ends on a note which leaves no one in doubt about the ‘fictionality’ of its open-ended conclusion. Evidently, this open-ended narration forecloses the trope of denouement, as the conflicts surrounding the personalities of Maude, Lakemfa, Maria, Mitchel and other are left unresolved. As Maude interferes in the course of Lakemfa’s positive transformation, after listening and reading the stories of Maude and Bozo respectively, Lakemfa is ‘scandalised’ to hear that the two stories are nothing but only figment of Maude’s imagination. Thus, Lakemfa has been fooled to have been taken in by the stories of Maude and Bozo. Maude is emphatic about the ‘fictionality’ of the manuscript entitled *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*:

What I’m trying to tell you, Lakemfa is that all that story I told you today, all that script you read, was fiction. There is no iota of truth, no soupcon of reality in it all. It was all a figment of the imagination. That manuscript was actually the remains of a proposed novel by my kid brother (135).

Commenting on the text, Gikandi (2003:69) attests to the ‘fictionality’ of Maude and Bozo’s story by asserting that in Bandele-Thomas’ *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*, “life is so much embedded in fiction and where truth is sometimes blurred by the illusions that surround it”. Afterall, no one, not even Lakemfa, is immuned from “aprilphologism”.

The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond is a caustic satire of Nigeria’s socio-political realities which underscores the novelist consciousness of his Nigerian root. Its celebration of escalating banality, moral laxity, political violence, family disharmony, psychological dislocation, drug peddling and addiction, armed robbery and prostitution however casts it in bad light from writings which are expected to promote social harmony, moral rectitude, dignity of labour, heroic deed, unalloyed patriotism, and selfless service to mankind. While Lakemfa, Yau

and fellow students derive satisfaction in mocking their literature in English teacher, the school management looks the other way simply because Maude's philosophical disposition is considered inimical to students' religious development. In fact, he almost loses his job on account of what the scripture master refers to as his atheist posture, but for the timely intervention of the biology tutor. Therefore if no one enjoys his company, he is justified for not inviting anyone, student or teacher to his house. When he eventually encourages Lakemfa to visit him regularly, the boy begins to understand his behaviour up to the point that he can no longer 'connive' with his classmates to deride him:

I became subdued whenever he was in the class. I could no longer join my mates in making fun of the wiry, mysterious master. I could no longer guffaw or snigger even when someone wanted to make him the butt of the latest untested practical joke (9).

Similarly, when the understanding of Maude's stories dawn on him. He is totally transformed from his thieving misadventure to a 'saint' who even tries to persuade Yau to get reformed else he would report him to the authority:

I'm through with all that, that's why...I'm through with "tapping" books from the library, "raiding" the school farm, "lifting" ceiling fans from the classroom for sale in the town...I'm through with it all. I want to be different, Yau...I want to be part of those who want to cleanse it and if I want to cleanse it I must be clean myself (138).

Thus if Maude is considered an outcast, it is because none of his 'detractors' belong to his 'world' nor did he share their ideals. Lakemfa enters his 'world' and comes out a refined personality.

Also, Bandle-Thomas' sense of pessimism is evident in *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond*. Like no one else, the two major protagonists in his story- within-a-story, Maude and Bozo, operate in a predominantly hostile environment where survival is of the fittest. Maude has the unenviable experience of losing both parents early in life to assassination and cancer. As the society presents itself without a modicum of affection for his less-privileged status, he has to engage in nefarious activities to survive. His *deus ex machina* remains the encounter with the hypocritical philanthropist. In the same vein, the society has no plan for Bozo or his likes who takes to the street early in life. His resolve to alter the system only leads him to hobnob with social miscreants who let him down in the end. As the system conquers him, the futility of changing a hostile society is foregrounded. This conclusion has the unfortunate implication of weakening the

resolve of development-conscious Nigerians to alter a retrogressive inclination in the society. No wonder Yau denounces Lakemfa's newly found 'holier-than-thou' attitude because no one would appreciate it:

Look, lakemf, I don't know what sort of metamorphosis you've undergone. And I don't know how serious you really are. But if you're as serious as I think you are, then I must tell you, you've got a rough, rough road to travel. And a lonely one too. A very, very lonely one. Man Lakemf. You want to go the way of Fela? Gani? You want to go the way of Rodney? It's a lonely one, man. It's the most thankless of all thankless jobs (139).

This conclusion from a youth who is perceived to be member of future generation is a sad commentary for the nation's developmental drive. The youth should be enjoined to engage in patriotic venture at all time.

Ironically, a nation which revels in oppression and inequality sees no inconsistency in sustaining religious chauvinism! As religious sentiments soar, zero tolerance for diverse religious persuasion comes to the fore. The scripture master, who is also the school chaplain, detests Maude's anti-Christian affiliation, particularly his regular contribution of articles to "an intellectual, mystic journal supported entirely by atheistically inclined members of the academic community". He sees no contradiction in the biblical injunction which promotes good neighbourliness on one hand, and his hatred for Maude on the other. He finds Maude's personality unworthy and passionately detests this 'devil' incarnate. He regularly sends petition to the authority to have this aberrant teacher transferred. This is the height of religious intolerance especially in an academic environment where dissentient opinions should be espoused. Besides Maude, Bozo is expelled from Kagoro Secondary School for likening Jesus Christ to Mithras, the Persian god of light whose birthday coincides with the Christians' annual celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ on the 25th of December! Other instance of contradiction in the text is that of Mrs. Abednego who professes to be a staunch catholic but gives metaphysical books to her son Bozo. No wonder she gives no damn about committing murder when she discovers the incestuous affair between her husband and daughter.

Meanwhile on reading the story of Maude, a discerning African mind begins to wonder what has become of the communal living tradition in African society. Having lost his father and mother to the post-independent Western region crisis and the terminal illness of cancer

respectively, he begins his journey through the turbulent 'sea' of Nigerian society unaided. He "drifted with the wind", moving from Jos to Ibadan, Aba to Port Harcourt, Cote-d'ivoire to Ghana, Lagos to Cotonou. On his wandering escapades, he does so many menial jobs and even joins a gang which specialises in pick-pocketing until fortune smiles on him on his hospital bed. However, we cannot but ask what has become of the sense of communality in African society. If Maude's mother can be abandoned to her fate by other family members on account of the death of her husband, it is inconceivable that such abandonment of a relative who is perceived to have "the curse of Jonah" is possible in Africa. It is unAfrican and may only be possible in an individualistic Euro-American society, after all her fate cannot be adduced to any divine arrangement. She is only a victim of socio-political and economic imbalances in a capitalist social ordering.

The so-called magnanimity of the philanthropist who 'rescue' Maude from his hospital bed can also be called to question. He may not have assisted Maude and other underprivileged people out of altruistic intention after all. In actual fact, the economic dependency of these people might have been occasioned by the illicit actions and corrupt tendencies of the privileged members of the society, a class which the philanthropist belongs to. Evidence has it that such gesture may have been embarked upon merely to score cheap political goal and convince the electorates to vote for him. No wonder he ensures that the annual 'ritual' of coming with gifts for the underprivileged and the sick at Christmas, is well reported by the media, like the biblical Pharisees. Even Maude is not impressed:

Two days before I was due to be discharged from the hospital, a big shot, one of those self-styled philanthropist who own companies from Bodija to Fagge, came with the usual retinue of newsmen, to the hospital to wish the patients a happy *keresimesi*...He went from bed to miserable bed handing out gifts and making quotable quotes while the newsmen clicked away, *danburubanka*, like nobody's business and followed him with their notebooks, tape recorders and cine-cameras (37).

This media coverage is enough to show that this philanthropist has ulterior motive behind his spendthrift, father-Christmas disposition.

Similarly, Maude is able to have his way with the philanthropist because of the dearth of investigative journalism in Nigeria. He gets more than others from the philanthropist because he lies conveniently. He claims to possess a first class degree in French, a family and a teaching job in

Port Novo. He deceives everybody into believing that he has lost all he had, including his certificate, in the accident. Ironically, the journalists around are not committed to investigating the authenticity of Maude's claim. They are merely interested in the sensationalism of their stories, one of which read "Accident Victim bailed out by Popular Philanthropist". Such 'unprofessional conduct' by the supposed watchdog of the society is quite unbecoming. They have turned themselves to sycophants and bootlickers unworthy of occupying the "fourth estate of the realm". No wonder some of them are now at the beck and call of political office holders.

The policemen who pay the supreme price after Mitchell and Bozo's houses are raided might have deserved their fate. It is unthinkable that after making such discoveries and having everyone on sight arrested, the premises are not cordoned off! Surprisingly, the policemen merely raid the house in search of marijuana weeds which they know so well that Mitchell sells to people! In fact, the raid might have been occasioned by Mitchell's non-payment of the usual protection fee. Although they discover the fifty *almajiras* undergoing training in guerrilla warfare, yet they care no hoot if those that escape unleash a reprisal attack on them, especially as Mitchell is shot but not killed. It is therefore a matter of time before Bozo kills any policemen in sight and commits suicide. They have paid dearly for their 'unprofessionalism'.

The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond is unarguable, a masterfully crafted story told by a novelist whose affinity with Nigeria society is doubtless. It depicts Nigeria as a failed nation, and Nigerians as disillusioned, because the nation offers no good for her people. Corruption and moral laxity pervade all strata of the nation. The futility in the quest for order in such society is underscored by the failure of her people to achieve utopia, no matter their doggedness. In order to drive home its point, it employs disjointed episodic narrative techniques to present diverse fictional worlds in sharp contrast to the earlier tradition in Nigerian novels which places emphasis on unity of plot. Although its pessimistic fervour and artistic aberration may not be in tandem with the philosophy of development-seeking African scholars, Negash (1999) submits that its perceived pessimism and penchant to foreclose the tradition sustained in earlier novels underscore its radical inclination:

This expression of disillusionment should not be interpreted as cynical and apolitical but rather as radical, critical and displaced articulation. Paralleling these criticisms are utopian movements such as the Islamic Maitatsine rebellion in Kano, northern Nigeria. Bozo the anarchist uses the same

soldiers, students of Islam (almajirai) for his ill-fated insurrection. In spite of the utopian elements underlying these insurrections, these movements are dystopian because they originate from present fears and anxieties projected into the future (88).

Its vision of contemporary Nigerian society bedeviled with corruption and disorder is indisputable. It, therefore, makes a strong case as a text written in the emerging postmodern literary tradition.

5.3 The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams

Apparently clad in the foremost postmodern tradition, Bandele-Thomas' *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* (1991) exhibits an undisguised but morbid rhetoric to present a strange world peopled by characters whose deeds are enmeshed in illogicality, contradiction and absurdity. Depicting the futility of mankind to exhort a corrective influence on a deranged society, the text makes an eloquent statement on the overwhelming instrumentality of the state to coerce the people into obedience in a manner which underlies her Gestapo nature. Echoing the realities of the economic and socio-political maladies of post-independent Nigerian society, it masterfully displays several images of violence to drive home the point that Nigerian society is a chaotic one devoid of order and institutional control mechanism. Employing disjointed episodic narrative technique as its adopted style, it tasks the readers' sense of organisation to link diverse narratives told from multi-layered narrative centres together to form an organic whole.

The themes of violence, corruption and brutality pervade all strata of the society, both real and imaginary in the text. From events at St Peter's High School (where Rayo ensures that both Toshiba and the school principal regret their bullying and anti-people antics), through the stories of Baba Ayafa and the killing of Teejay by a trigger-happy soldier, to the imaginary "ultra" corrupt president of Zowabia (whose Machiavellian disposition tallies with that of some African dictators), no one is left in doubt about the chaos and violence in modern Nigerian society. The graphic description of Oshodi and other slums underscores a deranged Nigerian system which defies all known logic in the country. Also, the survivalist instinct of Tere, who takes to prostitution to pay her way through the university, is a testimony to the 'institutionalisation' of violence in the nation, a development which casts aspersion on the so-called reformatory inclinations of the military in government. Through diverse narrative angles, military regime and its penchant for retrogressive governance, brutality and mis-directed politicking are laid bare.

Like Maude in *The Man who came in from the Back Of Beyond*, Rayo is a fire-brand radically-inclined youth. He is humane, determined, focused and very brilliant. He detests injustice and oppression though he regularly lands himself in trouble in a society where inequality has assumed a dangerous dimension. Little wonder his behavior runs contrary to that of others. Kayo attests to his “strange” behavior among his peers:

Rayo had always been a strange one. Ever since we were kids he had gone around with this macabre streak in him. He was a weird one, that Rayo. Always wanting to be a hero (5).

Although his “strange” attitude sets him apart from other students, his idealistic and non-conformist posture do not stand him in good stead in the face of the authority. Only a hardworking professional like Dr. Dakwa notices that potential in him when he is to be circumcised at the age of seven:

I beg your pardon...did you say prepuce...A Thesaurus? You use a Thesaurus? Excuse, madam, but your son here is a wonder. How old is he?...Worried, madam? You shouldn't be worried. This gentleman here is a genius. Hold your head high in pride (15).

A genius that he is, he secures double promotion at the high school level.

Meanwhile Rayo is not left in doubt that injustice must be confronted in clear terms. Even at the risk of sacrificing personal comfort, he does not hide where his allegiance is: always on the side of the oppressed and downtrodden. When senior Toshiba turns to a monster that junior students dare not disobey, he connives with four other colleagues to have him drugged and humiliated up to the point that Toshiba has to be sent to another school by his parents! Also when the injustice meted out to Baba Ayafa comes to his attention, he gets his own pound of flesh from the recalcitrant school principal and has Baba Ayafa retired with full benefit. More importantly, his ideological lining leads to his expulsion from University of Ife when he leads a violent students' demonstration. He is an altruistic personality who cannot stand oppression and injustice. This is in sharp contrast to the selfish and self-centered professor Olentelaafaa, a former university teacher who now serves, defends and supports the oppressive military regime where he is an adviser. The level of debasement which now engulfed even the ivory tower can better be imagined.

With the combination of realism and satire, *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* documents the horror that is associated with military rule in Nigeria. While the masses wallow in abject poverty, the rich thrive in ill-gotten wealth which they flaunt with reckless

abandon! In a country where military leaders visit “Milan to have a toothache examined”, the General hospital in Kafanchan is always overcrowded and ill-equipped to meet the medical needs of the citizens from neighbouring villages of Tudun-Shanu, Kagoro, Ungwar-Rimi and Zango-Kataf. Medical services used to be free but now, patients have to pay through their noses for hospital cards and prescriptions, “from headache pills to transfusion drips”. The hospital is a pitiable sight where people must book in advance to enjoy ‘prompt’ medical services:

The queues, especially in the injection rooms, often stretched out across the length of the hospital itself. The overworked nurses and attendants were sometimes so ill-disposed, so foul tempered that mere confrontation with them often effected instant cures in patients, without the benefit of medication (10).

Such is the level of neglect and insensitivity of the nation’s leaders.

Several instances of system collapse abound in the novel. At St. Peter’s High School, senior Toshiba has constituted himself into law which must be treated with reverence. Nobody can beat Toshiba at his bullying best! Junior students dread him. He regularly collects ‘tithe’ from them and even has the gut to keep a “carefully updated list of names and collection dates”. Kayo’s account of the illicit activities of Toshiba is startling:

He operates a protection racket in the hostel. For a percentage of your pocket-money and provisions every month you were guaranteed absolute peace and rest of mind at school. He would guarantee that no prefect or senior student would punish you except if you were foolish enough to commit one of the capital offences, namely, making a pass at a senior’s girl, or refusing to step down for a senior in a ‘love triangle’ (meaning, in this case, that the girl you were both after would rather have gone out with you (85).

Besides extorting money and provisions from the junior students, Toshiba has two junior students at his beck and call. While reading his usual sex comics or watching ‘blue film’, they would stay by his side, fanning him to sleep. It takes the giant stride of Rayo to finally cut him to size. The school management, under which authority he meted out inhuman treatment to fellow students cannot reprimand him if only to deter other senior students who connive with him!

Apart from Toshiba, the school principal is also a man who revels in inhuman treatment of fellow human beings. In a clear case of insensitivity, Baba Ayafa (the school’s night-soil-man who

has worked for over thirty years) continues to work even at over seventy years of age! His abode is a rickety, “wheelless 1955 Bedford bus” within the school’s compound which has the inscription “shit money doesn’t smell”. It takes the intervention of Rayo to ‘liberate’ him. Having been greatly disturbed at Baba Ayafa’s plight, Rayo confronts the principal with the demand for flush toilets or, at least, pit latrines. Interestingly, the principal frowns at such impudence, wondering how a ‘little brat’ can teach him his job! He therefore whips Rayo without pity. However, he would leave to regret his action as a determined Rayo injures him with the broom in the toilet. As flush toilets are introduced, Baba Ayafa is retired with full benefit. The principal has to be transferred to another school.

Meanwhile, the military personnel continue to lord it over the nation. To command obedience, the military churn out decrees which the people must comply with. Rayo is arrested, tortured and expelled from University of Ife for leading a students’ demonstration where he addresses the students on the state of the nation. Nobody dare question the military leaders. Rayo has to face the consequence of questioning the status quo! How on earth could he have exposed the fact that the president’s child attends a school in Switzerland where the students attend classes in helicopters? What gives him the effrontery to comment on the bribery allegation, of over one hundred thousand pounds, leveled against the second-in-command by Rahman, an international con-man? Similarly, Teejah is shot by a corporal for having the audacity to question a group of soldiers who beat up a station manager on the excuse that he cannot ensure the smooth operation of the rail system. In fact, Jeremiah Pategi (later to be known as Sosoman) has to feign madness to escape the wrath of rampaging soldiers who chase him all over the town. He escapes through the skin of his teeth.

Ironically, the ivory tower which should provide a ray of hope from the intellectual doldrums occasioned by incessant military intervention, does not fare better in the generally lull. Experience has it that university egg-heads are quick to abandon their students and researches for a place in government. Having achieved their heart desire, they soon join the corrupt bandwagons in government. In flagrant disavowal of their hitherto cherished radical inclination, they contribute negatively to the deprivation in the system. Majority of them are ready to boot-lick for the man in power no matter whose ox is gored. While the libraries face dearth of books and journals, and the laboratories dilapidated and ill-equipped, they look the other way and even act as the regime’s mouthpieces! In no time, their megalomaniac attribute comes to the fore. The example of professor

Olentelaafaa would suffice. A former professor of philosophy at one of the nation's universities, professor Olentelaafaa has the penchant to endorse all government policies hence he is appointed an adviser in government. Now, he writes all the president's speeches among others. He turns himself to a bouncer who must fend off critical questions meant for the president at a press conference. Having persuaded the reluctant president to answer few questions, he takes up the responsibility of determining which other questions the president can answer:

His Excellency shall not entertain any question pertaining to politics at the present moment. As you are all aware, the ban on politics has not been lifted yet. Any discussion, therefore, bordering on politics would be tantamount to jumping the gun. Will security kindly see Mr. Ibidudu to the floor ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾.

Also in his determined bid to curry the favour of the president as a loyal and dutiful adviser, he takes it upon himself to answer some questions meant for the president. When a BBC World Service Correspondent seeks the president's comment on the weighty allegation leveled against him by barrister Kurchia, professor Olentelaafaa steps in unconvincingly:

Mr. Kurchia's unfortunate and misguided outburst merely, goes to show how tolerant and accommodating his Excellency is to criticism of whatever gender by his subjects. Go to anybody today, I beg of you, stop anybody on the street today. They will all bear testimony to the chewing-stick brightness of His Excellency's teeth...How could such a person, such, such...such personification of kindness...how could one such as he bear ill will towards another person ^(157- 158).

Similarly, when a woman reporter asks for the president's position on women emancipation, professor Olentelaafaa's response only shows the cabinet members lust for women of easy virtues. To a reporter from Radio Moscow, he counts the reporter lucky to have escaped execution due to his "neo imperialist audacity". He therefore calls for the security to ensure his deportation within the next twenty four hours! This is sycophancy taken to a dangerous level. On one occasion when professor Olentelaafaa takes sycophancy to a ridiculous extent, even the president, whom he is ready to defend at all cost, castigates him in a most indecent manner. He is ordered to apologise to the assaulted lady:

Halt, you monkeys, set the lady down at once! I'm most disappointed, Prof. That display was a classic manifestation of intellectual senility. You shall write an apology to the

lady. In addition, you shall find an exercise book and write in it two thousand times the sentence: "I am intellectually senile" (159).

What else can the professor do other than to simulate laughter?

Besides professor Olentelaafaa, Zowabia has the misfortune of being led by political jobbers who are desirous of keeping their offices by not incurring the wrath of the 'almighty' president. Discussions at the cabinet meetings are tailored towards greasing the elbow of the president. Members try to beat themselves to the president's attention and favour. When the president expresses his displeasure at Barrister Kurchia's declaration on the state of the nation while abroad, the cabinet members scramble to be seen as providing the most credible advice to him:

President: All I want is that Kurchia of a lawyer. I want his head-and not necessarily on a platter of gold.

Member Two: Do you suppose, after all he said against the government, he would still have the guts to come back home?

Member One: Are you saying that he might just decide to stay put over there?

Member Three: I know the way he operates. The man is in love with publicity. I'm sure he would die of disappointment if we didn't welcome him at the airport with a Black Maria (167).

When the president insists he only wants him dead, they begin to advance the most suspicion-free assassination methods:

Member One: In espionage we call it extreme prejudice. When we tell an agent to treat a subject with extreme prejudice we mean slit his throat open.

Member Two: Slit his throat indeed!...There are more civilized ways of going about it, in case you don't know. Modern ways too...State of the art. That's one reason I love those Nigerians. They are always up to date. Can you believe they're already into parcel bombs?

Member One: Let's send him a parcel-bomb!

President Babagee: Do you think that would be wise?

Member Three: What do you mean, your Excellency?

President Babagee:

It might look suspicious.

Member Three:

You think so? Not if we planned it well. Rope him up in a drug scandal or something. Better still, make out he's an arms dealers (167).

Other options which the cabinet members consider include kidnapping. This conversation reveals the intellectual ineptitude of the cabinet members who are to serve as presidential advisers! The quality of advice expected from these characters is better imagined. None is to be given for patriotic, altruistic intention. Perhaps the president is right to have reduced them to mere numbers unworthy of any specific portfolio.

The political elites constitute themselves into cabal which cares less for the generality of the people. Having abdicated all sense of responsibility and justice, they amass wealth not minding the state of the nations' finances. As the external debt soars to about forty billion America dollars, the value of the local currency continues to nosedive. Nevertheless, their corrupt and inhuman postures do not escape the people's attention. Even secondary school students, led by Rayo, are aware of their self-centred disposition hence regularly mock them with jokes and anecdotes particularly during the so-called Political Science Hour. In a graphic illustration of political rallies and campaigns, Rayo, in his jocular best, captures the vain promises of a typical Nigerian politician seeking electoral votes. Decked in expensive attire and surrounded by thugs and supporters who have the unenviable task of applauding whatever he says, the politician promises to build bridge first in a village and later construct a river beneath it:

If the good people of this great village should do the sensible thing of voting me into power, I shall make sure that within six months you have a modern, fully- stocked library, two more primary schools, five secondary schools and two universities of transferred technology. I shall ask the farmers to throw away their hoes and machetes-because believe me-every last farmer shall be supplied with tractor, a mechanical harvester and a planting and weeding machine

(33).

These empty promises include the immediate provision of solar-powered electricity, dams and airports in a village where the roads are not even motorable!

The spate of corruption and mal-administration in Nigeria is not without its casualties. In *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams*, the character of Tere speaks volume on the level

of moral laxity in Nigeria. Since she has to survive and fund her university education without assistance from her poor parents, Tere finds succour in flirting with men who are about her father's age. In fact, she derives satisfaction in sleeping around with different men once they can pick her bills. She consoles herself with the fact that the "two way traffic" affair with her 'sugar daddies' is better when compares with that of "her course mates who goes to Lagos every weekend" to prostitute. In a frank conversation with her boyfriend Kayo, after a round of sexual intercourse, she attributes her reason for dating a man who is older than "her father's elder brother" to the need to acquire university education:

He's a nice old man. Fussy and affectionate. And unbelievable generous. That's why I went out with him in the first place. Starting with the last reason. He's been paying my school fees for the past two semesters. If I had to live on the crumbs my parents are able to give me I'd have dropped out long ago...So, Kayo, I need my sugar dadies. I give them my body once in a while and they keep my bank account comfortably in the black. It's a two way street, I know. I offer them promises of rejuvenation- I make them young again. For a fee. But they too-they take away something from me-my youth (25).

Therefore no one should be surprised that her fiancé, Joe, rejects her outrightly on getting information about her escapade.

The chaotic nature of Nigeria is foregrounded in the metaphor of Oshodi. A study in disorderliness and confusion, Oshodi is described as "the craziest and busiest bus stop this side of the Sahara". It prides itself in its notoriety as the haven of criminals, hangers-on, drug peddlers, petty thieves, street urchins and ladies of easy virtues. While the people are always in a hurry, traffic-jams mostly result from the inability of motorists to maintain law and order. Besides the dastardly act of swindlers and con-men, marijuana is freely sold irrespective of the time of the day. In this tensed environment, traders, hawkers and even preachers have a field-day in the overcrowded *molue* bus. As law and order have broken down, policemen look the other way as they either cannot enforce the law, or connive with the lawbreakers. Gory sights of lynching are rampant. Sporadic gun shots are common albeit amidst carefree people. In one of Rayo's notes, Oshodi is depicted as an environment of "cosmic nightmare of organized chaos". A bus conductor can stop his driver in the middle of the road on the slightest provocation, without minding the attendant traffic jam his action can cause! In such an environment where "no fewer than 50,000

people are waiting for, racing after, struggling for or scampering in into buses, licensed taxi or kabukabu”, two shameless individuals are engrossed in romance in one of the parked *molue* buses:

In one of the two motor parks, an orange-pip spit away, sit two silhouettes in an early parking Molue. They are unashamedly merged together as one, _ategor indifferent, as it were to the prosaic concreteness of the world around. Two mouths shakings hands lip-to-lip, exchanging views tongue-to-tongue. An ashie probably, and an off-duty driver

(76).

Such incident is not uncommon at Oshodi. It is indeed a metaphoric manifestation of a nation and her people whose actions negate that of every sane society. This same reality of Oshodi has earlier been laid credence to by Bandele-Thomas and Arthur-Worrey in their respective novels, *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* and *The Diaries of Mr Michael*.

Of all, the illicit activities of the deranged president Babagee of Zowabia, more than anything else, make an eloquent statement about the intellectual naïvety which culminated into retrogressive leadership style of Nigerian leaders. Having gagged the press and have opposition leaders executed, president Babagee assumes the status of a fearsome military dictator, reminiscence of some African leaders. None of his decision is informed by national interest. He violates human right at will, amasses ill-gotten wealth, sets opponents up on the flimsy excuse of planning a phantom *coup d'état* and slights the international community with reckless abandon. Since he trust no one, he only discusses state matter with his wife, Mamagee, a lady whom no one dares ignores. In a nation where ‘presidential romance’ is a national assignment, the president sees politics as war that should be fought with all arsenal at one’s disposal! In his wisdom, power should be protected at all cost:

In this game-as you call it-there are no permanent friends. Plenty of permanent enemies, though. And-point of correction, my dear-the name of the game is power. And power is no game. It’s a war in which all rules are thrown overboard. If you can’t win fair, why not win foul? Winning is the name of the game. Hit below the belt. Stab them in the back. Shoot first-and be ready to shoot again after apologizing. Then, my dear, and only then, might you be on the way to making your first million (137-138).

With the president’s statement, it becomes clear why he must tame the radical lawyer, Kukar Kurchia by all means. To achieve this act of suppressing all dissentient voice, he makes Bayor

Success the head of the Gestapo. The justice minister, whom he refers to as “toilet idiot” in his moment of rage, is to promulgate retroactive decree which makes rumour-mongering a capital offence with a five year retroactive effect!

The fate which has befallen Zowabia owing to president Babagee’s crude method of administration is further captured in the president’s dream. Zowabia used to be a land flowing with milk and honey. It was a prosperous nation where the people enjoyed the comfort the nation offered. Unfortunately, the reign of governance was hijacked by shylock and greedy few. In no time, the rich began to flaunt their wealth in the midst of abject poverty:

Things continued in this manner for a long while, until a few greedy one, who thought they were wiser than everyone else (truth be told, they were), decided that it wasn’t such a good idea that everybody could get to shore and acquire a canoe or a boat. These greedy, cunning ones put their heads together, over plates of goat head pepper soup, and hatched out a plan to make the river bank as inaccessible as it could be ⁽¹⁴⁴⁾.

However the people managed to survive against all odd. Undeterred, the elites connive to assume the mantle of leadership and thus produce a guide known as the constitution. Expectedly the constitution does not reflect the yearnings of the people! It is “the Bible of Double Standards” which negates the law of natural justice. Justice is now a commodity which can be purchased according to the dictate of the market-force. Stealing is a ‘crime’ only if the perpetrator is caught.

In the same dream, president Babagee assumes the role of the chief justice of the high court of Zowabia. To further underscore the corrupt system, a policeman in charge of a case collects ten thousand dollars bribe from an accused person, on the instruction of the chief justice. He however keeps a large chunk and gives ten thousand naira to the equally corrupt chief justice! Having paid for justice, the accused has the effrontery to condemn his arraignment. Yet he is discharged and acquitted with “deepest apologies”. Ironically, the case of barrister Kukar Kurchia elicits the gross pervasion of justice in Zowabia. Barrister Kurchia is accused of smearing the image of the nation in a press conference. He is to be held responsible for all social maladies in Zowabia:

That on the strength of the aforementioned charges you are held singularly responsible for all the ills-economic, social and political that have befallen this country within the last thirty years. You are responsible for corruption, nepotism, armed-robbery, gun-running, drug-trafficking, gross immorality, general baseness and the failed economy ⁽¹⁵²⁾.

Expectedly, the chief justice, who has earlier ‘discharged and acquitted’ an accused, is quick to pronounce barrister Kurchia guilty as charged, even before he is brought to the dock! He is to be executed by firing squad at the president’s favourite shooting club.

The myriads of problem which bedevil the nation have made any recourse to decency among the citizens a mirage. Therefore, *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* revels in the exploration of unrestrained description of sexual scenes and organs, a development which further lays credence to its overt affinity to postmodern textual experiment. As the power-that-be makes survival difficult for the downtrodden, Tere decides to use what she has to get what she wants! In a manner unheard of in traditional African novel, sexual intercourse between Kayo and Tere is freely discussed without any modicum of decency. Kayo is the narrator:

We had brought the mattress to the floor. The creaking of my base-sprung bed was enough to wake the dead. Our clothes were flung all over the floor. . . I ran my hands all over her-her breasts stood high, and proud and faintly bristly at the tips. I ran my fingers down her stomach, down, down, over the lush hair-growth that serenaded the lips of her vagina... My middle finger ran briefly over her vagina. She purred... I drew my middle finger in a curve and rubbed her clitoris with it... I parted her legs with my left foot and manoeuvred myself between her legs. I spread them wide open and brought my head down to the cleavage. My mouth came down on her public hair and my tongue, probed deeply into her... I lifted her gently and turned her on her face. Then I enter her from behind, gently, roughly and slowly (22-24).

As if this is not enough the readers are led into Toshiba’s favourite story in a sex comic, the story of a randy guy and a nympho lady. Husband and wife are so fond of each other that they must have sex anytime, anywhere, anyhow:

They screwed every hour of the day and everywhere they were: in the bedroom, on the couch in the bathroom, on the stairs, in the kitchen, in the car, public toilets on street corners, on the beach, once even on top of a tree... They did it in every position you could think of: front, rear, upside-down, sideways, 69... and in many international styles too. To name a few: the impossible kangaroo style, from Australia; the acrobatic, Japanese position; the running- commentary American initiative; the all-silence British invention and the *Yeparipa!* Nigeria variety... (48-49).

Also as documented in one of Rayo's notes, sex and marital infidelity are everywhere without any pretext to self control. When the poverty-stricken Kazeem catches Kasali, "the jerry curled Molue conductor", having sex with his wife, he decides to attack the man, cutting off his penis in the ensuing melee! All these are clear indication of a society on the edge of precipice. Cosmic harmony has taken flight.

Unfortunately in this hostile nation, it is needless for any individual to attempt to alter the overwhelming social maladies. Those that attempt to ameliorate or redress the oppression in the society merely expose themselves to the danger of being consumed. Rayo's reformist activities present him in bad light in the eyes of senior students and the authority at St Peter's High School. He is viewed with contempt and maligned for his 'pious' disposition in a 'crazy' world. While the senior students are amazed at his impudence to question the legitimacy of their antics, the authority frowns at his inability to keep away from trouble. For humiliating Toshiba, he gets reprimanded with five days of hard labour on the school farm. Luckily he escapes being expelled. Also when he injures the school principal for Baba Ayafa's sake, he is 'sent' to another school. However, he meets his Waterloo at the University of Ife when he leads a violent students' demonstration on the state of the nation, a development which Aliu (2000:36) calls "an ominous anti climax which later becomes a melting point for the remaining half of the narrative". He is arrested, tortured, brutalised and finally expelled from the university. He has to go to Lagos where he manages to survive on a free-lancing job. He becomes frustrated at his inability to effect the desired change so much that he attempts suicide in resignation. Awosika (1999) captures his frustration thus:

It is not just that Rayo is frustrated in the adult world, he actually does not survive the violence. His final surrender is preceded by a gradual weakening. The case of the two hundred tablets of valium, though unadmitted by him simple points to severe frustration and surrender. The prelude to madness. The other intellectuals in the story also crumble

(26).

Besides Rayo, Teejah and Pategi also regret the consequences of their attempt to redress military brutality. Teejay is most unlucky because he pays dearly with his life! Pategi has to feign madness to escape. Therefore, the stories in the text underscore the postmodern futile effort at seeking for order in a society which is disorderly. In actual fact, it may be insane for anybody to seek sanity in the world.

In Bandele-Thomas' *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams*, a postmodern 'doubling' technique is employed to espouse the overt 'displacement of meaning' in postmodern parlance. The narrator and Rayo is one and the same person! They are however presented in two fictional worlds from where readers, according to Negash (1999), are expected to decipher the reality of one and the 'fictionality' of the other:

Bandele-Thomas uses madness in surrealistic terms to convey the co-existence of two worlds and as a literary device that is self-consciously postmodernist. These intentions are best demonstrated in *The Sympathetic Undertaker* through a clever construction of the schizophrenic character Rayo, the narrator's brother, who turns out to be one and the same as the narrator... At the end of *The Sympathetic Undertaker*, and right after the dramatic revelation that Rayo and the narrator are the same person, the narrator observes the bodily disintegration of the 'other' as the other and the narrator merge (89-90).

Kayo's story simulates Rayo while that of Rayo is presented in a diary-like fashion. Essentially, Kayo's narration simulates Rayo and Tere so much to the extent that their non-existence becomes unclear. The image of reality has blurred the reality.

As it obtains in postmodern texts, tangentially diverse stories are told to depict the violent nature of the world. Both Kayo and Rayo tell several stories which centre on violence, corruption, hopelessness, pessimism and brutality. In an apparent surrealist tradition which places premium on dream-like images and symbol to depict the condition of existence in neo-colonial Nigerian society, allusion is made to several sore aspects of our national life. Examples abound from the condition at the hospital to the comatose rails system, from corrupt judicial system to police ineptitude, from military brutality to politicians' vain promises, from infrastructural decay to moral laxity. Textual references to these realities include president Babagee's dream of occupying the exalted office of the chief justice of Zowabia where he can dispense justice in absentia or according to the dictate of the market-force; the 'Political Science Hour' at St Peters High School provides an opportunity to satirise politicians who can promise heaven on earth to attain political height; the level of environmental filth and dirt in Zowabian High Commission in Zimbabwe which earns her the appellation "dirt house"; and Tere's debase sexual escapades with several 'sugar daddies'.

Besides surrealism, phantasmic device is employed as a deliberate textual strategy of character exploration in a bizarre world where survival is almost a mirage. This textual super-imposition of reality, satire and the grotesque give credence to the exploration of madness as a useful device in the text. Commenting, Negash (1999) applauds the artistry of Bandele-Thomas for its penchant to employ a device which mingles reality with absurdity while depicting the repulsion in the contemporary world:

Consequently he adopts a surrealistic approach in which he mixes the phantasmic with the naturalistic to refract Nigerian realities. Tales of cruelty, abuse of power and corruption are strung together to build parables on the moral and political questions of truth and falsity, idealism and freedom. Humour and irony lighten the horror and provide hope at the same time as they satirize systems of oppressive power (77).

In this vein, Rayo's extreme frustration and deprivation lead him to a psychic condition which his mother seeks to purge through Mamasoso's ritual intervention. Since he now has fantasies, dreams, terrible thoughts and terrifying images (like his eyes disappearing in his face or his manhood "vanishing" from his body), he might have become a psychosis occasioned by his long-suffering antecedent. As the text combines both the rational and the irrational to drive home its point, Bandele-Thomas' novels can be said to employ a semblance of magical realism to attest to the novelist familiarity with his Nigerian root. This approach, in the opinion of Negash, stands his works out:

It is the superimposition of the believable images over the inexplicable that gives the narratives of Bandele-Thomas their compellingly dreamlike quality (83).

Also, the narrative centres in *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* are indiscriminate. It employs diverse points of view to underscore its episodic narrative technique. Through the feature of "diegesis", several stories are presented to depict its erratic characters and bizarre fictional worlds. Awosika (1999) describes the narrative centres of *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* as a tasking device meant to present narrations which are unrelated and digressional, a feature which underscores postmodern penchant for "organised violence":

The narrative voice is indiscriminate in its adoption now of the first person mode, and then of the third person; it is infinitely erratic and without the slightest pretence towards

distance. The structure is episodic and blatantly digressive. All the characteristics mentioned above amount to a violation of all that good taste in criticism since Aristotle has taught us to dislike (24).

Nevertheless, Bandele-Thomas' novels are able to articulate the traumatic nature of postcolonial Nigeria society, despite their endless digression and absurdist themes. Utopian speculation is foreclosed. With particular emphasis on Bandele-Thomas, Booker (1995) affirms the inability of postcolonial writers to achieve the much-sought after utopia hence their disenchantment and the consequent advancement of themes which foreground hopelessness, banality and illogicality:

Postcolonial writers, actively engaged in the construction of cultural identities for their new societies, include strong utopian elements in their work. On the other hand, actual experience in the postcolonial world has been anything but utopian. It thus may not be entirely surprising that recent postcolonial literature has taken a powerfully dystopian turn. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in African fiction (58).

Thus by churning out themes of disillusionment, *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* has, no doubt, cemented its place as a quintessential postmodern text.

Although Rayo's activities as an intellectual, radical, non-conformist activist may have endeared him to people, most especially Dr Dakwa, yet his regular brushes with constituted authorities, present him as an eccentric personality. He is a clear example of a person who does not know how to survive in a hostile environment. Irrespective of their bullying disposition, Toshiba and the school principal at St. Peter's High School represent constituted authorities at their respective levels, hence must be obeyed. Rather than come to terms with the system collapse which has failed to regulate their nefarious activities, Rayo chooses to confront them without minding the consequence. Although strict adherence to schools' rules and regulation is part and parcel of students' training, Rayo decides to be the odd one out. His altercation with Toshiba and the principal almost cost him his high school education, but for the timely constitution of a panel of enquiry as well as the prompt intervention of the commissioner of education. He, however, gets expelled from University of Ife, tortured and psychologically wounded by the authority. He may have fulfilled his mission of acquiring university education if, and only if, he can keep his head as even Marx does not contemplate a one-man revolution. In the same vein, if Toshiba can escape his bullying escapades despite series of 'confessional statements' from his victims, if the principal

would only be transferred despite his overt administrative ineptitude, if the corporal who killed Teejah is merely strip of a rank, of what benefit is man's resolve to confront injustice in a deranged society? Besides, with the support given to Toshiba by the senior students at St Peter's High School, would his transfer to another institution guarantee the end of bullying for the junior students? Do the soldiers who kill Teejah not have the effrontery to still want to inflict further injury on Pategi? Perhaps both Rayo and Teejah realise this rather too late! No wonder Rayo is taken for a 'madman' wherever he finds himself.

Also the rampaging soldiers, who beat up the station manager, kill Teejah and chase Pategi all over the town, may be excused of any alleged wrongdoing: they only seek to make a comatose system more efficient, even if their actions militate against the dignity of mankind. The level of infrastructural decay is worrisome. Nothing seems to be working as the leaders turn deaf ear to the yearnings of the people. The rail system which used to be the major means of transportation for the masses has been grounded. In no time, railway stations become the haven of stranded "travelers, wayfarers, hawkers a notoriously seasoned crop of thieves and pick pockets, a thriving bond of mendicants, a resolute tribe of plain clothes policemen". Salihu and his notorious gang of pick-pockets hold sway unmolested, tormenting stranded travelers. The soldiers' train has been grounded in the bush for over three days, yet the Kafanchan-Enugu bound journey is stalled! Even Teejah survives the delay courtesy of Pategi's magnanimity. Although the station manager may be blameless in all this (for "the minister of transport went to India and bought refurbished coaches and engines which had gone out of use over there twenty years ago"), yet everyone agrees he is guilty of what even Teejah calls "normal bureaucratic sloppiness". Thus if everyone can wait at the station 'till kingdom come', the soldiers, obviously, don't have the luxury.

If the entire system is deemed inefficient, the concerted effort of some professionals provides a ray of hope from the societal doldrums. Regularly and repeatedly, barrister Kurchia remains a torn in the flesh of the regime. Although president Babagee spares no time in calling for his head, yet he remains resolute. He even takes his campaign against the regime's excesses abroad, granting series of interviews to foreign press. He is no doubt, committed to the need to salvage the nation from dictatorship and mal-administration. Similarly, despite the overcrowded, ill-equipped hospital at Kafanchan, Dr. Dakwa discharges his duties conscientiously and diligently. He is a warm person, humane, time-conscious and ever ready to do his job. He only

comes late to honour his professional assignment if he is coming from an emergency duty. On an occasion when he arrives late at his duty post, he apologises to Rayo's mother:

Patient had a relapse. Shortage of doctors. They came to wake me up at four this morning. Two hours after I'd gone to bed, actually. That's a doctor's lot, young sirs. If you're thinking of becoming a doctor, you must be prepared for hardwork. Terribly sorry, madam. Terribly, terribly (13).

Even the nurses on duty do their work dutifully at the 'dreaded' injection room. Other professionals like the journalists, are equally committed against the odds mounted by a dictatorial military regime. When the opportunity presents itself at a press conference, journalists bombard president Babagee with series of questions. Although Mofine Ogongo of the Zowabian News is insulted and assaulted for having the audacity to seek to know the government's position on women emancipation, she courageously stands her ground. In fact the president has to order for her to be 'released' while professor Olentelaafaa is to apologise. Even Bob Vaughn and Nyet Karpov of BBC and Radio Moscow respectively are core professionals in their line of duties. Rash Ibidudu of The Labour Militant has to be rebuffed and ordered out of the premise because professor Olentelaafaa fears his question may be politically motivated. Therefore, despite the gloom which pervades the land, few professionals are committed to the development of the nation.

The 'ultra' corrupt nature of president Babagee may have defied logic in a manner reminiscent of recent African leaders. Nonetheless, the crop of persons who constitutes his cabinet is unbecoming in a development-conscious nation. As the ministers struggle to outsmart themselves to gain the president's attention, no form of credible advice should be expected from these sycophants. To soothe the president's ego, they offer series of advices designed to nail the recalcitrant barrister Kurchia. Professor Olentelaafaa is the worst culprit in the game of deceit, cover-up, insensitivity and sycophancy. No wonder he is despised and treated like a leper everywhere he goes. Even the president scolds him occasionally. Therefore since no one can advise the president appropriately, he may not be solely guilty of his regime's misrule.

In a manner which forecloses any sense of decency, Bandele-Thomas' *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* discusses sex freely! Kayo's sexual escapades with Tere are nothing but a child's play compared to her illicit sexual spree with her 'sugar daddies'. Although Tere calls it a game of survival and Kayo quite agrees with her, African society frowns at such amorous relationship outside wedlock. Kayo's mother passionately despises Tere and vehemently

condemns her dastardly act. Her fate thus serves her right as she loses Joe and later dies of complication after an abortion. Therefore, the manner in which the text treats ‘traditionally forbidden’ themes of sex, infidelity and prostitution are inimical to good taste in African literary tradition as pioneered by the Achebe school of thought. A situation where sex is discussed with graphic illustrations of various sexual styles and organs is unheard of in traditional African writings which espouse themes that promote cultural values and tradition.

As the metaphor of Oshodi underscores the chaos and perfidy in Nigeria, Bandele-Thomas’ *The Sympathetic Undertaker and Other Dreams* casts aspersion on the array of people at this notorious area of Lagos state. It blames the people for always being in a hurry to get things done, a development which aggravates tension in an already tensed environment. Nevertheless, Oshodi offers a clear manifestation of communal living tradition in African society. The experience of a woman who gives birth at Oshodi and how the passers-by rally round her in assistance is a statement on African hospitality and communal sentiment. This is in sharp contrast to the individualistic, everyman-for-himself style of living in the West. More importantly, the child-birth is a metaphor for rejuvenation and new lease of life to be expected at Oshodi. This has proved prophetic as it is gradually coming to past of late. Oshodi now wears a new look.

Although Bandele-Thomas’ writings may not readily come to mind as politically-motivated, utopia-seeking writings from a vintage fire-brand writer, his commitment to the development of Nigeria is never in doubt. If his novels do not come to the fore as radically-inclined *a la* the marxian tradition, critics like Negash (1999), Awosika (1999) and Aliu (2000) agree that they are ensconced in socio-political realities of Nigerian nation which offer little hope. In the opinion of Negash (1999), familiarity with Nigerian environment lays credence to Bandele-Thomas’ dystopia poetics which elicits the condition of living in a hostile economic and socio-political environments. Nigerian society is inimical to public goods:

The parodies and satire in *The Sympathetic Undertaker* and the brutalities redeemed by humour in *The Man who came in from the Back of Beyond* are consequently morally and politically engaged. However, neither utopian nor political vision is prescribed. On the contrary, the tales of brutality and despair give his novels a dystopic turn for the most part. Finally, the theme of madness accommodates an escape from the harsh realities of these marginals, at the same time as it serves as a metaphor for the ultimate economic and

cultural distortions in the neocolonial backyards of Nigeria

(91).

Therefore, his mastery of literary devices such as symbolism, imagery, satire, parody, allusion, surrealism and phantasm, under which he disguises to make socio-political commentaries, justifies his place as a committed contemporary writer. Even if critics are quick to allude to his 'apolitical' pessimistic credential, a development which underscores his categorisation along with the art-for-art's sake tradition, his experimentalist writings stand him in good stead as an influential writer whose works are worthy of serious critical attention. No wonder Gikandi (2003:69) refers to him in glowing term, describing him as "one of the most promising of a new generation of African writers".

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

CHAPTER 6

6.0 A Deconstructive Reading of Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* and Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun*

6.1 Toni Kan Onwordi: A Brief Biodata

Anthony Kanayo Onwordi is an award winning novelist, short-story writer, essayist and poet. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and Master of Arts degree in English (literature) from Universities of Jos and Lagos respectively.

Having worked for five years as a practicing journalist, he garnered vast experience in writing, editing, book review, marketing, research and corporate communication. He has served as Managing Partner, Radi8, a public relation outfit in Lagos. Besides his foray at research department of banks like Zenith Bank and Bank PHB, he once served as Head, Corporate Communications at Visafone.

Toni Kan Onwordi is a prose writer and literary critic. As an undergraduate at the University of Jos in 1992, he got a month stint at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland for winning the British Council Essay Competition. He also came first in Swiss Radio International Essay Competition (English language category) and the Liberty Short Story Competition. He also received a poetry prize at 2001 Muson Poetry Festival in Lagos. A fellowship from Heinrich B Foundation took him to Germany in 2003. His poetry collection, *When a Dream Lingers too Long* (2002) came second only to Ogaga Ifowodo's work in the 2002 ANA poetry prize. His *Ballad of Rage* (2004) also made the last short-list for the maiden NLNG literary prize in 2004. His second collection of poetry, *Singing Songs of Absence and Despair* (2009) is already receiving rave reviews; the same critical attentions which heralded the publication of his collection of short stories entitled *Nights of the Creaking Bed* (2008). Apart from regular appearance at newspaper art columns, his works have appeared in Salthill, Drum Voices, Revue, Farafina, Sentinel Poetry Quarterly and ANA review.

6.2 *Ballad of Rage*

Toni Kan Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* tells the story of three estranged personalities whose troubled souls are entangled in the odious realities of contemporary Nigerian society. In a sustained attempt to articulate the futility of a deranged psyche to take rational decision, it depicts human species as not capable of coming to terms with societal forces which impede his rational

thinking mechanism. This largely underscores the existentialist disposition of mankind in a hostile environment. It employs omniscient first-person narrative technique to tell the story of rape, brutality, corruption, frustration, betrayal, infidelity, incest and murder, with the protagonists telling their separate but related stories. These stories are, however, presented in a disjointed narrative manner which further accentuates the absence of cosmic harmony in the world.

An unnamed narrator is compelled by fate and circumstance of her barren situation to marry a frustrated “old” doctor. The marriage is that of convenience since the doctor has earlier vowed never to raise another family having lost his last to the infidelity of a wife. Rather than find solace in the company of a caring and dutiful husband who loves her despite her status, she becomes a sex-maniac, addicted to the point of seeking sexual satisfaction wherever she can, and from whosoever is readily available! Perhaps to pay men back in their own coin, she relegates feelings and affection to the background in sexual relationship. She finds a willing accomplice in Jeff, a twenty-four-year-old cab-driver. Without uttering a word, they make love anytime they meet, and anywhere it suits their whims and caprice, either on the couch, on the beach, in a car, in fast food joints, or in his room! Their first encounter which takes place in her matrimonial home is startling:

He took my shopping bags upstairs and after he set them down on the dining table he reached for me. I could have pushed him away. I could have screamed. But no was a word I could not utter. I let him pull me down on the couch. I was a dry and thirsty land, he was a long sought water. I clung to him for dear life. A short while later, my whole body tingling. I stood on the balcony, his semen running down my inner thigh as I watched him drive away (28).

On a similar occasion, she visits his house for the now regular sexual ‘dosage’. Unfortunately, she meets his girlfriend. He quickly thinks of the way out:

So, I took a cab and the journey to his house had never taken so long. When I got there, I met a girl in his room. He introduced me as a friend and, leaving the girl in the room, drove me back home. He took me in the sitting room, wordlessly, violently. When he was done he pulled on his trousers and left without a word (35).

Although she prefers to disguise by going and coming in buses, the affair is not without a trail! It however proves fatal as the doctor murders her and damns the consequence! He has earlier threatened to kill her if she engages in extra marital affairs.

Even before the doctor's wife meets Jeff, she has often been engaged in romance and sex outside wedlock against her mother's entreaties to be wary of men on campus. When she meets Pam at "the department's end of year party", she throws caution to the wind and allows lust to becloud her sense of reasoning. At a later date, she allows Pam to have carnal knowledge of her "atop a knoll at Shere hills". Also, her encounter with the doctor does not portray her as a worthy lady of integrity. Before they finally tie the nuptial knot, she has encouraged the doctor to make love to her when the doctor visits her in the apartment she shares with a friend. Always the first to make a move, she practically lures him to bed:

I remember washing my hand, even though I can't seem to remember why. Then when I was done I had asked for a napkin but instead of a napkin, she dropped her frilly panties in my outstretched palms... Still laughing she had dropped to her knees and kissed me, deep, hungrily. We made love for the first time that night and afterwards, as we lay naked in her small bed, Roberta Flack's voice issuing from the radio had lulled us to sleep (43).

The only time she does not consent to sexual intercourse is when the policemen rape her and other girls on the rock! The policemen have come to campus to quell a violent students' demonstration.

If the doctor's wife is said to be a pervert, her lover, Jeff, can be described as a randy young man who is equally frustrated and disturbed. Having been rebuffed by his parents who turn down his choice of music as a career, he becomes a deviant. He sees no fuss about being a banker or doctor. He drives a cab and smokes marijuana heavily! He nurses an ambition of going abroad to pursue his 'dream'. He therefore becomes an outcast in the family, especially after his grandmother who had stood against his parents' refusal to have him study English in the university had died. Only the doctor's wife understands and encourages him to be focused on his dream else he may live to regret his decision later in life:

Regret is a terrible word. The saddest word, if you ask me. It's a mirror you do not want to look into because all it reflects is pain... That's why you must pursue this dream, you know, your music, if you are really convinced that's

what you want to do. Or else you will look into that mirror in years to come and cry (125).

This advice further endears her to Jeff. Henceforth, nothing can stop them in their treacherous act until the bubble bursts!

The story of the doctor leaves sour taste in the mouth. The circumstances surrounding the death of his two sons almost turn him into a misogynist who detests women with passion. This perhaps informs his lack of attention to Rosa's show of love. He would not marry a woman whose children would remind him of the death of her sons! When he eventually comes across a woman whom he had earlier diagnosed of having ruptured uterus and damaged fallopian tubes, he has to change his disposition towards marriage, after all the chance of pregnancy for her is almost a nullity. Unfortunately for him, he is about to take a decision which would ruin his blooming career and hard-earned reputation. He proposes to her six months later:

You have brought me so much joy and I can't tell you how much I love you. This my own way of saying Thank You for all you've done, for bringing sunshine back into my life. I know I'm not that young, but we can be happy together. I promise that. And you know I don't care for children. I want to live just for you. All I ask for is your love and your faithfulness. And in turn, I promise to be all you expect and more (23).

When a fifty-two year old man speak in such glowing terms to a woman who has lost all hopes of ever enjoying marital bliss, her response can be predicted. A marriage is hurriedly arranged. However at thirty-two and being a pervert, he cannot meet her expectation in bed:

Like a guide leading the blind, I was the eye he needed to see through the fog of passion that swirled around us. I made the first moves, I was always the one who had to get him in the mood but when passion flared, he always gave as good as he got. But age was not on his side and so many times, as the after sex glow faded, I would catch myself wondering whether I would be content with what he had to offer... But then at thirty-two and barren I was grateful to find a man to call my own. What I felt for him was no more than gratitude (23-24).

Therefore, she seeks sexual satisfaction from men outside wedlock. She barely manages to 'escape' Afam's lustful gesture when they meet at an Art Workshop. When she eventually meets Jeff, she succumbs cheaply to her inner passion, daring her husband's threat in the process.

As a dutiful and caring husband, the doctor provides his wife with whatever she needs. When she loses her job, he encourages her to turn to her childhood hobby, painting, offering to sell some of her painting to his patients and friends. He is so convinced of his actions that when he eventually discovers her wife's infidelity, he has no regret killing her. He also prepares himself for the consequence. The circumstance of his falling from grace to grass does not deter him to offer his professional services to other inmates even in the prison. He accompanies inmate who has ulcer to the general hospital in handcuff, agrees to follow the injured captain of the Hard Men XI to the hospital, obeys the instruction of the chief warden to make a miserly list of drugs to treat inmates, and offers therapy to a sexually-abused Bernard in prison! While awaiting trial, he pays the tuition of his nephew in medical school and appreciates Rosa's concern, though he turns down her offer of securing the service of a competent lawyer to defend him in court. As the *defacto* 'resident doctor' in the prison, his qualities endear him to the inmates and the authority. Nevertheless, these good qualities do not becloud the opportunist inclination of the doctor. He capitalises on the awareness of his wife's bareness to lure her into marriage, knowing full well that he does not want to raise another family for personal reasons. On more than one occasions, he bribes the wardens to have access to books and other personal effects. He receives visitors occasionally in the prison and whenever he does, the wardens are ready to give him extra time beyond the stipulated time. He has the luxury of collecting his salaries while in the prison though he is able to pay for his nephew's education and send a card to Rosa. He attacks and almost kills Jeff who has come to confess his misdemeanour to him. His desire to seek revenge may have hitherto influenced his readiness to die before the confession. He later regrets his action of killing his wife when he could have sent her packing.

The rate of bribery and corruption in the system is quite alarming! Policemen take bribe at will, most of the time with reckless abandon. Instead of arresting Jeff and his lover who are caught with marijuana, they merely collect bribe and look the other way. On another occasion, they collect money from a bank's managing-director and throw his driver to jail for impregnating his sister-in-law! When the driver, Godfrey, repeatedly proves his innocence, the doctor is not fooled because he knows the police inside out:

I knew what would happen. One day he would be taken and shot, his body displayed on TV alongside other bullet-riddled bodies with a cache of locally made pistols arrayed beside them. The tone of the newscaster would be sober as she relayed the headline: police gun down six robbers (37).

This scenario is not uncommon in Nigeria and many innocent lives have been lost in the process. Even a trumped-up charge of rape may be leveled against him and a 'witness' hurriedly arranged to testify against him in court. There is also the case of eighteen undergraduates who are arrested after a fatal cult clash. Of the eighteen suspected cultists, seventeen children of wealthy parents are released while only one is clamped in jail! Such incidence has become a pastime amongst officers and men of the Nigerian Police Force.

As if bribery and corruption that permeate the Police Force is only a child's play, officers and men of the Nigerian Police Force have taken brutality to a dangerous dimension. Having been sent out to perform their statutory duties of maintaining law and order, the policemen throw caution to the wind and engage in act capable of further enmeshing the image of the Force in disrepute. A minor peaceful demonstration by undergraduates in the university has turned violent as the police arrive to quell the riot. Ironically while they fire teargas canister to disperse the students, many of them have ulterior motive behind the performance of their constitutional duties. The narrator presents a bizarre story of police brutality:

Smoked out of hiding by tear gas, we ran for the gate at the rear of the campus, but anti-riot policemen had blocked it. We turned and headed for the hills and that was where the nightmare began. They let the boys escape. They grabbed the girls. They dragged us into a thicket. They raped us, on the bare rocks, thorns and briers digging into our backs and buttocks. Not once, not twice (10).

This is a sad commentary particularly coming from an institution which is trained, maintained and sustained by tax-payers money. When an institution saddled with the duty of protecting lives and properties is involved in act inimical to public good, the end result would be catastrophic for the nation.

It is not only the Police Force and medical institutions that are affected by the general rot in the system. The prison service is worse hit by general recession ranging from dilapidated structure and leaking roofs. On one occasion when it rains in the prison, the doctor is aroused from his sleep:

It is raining. The patter of rain drops on the roof brings me awake from a lazy sleep. I stretch and yawn and snap awake when I feel the first drop of rain on my skin...I move my thin mattress from the direct path of the rain and in the process awaken one of my cell mates...To catch the rain drops, I place bowls at four points and sit to watch them full up (56).

Evidences have it that Nigerian prisons are ill-equipped, underfunded, over-crowded and have generally become haven for breeding criminals contrary to their supposed reformatory tendency (Adelola, 1994; Atere, 2000; Okunola, 2002; Okunola, Aderinto & Atere, 2002). Although Okunola (2002:363) submits that a prison system is strategically designed “to remove the undesirable elements” from circulation, the reality on ground cannot justify this claim. Okunola, Aderinto and Atere (2002) believe that once the dangerous elements in the society have been restricted within the confine of the prison’s wall, they are expected to have been reformed and trained on how to live harmoniously with people in the society. Unfortunately, the reverse has often been the case in Nigerian prison system:

All the problems mentioned above-congestion, inadequate and poor facilities, recidivism etc and there attendant consequences have made the prison function of reformation and rehabilitation difficult to achieve (331-332).

These problems, in the opinion of Adelola (1994:127), have been compounded by the intimidating presence of significant number of awaiting-trial inmates in Nigeria prisons. This reality is textualised in Onwordi’s *Ballad of Rage* as the doctor’s sojourn in prison reveals the decadence which ravages Nigeria’s prison system:

You get all sorts here. Those who have been here so long they will never fit in outside...Then there are those who will never get used to prison life...There are the real freaks, men who are women. Those who spend their time here gratifying the sexual needs of fellow prisoners. I have often wondered what drives them? Fear perhaps (67).

This development makes nonsense the perceived reformatory role of the prison. One can only wonder how such system can play a reformatory role in the life of an inmate!

Meanwhile as an experienced medical practitioner, the doctor is disgusted at the ill-equipped nature of the prison. Although he does not seek a way out of prison life because he believes that he deserves his incarceration and inevitable execution, he is at loss about the reality of

the prison. He keeps on wondering how so many sick people suffering from tuberculosis, herpes, ulcer, meningitis and the dreaded Human immunodeficiency Virus are kept together in a cell without medication or doctor to care for them! Also hardened criminals like armed-robbers, murderers, homosexuals, cultists, petty-thieves and pick-pockets stay together. The doctor's account is startling:

Then there are those who cause me the most heartbreak. The walking dead, AIDs victims. You see them and for the trained eyes you know at once that these are dead men pretending to be alive. Colonized by opportunistic infections, meningitis, herpes, tuberculosis... Here in prison there are no drugs, no care, so you catch these men, dead already, surviving just by the sheer effort of the will. Every morning when the cells are thrown open, corpses are pulled into the corridors. Hard labour inmates must have lost count of how many they have buried so far (67-68).

The doctor's testimony only confirms the general assertion that the commonest thing in Nigeria's prison is death by installment. The danger in keeping petty-thieves with hardened criminals and condemned inmates in the same cell is enormous. Besides the possibility of producing inmates who are more hardened and notorious than before, no one can rule out conflict and disagreement which can have fatal consequences. The example of the crisis between the remandees and the lifers over space would suffice. Four remandees are kept overnight with nine condemned men. An argument ensued over space in the cell and in no time, the condemned men have lynched the remandees! Enraged by this gruesome murder, other detainees and prisoners swoop on them and lynched them in reprisal. As the wardens flee from the mob, policemen have to be invited before the riot can be quenched. Even the hurriedly organised football match between the hard labour inmates and the condemned inmates does not assuage ill-feelings and hatred. After the hard labour inmates win the game by three goals to one, their captain is attacked later in the toilet. He never makes it to the hospital.

As dehumanizing as the prison's environment is, window-dressing can assume an absurd dimension in it. After the death of thirteen inmates of the prison, the government suspends the controller of prison and hurriedly constitutes a panel of inquiry to investigate the crisis and condition of living in the prison. So as to save his face and create the impression that all is well in the system, the chief warden invites the doctor to his office and instructs him to help equipped the

sick bay with “essential drugs and items”. He is therefore led to pharmaceutical stores where he purchases the drugs. As the panel of inquiry sits, the inmates are to smile and pretend all through. Even the hard labour inmates and the condemned inmates have to bury the hatchet temporarily. No one is to rock the boat else he would have to face the consequences afterwards:

Prisoners and remandees are at their best behaviour. We laugh and smile and say all is good because we have been asked to and because we know that the Members of the Judicial Panel will not be here forever. They are here for a short stay and then we return to our routine and there will be no mercy for anybody who steps out of line. The Hard men and coasters even seem to have buried their differences (98).

This development is a pointer to the fact that even those in authority know what is good for those under their care. However, there is a whole lot of difference between knowing what is right and doing it. Nigerians are so used to fire-brigade approach to solving problems such that a discerning mind cannot but wonder why they cannot take the pain to do it consistently before the day of reckoning. Such ‘lousy’ preparation to cover-up ones track has been subject of Osundare’s scathing criticism in his “siren” and *State Visit*.

The case of double standard rears its ugly head even in the prison. Although it undermines the law of natural justice, yet it finds a safe haven in Nigeria’s system. While some inmates wallow in deprivation in their over-crowded cell, the ‘privileged’ inmates enjoy unrestricted access to the outside world with various communication gadgets at their disposal. With the wardens at their beck and call, albeit for a fee, they live like kings and emperors in their prison ‘domain’. The political activists/detainees belong to this ‘privileged’ category. Having turned activism into a ‘lucrative industry’, they seem to derive pleasure in their continual incarceration so much that they now savour the unprecedented benefits which accrue from their adventures. Their cells are always bee-hive of activities with party and merry-making always part of their daily routine:

The political detainees are having a party. One of them is celebrating his birthday. I remember him from pictures and stories in the magazines as well as interviews on TV... They are frying bean cakes and drinking from plastic kegs which no doubt contain alcohol spirited into the prison through a trusted courier. In prison anything is possible once the price is right (55).

Nigeria's postcolonial history is replete with the activities of several so-called human right activists who are merely after personal gains. Such individuals later outsmart their colleagues in the quest for pecuniary benefits. They are ready to discard their socialist credentials for capitalist ideology once their interest is taken care of. Their actions smack of greed and selfishness.

If the manner Nigerians observe the 'ritual' of worshipping in the church is juxtaposed with their corrupt and evil machinations, a critical mind would marvel at such glaring contradiction. One cannot but be awestruck at the level of 'religiosity' of these criminally minded personalities from all walks of life. While they consistently perpetrate evil deeds ranging from marital infidelity to prostitution, bribery and corruption to nepotism, armed-robbery to drug-peddling, they, nonetheless make it a point of duty to attend churches and other unorthodox places of worship! The doctor loses his first family owing to the infidelity of a wife who does not fail to attend Sunday Service in a church. In flagrant non-compliance with biblical injunction which abhors adultery and fornication, she keeps a lover whom she brings home whenever she wants. Yet this adulterous wife has the conscience to admonish her husband to lay good example for the children to follow! One would have been surprised if her own example too is worthy of emulation by the children. In the same vein, the prison is comprised of inmates who are homosexuals, cultists, armed-robbers, conmen, murderers and rapists who still attend regular church services. Even the preacher is an awaiting trial inmate who is been detained for the murder of "his wife, her mother and sister". He is described as a fiery preacher:

For he saith unto Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (54).

He also enjoins them to believe in God who only can show mercy. However when a prison inmate becomes a preacher of Jesus Christ, one is surprised at what brings him the 'salvation' he now proclaims.

The philosophy behind Toni Kan Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* can be likened to that of ancient Greek drama, particularly as exemplified by Aristotle's *Poetics*, where supernatural forces play trick on man's destiny with little or no possibility of being exorcised from the dictate of the gods. In classical Greek tragedy, vendetta-seeking Greek gods are fond of lording it on mankind who are entangled in their furies, unable to wriggle out of their 'belligerent' dispositions. Man becomes a mere toy tossed up and down by the gods. His destiny is fatally tied to their pranks and

antics. Sophocles *Oedipus Rex* offers an eloquent representation of man's inability to escape the wrath of the gods, despite the fact that such wrath may not have been occasioned by any fault of his, besides a divinely-inflicted hubris which justifies his inevitable fall. Shakespeare's *Othello* is a text written in the same Greek tradition. In the same vein, *Ballad of Rage* presents three protagonists who vainly seek to be set free from odious fate which impedes on their sense of self-fulfillment. Cruel fate has always led the doctor to marrying women of easy virtues. Besides Rosa who loves him passionately, other women have always capitalised on his unalloyed love, cheating on him in the process. His first marriage 'crashes' because his wife has the effrontery to invite a lover to her matrimonial home! Unaware that the gas is leaking the lover lights a cigarette and the house goes on in flames. Although the two love-birds escape unhurt, his two children and a maid die in the inferno. He almost becomes a misogynist until he meets a lady who 'agrees' with him never to raise children who would remind him of his two sons. Unfortunately, her second marriage is anything but better. He marries a sex-addict whose insatiable sexual desire gets to the extent where she seeks sexual pleasure from anybody, anytime, anywhere, anyhow! The fatal consequence of her action leads her husband to the prison and, perhaps, a date with the hangman. His kind disposition offers enough clues to his attitudinal nuances as a gentleman. Ironically, fate plays a fast one on him.

Besides the doctor, his wife may be excused from her behavioural misdemeanour for obvious reason. Before the rape incident where several policemen gang-raped her, she enjoys a blissful sexual life full of passion and devoid of any ill-feelings towards men. She cherishes the fond memories of her romance with Pam, her lover in her undergraduate days. She only becomes a 'monster' when the policemen assaulted her, passing her to one another like article, a better-forgotten experience which infringes on her sense of self-worth. As if the psychological torture arising from her humiliation is not enough, she gets pregnant and while seeking abortion, has her uterus and fallopian tubes damaged! In a society where single mothers are viewed with contempt, nothing but Dilation and Curettage (otherwise known as D and C) would be worthwhile, especially as her boyfriend would have none of it. Her fate, therefore, evokes pity.

Even the randy Jeff may not be a bad guy after all. The blunt refusal of his parents to support whatever career he chooses may have been mainly responsible for his action and inaction. Fate has given him parents who assume an all-knowing disposition, relegating his free-will to the background. They refuse to pay his tuition for choosing to study English at the university, contrary

to their preferred 'lucrative' courses like medicine and accountancy. Even when he graduates with a degree in English, they stand their ground against his choice of music as a career, without taken his talent and dream into cognisance. He comes to mind as a focused man who refuses to be distracted from his cherished dream of becoming a music star when he gets abroad. To achieve this, he drives a cab to save enough money for the trip. His problem, however, starts when the doctor's wife boards his cab home and lures him to have sexual intercourse with her. He later realises his folly and goes to meet the doctor in the prison to confess his misdemeanour, like Judas Iscariot in the bible. If none of his family members would understand his plight, who would blame his recourse to marijuana for succour? If fate offers him no hope, especially after the death of his grandmother who pays his tuition in the university, why would he not revel in the bosom of a woman who offers him company and emotional stability? Therefore the hard-line posture of Jeff's parents in a society where talent is downplayed and, in its stead, premium is placed on one profession over the other, is equally responsible for his action.

Apart from its philosophical underpinning which foregrounds the inevitability of fate in social engineering, Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* discusses sex, promiscuity, infidelity, lust and homosexuality without any modicum of decency. In a manner contrary to established literary convention in Africa where premium is placed on morality and values, the text displays graphic details of sex and sexuality in flagrant disavowal of highly-cherished African literary tradition. The doctor's wife is an unrepentant nymphomaniac who sleeps with any man that catches her fancy, from Pam to Jeff. All these sexual scenes are vividly described in the text. Her experience with Pam is nothing compares to that of Jeff:

I craved for more. He lived at the back of his father's house. Once we drove in and stepped into his room, passion would take over...Most times when there was a power outage or when our passion was spent, we would lie naked in bed, his fingers tracing circles around the dark aureoles of my breast
(33).

Also, Jeff describes his first encounter with her in details:

I heard her purse fall and her moan was hot ash sprinkled on my wood. I was boiling. She had no panties on. I remember that. I also remember that she was the one who lifted her skirt and lay on the couch with her legs spread open. I drove home not believing that it had happened. That I had just

made love to a married woman in the sitting room of her matrimonial home, with the door open and the risk of discovery quite high ⁽¹²¹⁾.

Other sexual scenes describe in the text are that between the doctor's wife and the policemen, the doctor, his wife and Rosa. All these scenes are laid bare for all to see and imagine. However, a discerning mind can only wonder the lesson one stands to learn from these images. They merely portray Nigerian society as morally lax and valueless. The text's penchant for art-for-art's-sake philosophy is quite unbecoming, especially in a society which seeks cultural rebirth and rejuvenation.

In similar vein, a morally bankrupt society can only produce youth who are morally inept and corrupt. The youth presented in Onwardi's *Ballad of Rage* do not comport themselves as capable or altering the rot and decadence in the society. Their activities range from cultism to armed-robbery, prostitution to homosexuality, violence to drug addiction. They contribute ignominiously to the maladies in Nigeria. If the so-called future leaders are enmeshed in social vices of such magnitude, Nigeria's future can be said to be bleak. Therefore, the text does not make a worthy representation of value-conscious African texts, texts specifically written to correct societal vices. Its depiction of African youth does not tally with the ideals expected from value-conscious African writers and critics.

Marital infidelity and promiscuity are twin-vices which dominate Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage*. The doctor is always the victim of women who cannot but have extra martial affairs. His first marriage ended abruptly, resulting in the death of her two sons. The second marriage does not fare any better since the wife does not have any inkling of affection for him. As a married woman, she almost falls in love with Afam. When she eventually meets Jeff, she frantically lures him to bed severally. Her fate serves her right as she is caught and killed by her husband. A man who had 'rescued' her from the psychological trauma of living with her condition obviously deserves better treatment. This is in sharp contrast to what obtains in traditional African society where women have unalloyed love for their husbands.

In all, Toni Kan Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* is written against the backdrop of the novelist's belief that the injustice, oppression and corruption in contemporary Nigerian society have the tendency to create monster out of Nigerians. As people struggle to make ends meet in a nation which does not take the plight of her people into consideration, nothing other than banality, moral

laxity, marital infidelity, corruption, administrative ineptitude, official brigandage, infrastructural neglect and religious hypocrisy should be expected. In such a deranged society, no one can contemplate love, affection and relationship. People barely manage to survive hence survival is only possible for the fittest. In an interview with Henry Akubuiro (2009), Onwordi's attributes this "siege mentality" to incessant military interventions and the nascent democratic experiment in Nigeria's history. In his opinion, this reality leaves much to be desired. It has, indeed, forecloses any fictional reflection of love and marital harmony:

I tried to make a case that, if you look at contemporary fiction-using Maik Nwosu's *Alpha Song* and *Invisible Chapters*, Helon Habilas prison stories in *Waiting for an Angel*, Nengi Illegba's *Condolences*, Akin Adesokan's *Ode to the Tribe*, my own *Ballad of Rage*, and a few others-which were set against a backdrop of our recent history, that is, the military dictatorship of Babangida and Abacha up to the beginning of this democracy, you had people who were under siege. And I felt that siege mentality wasn't supportive of relationships. So we couldn't incubate emotions into love.

Thus, it becomes apparent that the socio-political experience in recent Nigeria's society informs Onwordi's treatment of themes which would be largely 'unheard' of in traditional African society. This marks Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* out as a text sets in the postmodern order where social harmony is absent.

Besides its themes of violence and corruption, *Ballad of Rage* is written in the postmodern disjointed, narrative technique. Three protagonists are involved in the presentation of several fragmented but interrelated stories. With special emphasis on omniscient first-person-singular narrative model, each protagonist tells his or her story in a manner which draws pity unto him or her. The doctor's wife tells a story where some randy policemen inflict rape on her and other fellow students. This singular act, apart from turning her to a barren, leads her to the point where she now sees all men as 'articles' meant to be used and dumped. She becomes a sex addict whom no single man can satisfy sexually henceforth. Besides satisfying her sexual lust, she neither speaks nor cares for even her lover. Her husband has almost become a misogynist before he meets her. Unfortunately for him, his first wife is a lesser 'devil' compare to his new wife. He has to spend the rest of his miserable life in jail where he meets several characters whose lives offer clear

insight into Nigeria's situation. Even the lover boy, Jeff, is entangled in hostile family intercourse where he takes decision alone with no love and support from his parents. He has to seek and gets 'comfort' from the doctor's wife. He ends up in jail too. Therefore these related stories are revealed in episodic manner to depict the postmodern penchant for structural "diegesis". When they however, form a whole, the import of the novelist's message is not lost on the readers.

By and large, the philosophy behind Toni Kan Onwordi's *Ballad of Rage* does not conform to that of a nation in search of cosmic harmony! Its treatment of theme of marital infidelity in a nation bedeviled with escalating corruption, injustice, moral laxity and infrastructural decay is clearly at variance with the developmental aspiration of the people. A value-conscious nation would definitely discard any theme that undermines traditional assumption and core values, particularly themes of sex, rape, promiscuity and marital infidelity. Besides, its recourse to Graeco-Roman ethos which privileges divinely-ordained fate as the *sine qua non* for social engineering is antithetical to the instrumentality of man as a potent agent for social change. Also, fragmented narrative style makes nonsense the stereotyped linear plot structure which is the established norm in African writings. This experimentalist posture forecloses hitherto established writing style in its entirety. Its exploration of disjointed narrative experiment, even if it underscores the futility of order in the society, may not be apposite towards achieving redress from the maladies which are evident in the society. These thematic and stylistic thrusts are, though postmodernist, clearly not in tandem with the developmental yearnings of Afrocentric scholars. Therefore, the text may not appeal to a discerning African mind in the quest for social growth in line with Afrocentric paradigm.

6.3 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: A Brief Biodata

Born to the family of professor Nwoye James and Mrs. Ifeoma Grace Adichie on the 15th September 1977, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie grew up in the university town of Nsukka, where she had her elementary and secondary educations. As a teenager in 1996, she left for the Eastern Connecticut State University in the United State of America, enrolled and graduated with a degree in Communication and Political Science. She also received a Master degree in Creative Writing from Johns Hopkins University and another Master degree in African Studies from Yale University.

Chimamanda Adichie's works are undoubtedly of international repute. They include *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) and *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2008).

She also has several short-stories to her credit among which are “A Private Experience” “Limitation”, and “Jumping Monkey Hill” published in *The Thing Around Your Neck*. Others include “Ghosts”, “Tomorrow is Too Far”, “The Colour of an Awkward Conversation”, “My Old Man”, “The Untold Story”, “Sierra Leone-1997”, “Cell One”, “The Headstrong Historian”, and “A Tampered Destiny”.

Chimamanda Adichie has published widely and her literary efforts have been applauded across the globe. Her fiction and short-stories have been published in reputable outfits like Granta, The Financial Times, Zoetrope and Farafina Magazine. Among other awards and fellowships, she was the O. Henry Prize winner in 2003 and Hodder Fellow at Princeton 2005/2006. Her first novel, *Purple Hibiscus* won the 2005 Commonwealth Writers Prize and Hurston Wright Legacy Award. It was also shortlisted for the Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction, John Llewellyn Rhys Prize and the Booker Prize. Her second novel, *Half of a Yellow Sun* won the mouth-watering thirty thousand pound Orange Broadband Prize for Fiction in 2007. In 2008, she received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for five years.

Although Adichie’s diasporic experiences have influenced her creative scope significantly, her affinity with her Igbo ancestry is evident in her literary *oeuvre*. Her works are dominated by references to Igbo towns and villages from Nsukka to Orlu, Umuahia to Abba, Enugu to Umuahia. On the heel of international recognition and accolade, an appreciative Nigerian public has not denied her place as one of those who employ literature to earn national pride for Nigeria in the comity of nations. No wonder her *Purple Hibiscus* is now on the reading list of West African Examination Council’s (WAEC) Literature in English syllabus.

6.4 Half of a Yellow Sun

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006) fuses together the themes of love and betrayal, loyalty and frustration, corruption and deprivation, war and grief, hope and disappointment. In the context of Nigerian civil war, it centralises the Igbo nation as peopled by ambitious, resilient but ill-prepared group of people. Albeit from a subjective standpoint, it fictionalises the events surrounding the Igbo cause and the quest for self-determination in a hostile environment. Even if the title is reminiscence of the emblem of the still-birth Biafran nation, its pan-Africanist disposition underscores its relevance in articulating the socio-cultural milieu of Africa. Nonetheless, the historicity of events described does not becloud its style and technique. Its stories are told with recourse to traditional African story-telling technique which emphasises the

significance of craft and artistic innovation in advancing socially relevant themes. Its diction, as well as back and forth narrative experiment, foregrounds the literariness of an obviously socio-political text. Its adoption of literary devices like irony, metaphor, folktales, proverbs, suspense, symbolism and imagery are in line with African prose tradition whose modern form is given impetus by Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. Its methods of character delineation, unstable narrative structure, and third person narrative perspectives further attest to its quality.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie masterfully weaves the gloom, despair and wanton destruction of lives and properties around the characters of Odenigbo, Ugwu, Olanna, Kainene and Richard. From events of the early 1960s (before the war), through the war periods (1967 to 1970), to the after-effect of the war, these characters are largely instrumental to Adichie's narration. Odenigbo is a mathematics lecturer at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. He always plays host to like-minded intellectuals with whom the pre-war socio-political intrigues are laid bare. This group of unofficial 'think-tank' is made up of academics from all walks of life in the university. Over foods and drinks, they lead the readers into the events which culminated into the civil war. These regular discussions expose the idealistic, revolutionary and fire-brand disposition of Odenigbo. Besides his pan-African leaning, he subscribes to the idea of war to liberate the Igbo from the 'shackles' of poverty, injustice and oppression allegedly perpetrated by the Gowon administration in Nigeria. He actively participates in the pre-war rallies and sensitisation at the freedom square on campus. He serves at the Manpower Directorate at Umuahia during the war. He also endears himself to people as a caring and selfless personality, qualities which underscore his welfarist and humanist perspectives. He suffers the harrowing experiences of war as an air-raid mars his wedding. Also a landlord ejects him for a tenant who offers to pay more! He has to move his family to a one-room apartment where strange characters co-habit, in contrast to his more convenient campus residence. He collaborates with other men to build a bunker where people can hide from the incessant air-raids from federal troops. After the war, he is harassed and humiliated by Nigerian troops who discover his Nsukka linkage. He lost books, manuscripts, and other academic materials to the destruction of Nsukka campus. His 'revered' Mathematical Annals had served as toilet paper for the 'vandals'! His character can be contrasted with that of other Biafran leaders who are merely benefiting from the war. For instance, while intellectuals like Odenigbo and Okeoma suffer humiliation and death respectively, Ojukwu is severally accused of dictatorial rule and general insensitivity to the plight of his people. It is ironic that he led Biafra into war ill-equipped and ill-

prepared! Time without number, Kainene assumes the role of Ojukwu's fiery critic. In a conversation with Richard, she chides Ojukwu for misleading the Igbo nation into a war they are not prepared for:

Madu told me today that the army has nothing, absolutely nothing. They thought Ojukwu had arms piled up somewhere, given the way he had been talking, "No power in Black Africa can defeat us." So Madu and some of the officers who came back from the North went to tell him that we have no arms, no mobilization of troops, and that our men are training, with wooden guns, for goodness sake. They wanted him to release his stockpiled arms. But he turned around and said they were plotting to overthrow him. Apparently he has no arms at all and he plans to defeat Nigeria with his fists (183).

It is also ironic that while Biafran leaders complaint of injustice and oppression in Nigeria, events soon prove them to be worse off. In fact her maximum leader, Odumegwu Ojukwu, is accused of intolerance and dictatorial rule, a development which undermines his 'messianic' pretext. He is accused of favouritism, nepotism and self-centeredness. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) document the allegations leveled against the former Biafran warlord in the novel:

In *Half*, the Biafra leader is accused of favoring soldiers and civilians from his own part of Biafra, of dictatorial inclinations, and of oppressing the very people he professes to be protecting. He is accused of running Biafra like a family business, maltreating his colleagues, snatching their wives and being generally insensitive to the plight of the people (332-333).

In the same vein, Alexander Madiebo (1980) is quick to dismiss Ojukwu's sense of suspicion and dictatorial tendencies. He asserts that these weaknesses, amongst others, account for the failure of the self-determination cause:

It was because of the lack of mutual trust by people pursuing the same aim, that Ojukwu dispensed with the inner confidence of military experts and highly experienced political leaders...It is my view that Biafra never had a government but merely operated under a leader...what Biafra needed most but never had was collective leadership. Over concentration of powers into one hand is bad enough in

peace time, and should never be allowed in time of war when mental strains affect good judgment. As Ojukwu once said to Effiong, Biafra's effective policy-making body consisted of Chukwuemeka, Odumegwu and Ojukwu in short, himself alone (379-380).

Unfortunately, Odumegwu Ojukwu does not acquaint himself of these heinous and weighty allegations.

Odenigbo's house boy, Ugwu, is a study in hardwork and dedication. Coming from a humble rural background into the city life of Nsukka campus, Ugwu adapts quite easily as he had promised his aunty. Always at Odenigbo's beck and call, he acquaints himself creditably so well that he becomes the toast of everyone who comes into Odenigbo's campus residence. He quickly brushes aside the startling bewilderment which characterised his first coming to the city and settles down into middle class household. His loyalty to both Odenigbo and his live-in-lover, Olanna, is unflinching. He even nurses 'their baby' for them. His constant eavesdropping to the conversations between Odenigbo and other intellectuals on campus has influenced his sense of evaluation on socio-political events in the world hence, he aligns with the Biafran cause. In school, he learns so fast that his teacher, Mrs Oguike, attests to his "innate intelligence" and recommends him for double promotion. He even teaches at the school established by Olanna during the war. He actively participates in the war, earning the nickname "target destroyer" after his skillful bombing of the 'vandals' on one occasion. Wounded almost to the point of death, he comes back to behold a devastated Nsukka campus where so much have been destroyed. His mother had died during the war while his sister, Anulika, was raped! His 'beloved' Nnesinachi now has a baby for a 'caring' Hausa soldier who took care of her during the war. No wonder his hatred towards Nigeria and her troops soars.

Another narrative perspective is presented by Richard Churchill, a British researcher sojourning in Nigerian. A lover of Ugbo-Ukwu art, he is introduced into Odenigbo's 'conference' apparently because of his relationship with Kainene, Olanna's twin sister. A 'naturalised' Biafran, he believes in the cause of the Igbo and offers to contribute articles to propagate the ideals of the Igbo to the world at large, so as to correct erroneous impression being peddled by anti-Igbo nations. A detribalised personality, he rejects a fellow Briton, Susan, for Kainene and remains committed to her despite the fact that both are never married. He jealously wards off other suitors

from her. He stands by her throughout the war and after. Together with Olanna, he organises a search-party to seek for Kainene who does not return from the *afia attack* after the war.

From these three narrative perspectives, Adichie's *Half of a Yellow Sun* tells the story of love and betrayal, intrigue and corruption, blackmail and wanton destruction of lives and properties that are evident in the crisis-ridden immediate post-independent Nigeria. Having been swept off her feet by Odenigbo's sense of order at a theatre in Ibadan, Olanna Ozobia falls in love with him, preferring to end it all with Muhammed. She refuses to be used as sex-bait by her parents who want her to marry chief Okonji, the finance minister, to further their business interest! To demonstrate her resolve, she rejects a lucrative job-offer from the finance minister and chooses a teaching appointment at the department of sociology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She had earlier shone marriage proposals from both Igwe Okagbue and chief Okaro's families. On campus, she quickly endears himself to Odenigbo's friends and teaches Ugwu how to cook in a modern environment.

A self-opinionated lady who preferred to be suspended from school than to apologise to her teacher over a controversial argument on *pax Britannica*, Olanna attends the meeting of the Igbo union in Kano when she pays a visit to uncle Mbaezi's household. She actually beholds the killing of these relatives as well as fellow Igbo before the riot that precedes the civil war. She barely manages to escape through the skin of her teeth and endures the tortuous journey back home. During the war, she contributes immensely to the upbringing of Igbo children whom she teaches at Akakuma Primary School, together with Ugwu and Mrs. Muokelu. She later establishes her own primary school for the same purpose. Although an air raid by the 'vandals' mars her wedding, she remains undauntedly committed to self-determination for the Igbo. She devises survivalist strategy, like soap making, to make end meet. Her strong-willed disposition comes to the fore when she leads the search-party for Kainene after the war. This is commendable, especially when men like Odenigbo and Richard have lost all hopes. When Odenigbo and Richard betray emotion over the death of mama and inability to trace Kainene respectively, she is ever-ready to console both men. Her resolve to adopt and care for 'Baby' is a good commentary on her love for humanity.

The personality of Kainene makes a strong statement on the virtue Adichie bestows on her female characters, especially in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. In a quintessential Igbo fashion, Kainene is a determined business-minded character. She is saddled with the enviable task of managing her

father's vast business concern in Port Harcourt. She discharges this duty meritoriously and becomes the cynosure of all eyes that the family is proud of. This quality endears her to people hence Richard sees no qualm in denouncing Susan for her. Although she repeatedly casts aspersions on the ill-preparedness of Biafra for war against Nigeria, she plays her part during the war. After the fall of Port Harcourt, she relocates to Orlu and establishes a refugee camp to care for the displaced and homeless. Although she benefits in terms of contract from the war, she comes to mind as a determined Igbo woman whose commitment to the cause of Biafra is never in doubt. She refuses to 'escape' to London with her parents and resolve to thrive in war-torn Biafra. Her trade along enemy zone is a testimony to her determination to make her mark during the war. She never returns.

Another strong-willed woman in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is Mrs Muokelu. A barely literate woman, she joins hands with Olanna and Ugwu to train Biafran children during the war. A committed woman, she trains and feeds her large family and assists displaced persons to get food at the relief centre. Her commitment knows no bounds as she never touches anything from Nigeria. To guard against starvation and deprivation occasioned by the civil war, she trains Olanna the art of soap-making which can be sold for survival. She is even ready to go for *afia attack* if occasion demands. Irrespective of class and status, other women in *Half of a Yellow Sun* enjoy considerable influence on the affairs of men. Despite Odenigbo's displeasure, his mother almost forces him to marry Amala, a village girl who eventually has a child for him. Similarly, one of the reasons why Olanna rejects Muhammed for Odenigbo is the unfair treatment earlier meted to her by his mother.

Besides the themes of love, betrayal, corruption, war and destruction Adichie's craft consciousness is espoused in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Unlike some postcolonial novels which merely betray socio-political rhetoric, *Half of a Yellow Sun* combines the use of literary devices like metaphor, imagery, symbolism, humour and narrative dexterity to drive home its socio-political point. Its title is a metaphor of Biafra shrouded in pain, devastation and hope for prosperity. With the Biafran flag as the symbol, Olanna takes the pain to imbibe this 'tutorial' in her young pupils. The serious nature of this historical novel does not becloud Adichie's sense of humour. She explores this device in Ugwu, Mrs Ozobia and Pastor Ambrose. Ugwu is bewildered at the cozy atmosphere of Nsukka campus compared to the rural setting of his village. He marvels at seeing a refrigerator and a tap in Odenigbo's kitchen:

Ugwu entered the kitchen cautiously, placing one foot slowly after the other. When he saw the white thing, almost as tall as he was, he knew it was the fridge. His aunt had told him about it. A cold barn, she had said, that kept food from going off. He opened it and gasped as the cool air mashed into his face...He touched the chicken again and lick his finger before he yoked the other leg off, eating it until he had only the creaked, sucked pieces of bones left in his hand... Ugwu turned off the tap, turned it on again, then off. On and off and on and off until he was laughing at the magic of the running water and the chicken and bread that lay balmy in his stomach (6).

Also the reader cannot but laugh at Mrs Ozobia's 'craze' for jewelries to the point of carrying her highly-cherished jewelries box all about. As if this is not enough, pastor Ambrose stays in the house to 'pray' fervently to God to destroy Gowon. He would have done better if he joins the army like other men.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie's narrative is heavily influenced by Igbo universe and tradition. This perhaps influences her choice of simple and accessible diction. Her 'nativisation' of the English language is blended with elements of Igbo folk-tales, riddles and proverbs. As the messages reach the readers without ambiguity, this technique further endears her works to them. According to Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010), this overt acknowledgement of traditional sensibilities makes an eloquent statement on Adichie's sense of absolute "conformity with tradition":

She tries to reflect the Igbo folk universe in her fiction, especially in the form of proverbs and the folktale. In her deployment of proverbs, she either uses them to garnish her narrative, injecting local colour and conveying the speech patterns and nuances of her indigenous Igbo, or as a structural element, which determines the entire formal outlook of the story (319).

Thus, despite her early exposure to Western culture, her affinity with her Igbo root is undeniable.

Adichie's characters in *Half of a Yellow Sun* are quintessentially human in their actions and inactions. It is clearly evident in the novel that these characters are 'equipped' with both virtues and vices as obtain in normal human beings. They are imbued with strengths and weaknesses which further accentuate both flatness and roundness as the narration unfolds. As idealistic and

revolutionary Odenigbo is, his amorous relationship with Amala does not stand him in good stead as a committed and dedicated lover. This weakness lends credence to the suspicion that under intense pressure, he may capitulate and renounce the cause of Biafra too. Also, Ugwu's loyalty and stoic dispositions are not enough to dissuade him from participating in the gang-raping of a hapless bar maid during the war. Similarly, Olanna's dispassionate love for Odenigbo, which is given impetus by her conviction to stay with him despite family pressure, does not prevent her from sleeping with Richard, her sister's lover! Besides, all these characters enjoy opulence before the war but suffer greatly during and after it. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) submit that Adichie's characters are both flat and round because they are human hence open to human follies. According to them, Adichie

does not compromise the fact that they have to be true blueprints and reflections of real life figures. This is why she presents them as human beings, in their strengths and flaws, in their modesty and excesses, in their joys and sorrows, in their triumphs and defeats, in their aspirations and regrets. This is why her characters though credible, are not perfect. *Half of a Yellow Sun* presents us with characters whose essential humanity often control (323).

Therefore, even if Adichie's characters do not come to mind as people who are above board in their attitudinal nuances, yet critics appreciate their all-round 'genuineness' as mortal. Their humanity is never in doubt.

The entire narrative in *Half of a Yellow Sun* is presented with the employment of the third person narrative perspective from which events that make up the novel are revealed. Here, Adichie avoids the first person narrative voices but espoused the third person narrative perspective to depict the historic events in the novel. With the characters of Ugwu, Olanna and Richard, she tells the stories of class segregation, domestic responsibility and Western misconception about African society respectively. From these diverse perspectives, the socio-political realities of Biafran society during the civil war are laid bare. Ugwu's 'underprivileged' status affects his sense of judgment so much that he beholds with awe the 'grandeur' that is Nsukka campus! No wonder he eavesdrops at Odenigbo and Olanna's privacy as couple at night, finds it difficult to reconcile with live outside Nsukka during the war, and connive to rape a bar maid! Through him, the readers are exposed to the negative influence a 'naïve' experience can have on someone who has just been exposed to middle-class environment. Also Olanna's role, particularly her relationship with

Odenigbo, attests to the contemptuous manner the rich behold the poor in a class-conscious society. Her parents cannot come to terms with her preference for Odenigbo, a university teacher, when a serving finance minister seeks her hand in marriage. They are uncomfortable with the ‘madness’ which informs her choice of a teaching career when a ‘lucrative’ appointment awaits her in the finance ministry. However her experience as a master of the domestic chore is an advantage for Ugwu’s personal development. She also provides Odenigbo the sexual satisfaction he needs. Similarly, Richard’s personality elicits the resolve to denounce Western ‘jaundice’ perspective. His relationship with Kainene, his research on Ugbo-Ukwu art and his experience during the Nigerian civil war have all combined to reshape his perspective on the Igbo. His articles are to expose the world to the injustice and oppression meted out to the Igbo in Nigeria. His Biafran leaning has always been stressed.

Besides the narrative perspective which gives credibility to *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie’s careful handling of structure in the text provides a suspense effect which helps to sustain the interest of the readers all through. As the narration moves forth and back, the import of the historic novel is not lost. The early 1960s is a point in time when events that make the civil war inevitable occur in quick succession. Odenigbo’s ‘conference’ reveals this reality. Ugwu’s coming to the city is also seen. As the narration moves forth to the late 1960s, the coup d’etat and the mindless killings of people of Igbo extraction come to the fore. The civil war has also started with devastating consequences for the ill-prepared Igbo. From this point, the narration moves back to the early 1960s when Richard’s research effort takes him to Ugwu’s village for the Ori-Okpa festival. Also Odenigbo’s illicit affair with Amala and Olanna’s infidelity with Richard are discovered. Finally, the concluding chapters take the readers back to the war time in the late 1960s. Its negative consequences of killing, destruction, starvation, and deprivation are also evident. Everybody is badly affected in a way. As the war ends, the intellectuals count their losses on campus while others have either lost some relatives or have them bruised, raped or killed. Even the industrious Kainene is lost.

Even if Adichie tirelessly puts up an objective mien in *Half of a Yellow Sun*, no one is left in doubt about the side of the divide her interest lies. Although Charles Nnolim (2010:149) attests to the “greatness” of the novel on account of its “impartiality, the refusal to take sides, the absence of a judgmental stance”, Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010:104) are quick to dissent for the simple reason that Adichie’s tone is enough to draw the attention of the readers to the side of the divide

she aligns with. In their opinion, “the reader can hardly resist the temptation of reading these vital lessons into the objective presentation of the horrors of war”. Her Igbo ancestry, though suppressed, comes to the fore in the epic novel. Besides the commitment to the course of Biafra by her major characters like Odenigbo, Olanna, Ugwu, Richard and Kainene, other recourse to Nigeria is presented in a manner that depicts her as a hostile and blood-thirsty nation led by inhuman and oppressive leaders! While serious intellectuals who regularly converge in Odenigbo’s campus residence to cast aspersions on Nigeria and Nigerian leaders whose intransigencies, they argue, make the civil war inevitable, ‘clown’ like Pastor Ambrose is eager to call on God to reserve the worst part of hell for Nigerian leader, Yakubu Gowon! Ironically, Biafran leaders are equally guilty of nepotism, favoritism, corruption and general insensitivity to people’s plight. Kainene is highly critical of Biafran leader, Odumegwu Ojukwu, whom she accuses of dictatorial tendencies. She sees the civil war not as a war of liberation but as a war led by self-serving, power-hungry and over-ambitious Igbo leaders. Although she benefits tremendously from the war, she consistently questions the rationale behind leading the people to a war without adequate preparation. She does not see any sense in recourse to war when food supply is not guaranteed. She blames the corrupt nature of the elites and applauds the survival-instinct of the downtrodden. Nonetheless, her faith in the cause and survival of Biafra is unshaken. In line with that of her creator, Adichie, she aligns with her people on one hand, and criticises the approach on the other hand. Although this attitude reflects Adichie’s creative ingenuity, speaking from both sides of the mouth does her claim to objectivity no good. A critical mind would be at home more with the text’s stylistic dexterity compared to any claim that adjudges it as an objective documentation of historical events.

In the same vein, the perceived corruption in Nigeria may be a child’s play when it is compared with what obtains in Biafra. Chief Ozobia and his acolytes make ill-gotten wealth while people wallow in abject poverty. As their investment continues to multiply, poverty becomes entrenched in the land. So materialistic is Mrs. Ozobia that she possesses a box of jewelries which she carries about. True to type, she is quick to arrange the family’s relocation to United Kingdom as the war looms. It serves the family right that they lose some of their ill-gotten properties to ‘abandon property’ syndrome after the war. Unfortunately, the air-raids and killings affect the people the more. While the people are distraught and left displaced, intellectuals lost valuable books, materials and research papers. The mindless raping of a barmaid by some soldiers and the

spate of harassment and extortion justify the conclusion that the condition of living in both Nigeria and Biafra is equally bad. Oppression abounds everywhere.

With the publication of *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie has announced her arrival as a leading advocate of the tradition described above. Obviously, her exposure to Western 'liberalised' culture has taken its toll on her depiction of sex and sexuality. Having embraced sex as an instrument to tell the story of Nigerian civil war, Adichie's characters are presented as either sex-maniac or sex-starved. On her first encounter with the intellectuals in Odenigbo's house, Olanna inwardly craves for their departure because she already feels the urge towards Odenigbo. To achieve emotional purgation, Olanna lures Richard to have sex with her! Even Ugwu has the same feelings towards Ifesinachi. In the same vein, Chineyere regularly comes into Ugwu's room to have a 'quickie' behind close door while Amala sneaks into Odenigbo's room for a bout of sex when the latter is drunk. Evidence has it that when Kainene desires Richard, she invites him to her apartment in her father's hotel. Most of her female characters do the unusual by luring, cajoling or thrusting themselves at men in a manner unheard of in African society.

As if the unrestraint sexual urge of Adichie's characters is not enough, the coital act is described with impunity and without a modicum of decency. This justifies Uko's (2006:93) postulation that contemporary women writers in Africa are all out to depict African women as equally "free to love and express love" like their male counterparts, thus "essentially surmount all sexist depictions and picturesque portrayals". One of such occasion is between Odenigbo and Olanna:

His tone was gently teasing. But his hands were not gentle. They were unbuttoning her blouse, freeing her breast from a bra cup. She was not sure how much time had passed, but she was tangled in bed with Odenigbo, warm and naked, when Ugwu knocked to say they had visitors...After Ugwu served drinks, Olanna watched Odenigbo raised his glass to his lips and all she could think of was how those lips had fastened around her nipple only minutes ago. She surreptitiously moved so that her inner arm brushed against her breast and closed her eyes at the needles of delicious pain (49-50).

Another occasion is more graphically described:

'Touch me'. She knew he didn't want to, that he touched her breasts because he would do whatever she wanted, whatever

would make her better. She caressed his neck, buried her fingers in his dense hair, and when he slid into her, she thought about Arize's pregnant belly, how easily it must have broken, skin stretched that taut (160).

Even the deprivation in wartime does not prevent Odenigbo and Olanna's sexual escapades from blooming. The emotional trauma at the sudden disappearance of Ugwu and the news of Okeoma's death can only be assuaged with the therapeutic dosage of passionate sex in their one room apartment:

She did not let go of his arm until Dr Nwala stumbled back into the rain, until they climbed silently onto their mattress on the floor. When he slid into her, she thought how different he felt, lighter and narrower, on top of her. He was still, so still she thrashed around and pulled at his hips. But he did not move. Then he began to thrust and her pleasure multiplied, sharpened on stone so that each tiny spark became a pleasure all its own (392).

On another occasion, they decide to go unconventional, preferring the 'dog style' manner:

Her lips were still against his and her words suddenly took on a different meaning and she moved back and pulled her dress over her head in one fluid gestures. She unbuckled his trousers. She did not let him take them off. She turned her back and leaned on the wall and guided him into her, excited by his surprise, by his firm hands on her hips (282).

Similarly, Olanna's 'minutes of madness' with Richard is presented in a vivid manner:

She could hear his rapid breathing, she unbuckled his trousers and moved back to pull them down...She took her dress off. He was on top of her and the carpet pricked her naked back and she felt his mouth limply enclose her nipple. It was nothing like Odenigbo's bites and sucks, nothing like those shocks of pleasure. Richard did not run his tongue over her in that flicking way that made her forget everything;...Everything changed when he was inside her. She raised her hips, moving with him, matching his thrusts, and it was as if she was throwing shackles off her wrists, extracting pins from her skins, freeing herself with the loud, loud cries that burst out of her mouth (234).

Also, Ugwu and Chinyere secretly meet in Ugwu's room to have a 'quickie'. Adichie feels no qualm describing the "hasty" thrusts in the dark" in details:

The light was off, and in the thin stream that came from the security bulb outside he saw the cone-shaped rise of her breasts as she pulled her blouse off, untied the wrapper around her waist, and lay on her back...She was silent at first and then, hips thrashing, her hands tight around his back, she called out the same thing she said every time (127).

Other instances of 'indecent' depiction of sex and sexuality abound in the text. In a conversation between Alice and Olanna on men's infidelity, they describe the sexual prowess of their men with a finger and a clenched fist respectively! The worst case scenario is Ugwu's participation in the gang-raping of a hapless bar maid:

On the floor, the girl was still. Ugwu pulled his trousers down, surprised at the stiffness of his erection. She was dry and tense when he entered her. He did not look at her face, or at the man pinning her down, or at anything at all as he moved quickly and felt his own climax, the rush of fluids to the tips of himself: a self-loathing release (365).

These descriptions of various sexual activities run contrary to the tradition pioneered by Achebe and other earlier Nigerian writers. Sex is a taboo and should be done with the curtain drawn.

Evidently, Adichie's brand of Western libertarian feminism is at variance with African tradition. In traditional African society, sex is never contemplated except after marriage which is traditionally contracted between two families. Ironically, none of Odenigbo, Olanna, Amala, Kainene, Richard, Ugwu and Chinyere is married. Olanna prefers to live in Odenigbo's house even against her parents dictate. She sees no big deal sleeping with Richard too because, in her view, sex is for emotional purgation. Whenever Odenigbo suggests marriage to her, she is quick to turn down the offer, preferring to just leave with him. She even has the gut to say it to her mother! In fact, she only wants to conceive and bring forth a child despite not been formally married to him. The stigmatization that goes with the birth of a child outside wedlock means nothing to her. Even the not-so-attractive Kainene is averse to marriage. She gives Richard inclination to think the affair may not lead to marriage eventually. Ironically, both Olanna and Kainene cannot stand the sight of infidelity from their 'spouses'. Both ladies 'punish' their men in their own ways on discovering their infidelity. Also Ugwu enjoys sex while it lasts with Chinyere despite their age and social

status. Even Kainene sleeps with both Richard and Madu without being formally married to anyone of them. Such adventure is only permitted in Western culture where Adichie spends an impressionable part of her life. It is unthinkable in African traditional environment where sex before marriage is frowned at. Societal aversion to this cohabitation is shown in Arize's conversation with Olanna. She attributes Olanna's 'unAfrican' disposition to too much Western education.

Similarly, Adichie's female characters always dictate the pace in sexual acts. Apart from their abilities to go for, and get men who catch their fancy, they always take the lead in the coital act. When Olanna seeks to win Odenigbo's heart after the event at the theatre in Ibadan, she demands and gets his attention effortlessly. She has been swept off her feet by Odenigbo's sense of order:

Olanna had stared at him...already thinking of the least hurtful way to entangle herself from Mohammed. Perhaps she would have known that Odenigbo was different, even if he had not spoken; his haircut alone said it, standing up in a high halo. But there was an unmistakable grooming about him, too; he was not one of those who used untidiness to substantiate their radicalism. She smiled and said 'Well done'! as he walked past her, and it was the boldest thing she had ever done, the first time she had demanded attention from a man (29).

She now has the effrontery to discard Muhammed. The same can be said of Kainene when she meets Richard at a cocktail party. She tells Richard that she is available for any 'prospective' bachelor:

Have you ever been to the market in Balogun? They display slabs of meat on tables, and you are supposed to grope and feel and then decide which you want. My sister and I are meat. We are here so that suitable bachelors will make the kill (59).

Even in bed, both ladies always have their ways over men. While Olanna 'directs' sex over Odenigbo and Richard, Kainene 'acts' the man over Richard. Thus in Adichie's creative hands, men are object to be exploited to satisfy women sexual urge. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) are of the opinion that Adichie's female characters are not to be relegated to the background in the act of sexual intercourse:

Adichie's female characters, in line with the various degrees of their radical orientation, are also strong, proactive and

confidently assertive when it comes to the sexual act proper. Adichie, on her own, has proved an authorial feminist point by her unrestrained projecting of her sexuality. But she also allows her characters to do the same in line with what contemporary feminists like herself consider as the imperative of sexual assertiveness (221).

They are of the opinion that her Western orientation and exposure have provided impetus for her literary outlook. However, no discerning African mind would find Adichie's postulation funny. It is nothing but an absurdity of unimaginable proportion.

In order to realistically drive home their liberation from sexual deprivation and exploitation, Adichie's female characters discuss sex with impunity. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, her female characters are active discussants in sex-related matter and not passive onlookers. Besides their penchant to initiate sex, they are vulgar in their assertive claims on sex. Olanna is distraught and disenchanted at Odenigbo for sleeping with Amala while she is away. She expresses her displeasure to Auntie Ifeka who goes vulgar:

I am not asking you to go back to his house. I said you will go back to Nsukka. Do you not have your own flat and your own job? Odenigbo has done what all men do and has inserted his penis in the first hole he could find when you were away (226).

In the same vein, the deprivation of war does not prevent Adichie's female characters from expressing their 'humanity'. Alice and Olanna's description of sexual intercourse in a conversation is humorous but vulgar:

Alice: And he could not do

Olanna: What?

Alice: He would jump on top of me, moan oh-ah-oh like a goat, and that was it. (She raised her finger). With something this small. And afterwards he would smile happily without ever wondering if I had known when he started and stopped Men! Men are hopeless!

Olanna: No, not all of them. My husband knows how to do, and with something like this. (Olanna raised a clenched fist) (335-336).

Similarly, Olanna and Kainene are not left out in direct reference to sex and sexual organs. Both of them have just discovered the infidelity of their spouses. When Odenigbo tries to blame his mother for his 'sin', Olanna's response becomes vulgar:

Did your mother pull out your penis and insert it into Amala as well! (241).

And when Kainene confronts her sister, having just discovered her escapade with Richard, her vulgarity knows not bound:

You fucked Richard... You are the good one... The good one shouldn't fuck her sister's lover (254).

Chimamanda Adichie has never hidden her penchant to say it as it is. Reporting an encounter with Adichie at Fidelity Bank Creative Writing Workshop, Akeem Lasisi (2008) documents her resolve to call a spade a spade even if sex is the issue. She is reported to have wondered why people pretend whenever occasions demand vivid description of sex, as if sex is no more part of human day to day activities. According to her, the authenticity of a work of art would have been dealt a devastating blow if euphemistic terms are used in the presentation of any sexual scene:

It is about being honest with your art. The story is greater than you. Ejiro the writer has to be different from Ejiro the self. Otherwise, the story will not be good... If I were the editor, and you used manhood instead of penis, I would not published it. I would consider it dishonest (44).

Although Adichie's diasporic experiences have, no doubt, significantly widen her horizon and influenced her perspective on a wide range of issues, sex inclusive, the untoward consequence of wholesale importation of Western ideals hook, line and sinker into African consciousness is a justifiable worry. In fact, value-conscious culture advocates are quick to denounce Western perspective which they consider inimical to African cultural rebirth. Even if a liberal mind can excuse her on account of her close affinity with Western values, her flippant and unrestraint treatment of 'traditionally forbidden' themes would never escape fiery criticisms from cultural nationalists, particularly older generation of Nigerian writers. Thus, Adichie needs be reminded that some themes are better left in the domain of queer theorist in the West. Africans have nothing worthwhile to aspire to in them. Perhaps she needs be warned of the negative implication of exposing the youth to premarital sex. The danger embedded in such act maybe devastating in this age of sexually transmitted disease (STD) and the dreaded human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Also, one is tempted to conclude that unrestraint exposure to sex in the West has led to the advent

of gay marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, and others which are clearly at variance with African highly-cherished values. Of recent, Nigerian parliament outlawed gay marriage, homosexuality and lesbianism with the recent passage of Same-Sex Prohibition Bill by the senate. Despite Western entreaties and threat, the passage of the bill is greeted with commendation by Nigerians from all walks of life.

Adichie's feminist philosophy may have led her into collision course with value-conscious African critics. Although she consistently maintains her position that sex is explored only to elicit the humanity of her characters, the fact remains that premarital sex, graphic illustration of sexual acts and marital infidelity are frowned at in traditional African society. Even if we agree with Flora Nwapa (2007:532) that "a woman is also flesh and blood. She has a heart and soul and she is capable of human feelings," yet we aver that sex should not be promoted into a situation where it becomes an all-comer affair, particularly with unmarried women going out of their ways to seek sexual satisfactions from men *a la* Olanna, Kainene and Chinyere. It is traditionally reserved for couples. No wonder Nwapa is quick to relegate feminist politics to the background and agree that the panacea for cultural reawakening can be achieved in "indigenous traditions such as democracy, tolerance, sharing and mutual's support". Ogunjipe-Leslie's (254-546) brand of feminism is more accommodating to African cultural heritage. Amongst other roles, she asserts that feminism does not promote oppositional rhetoric to men, is not out to echo Western sentiments, and is not averse to African cultural heritage. It is only a gender-friendly ideological signpost to promote 'womanhood' and prevent exploitation.

Exploitation, corruption and brutality are part and parcel of every capitalist society, hence is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Karl Marx's treatise on alienation in a capitalist society is premised on the assumption that exploitation, brutality and corruption are embedded in every class-structured society. Adichie's depiction of Nigeria as a corrupt society in *Half of a Yellow Sun* gives the impression that Biafra would be better off. Ironically, exploitation and brutality assume a more dangerous dimension in Biafra. While Biafran leaders live in affluence, majority of the people wallow in abject poverty. The fall of Nsukka leads to the scampering of the intellectuals for safety while Biafran leaders thrive in opulence and have the audacity to even marry other wives! Colonel Ojukwu is accused severally of punishing any voice of dissent with arrest, detention and execution. He is alleged to have promoted some junior officers at the detriment of more senior ones. While an intellectual like Okeoma is killed, Ojukwu escapes to Cote D'Ivoire unscathed!

Kainene thrives and blossoms for being a government contractor. Odenigbo loses his rented apartment to a tenant who offers to pay more, despite his heroic assignment at the Manpower Directorate Division. The rape incident is a statement on the exploitation meted out to the downtrodden, even in Biafra. Suffice it to say that exploitation, corruption, brutality, ethnicity and other social vices that make the Nigerian civil war inevitable have continued unabated till date. As the political leaders lord it over the masses without any form of decency, poverty, occasioned by inept leadership, soars! Minority agitation for equal representation in the body polity has never been so persistent, hence violence has become a pastime in minority enclave like the Niger Delta. Ethnic chauvinism has never abated and has given rise to sectional militia like Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), Yoruba Revolutionary Movement (YOREM), Arewa Youth Forum (AYF), Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and other self-determination groups agitating for regional autonomy. Religious fundamentalism spearheaded by the dreaded *Boko Haram* sect has led to bloody clashes and wanton destruction of lives and properties especially in the north. Looting of public treasury has never been done with greater impunity despite the huge resources allocated to the various anti-graft agencies. Therefore the war has achieved nothing other than to increase suspicion and generate tension in Nigeria. Its futility as a means of altering perceived injustice in the society is a matter of fact.

In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Nigerian army is regarded to as peopled by inhuman and wicked soldiers, as if these vices are not associated with warfare generally. In an attempt to protect and defend a nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty, soldiers are specially trained to kill, maim and destroy properties in time of war. Although Nigerian soldiers ask Odinchezo to urinate on Ojukwu's photograph, a development which makes fellow Igbo to hide any clue that can reveal their ancestry, yet we submit that such acts are not uncommon during warfare. For instance, every announcement of a successful onslaught against Nigerian troops by Biafran soldiers is greeted with jubilation and pumping of champagne. Even after surrendering to Nigeria, Biafran, like Olanna, is still glad to behold a destroyed Nigerian fleet on the way back to Nsukka and gladly say "we did this". It is however strange how Adichie wants Nigerian soldiers to be different! Although the humiliation meted out to Odenigbo, who is forced to carry wood for using Biafran number plate on his car, is inhuman and wicked, yet we make bold to say that nothing can be more barbaric and inhuman compared to the gang-raping of a hapless barmaid by fellow Biafran soldiers.

Though man's inhumanity to man has no ethnic colouration. It is essentially a reality in a class-conscious society.

In the same vein, if people of northern extraction are perceived to be hostile and bestial, particularly for the pogrom on the Igbo before the civil war, the character of Muhammed offers a credible alternative. The psychological trauma of being rejected for another man does not dissuade him from protecting and saving Olanna's life during the riot in Kano. During the war, he sees no big deal in sending letters, gifts and provisions to her. He readily comes to mind as a caring gentleman who does not repay evil with evil. His aristocratic upbringing does not affect his sense of judgement. He goes the extra mile to call for caution before and during the needless war.

Religious hypocrisy is also evident in *Half of a Yellow Sun*. Father Ambrose hides under the guise of providing religious support for the cause of Biafra to escape being conscripted into the army. Unfortunately for him, his carnal corruption is exposed as he is caught peeping at Olanna's nakedness. Also father Marcel is alleged to have impregnated some displaced women who seek succour in the church during the war! Ironically both Gowon and Ojukwu are of Christian faith.

The post military era in Nigeria has given rise to new crop of writers whose thematic engagements have shifted from serious socio-cultural themes of cultural nationalism during colonial rule and disillusionment at independent. From the advent of civil rule, new Nigerian writers are quick to dispense with literature imbued with serious political messages. The high hope associated with civilian dispensation unequivocally influences their thematic thrusts which now centre on individuality, promiscuity, sex, women and wine. Since their works are meant for audience who care no hoot about cultural revitalisation, they flood the literary arena with themes which negate the core African values cherished by their predecessors. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2009) adduce reasons for this development to include dearth of serious issues worthy of concerted socio-political appraisal in the society. In their opinion, recent writers "appear more interested in getting the audience to appreciate them for what they are artists, and not as social crusaders" (106). Consequent on this, they become "a little bit more indifferent, a little bit more conscious of artistic restraint, a little bit less angry and a little bit more detached from his/her subject matter" (112). Femi Osofisan (2009) and Charles Nnolim (2009) agree that new writers have taken a different route thematically. They link the shift in thematic preoccupation of these writers to the advent of civil rule and the aspiration associated with the demise of military adventurists. Osofisan argues that none of the earlier generation of Nigerian writers "dare venture, except in the deflected language

of metaphor and refringent echo, into the contentious area of carnal experience”⁽³⁹⁾. This is simply because sex is meant to be shrouded in the secrecy tradition demands. Instead of tenaciously holding on to the tradition held sacrosanct by earlier writers, he is at pain that contemporary writers have jettisoned the need for cultural nationalism and have embraced the ‘bug’ of Westernisation:

But nowadays, when we look at our new crop of writers...and note their seemingly unbridled surrender to the goddess of Eros, the question inevitably rises to confront us-has our present literature walked away then from that original purpose? ⁽⁴²⁾.

On his part, Charles Nnolim posits that these writers are misguided elements that prefer the satisfaction of the body to the purity of the soul:

The fleshy school of writers are those authors whose main characters are in dire pursuit of the flesh, writers for whom the excitements and satisfactions of the body are far more important than the sanctity of the soul; for whom the pleasures of the flesh are of more moment than the essence of the spirit ⁽²³²⁾.

While identifying writers like Toni Kan Onwordi, Jude Dibia, Chris Abani, Wale Okediran, Chimamanda Adichie, Chika Unigwe and others as ‘eminent’ representatives of contemporary Nigerian writings, Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010) assert that these writers have imbibed the tradition given impetus by the liberty enjoys by their Western counterparts:

The conscious imaging of sexuality has become such a dominant feature in Nigerian and African literature as a whole to the extent that it appears to have been elevated to the status of a narrative subject. For the contemporary Nigerian writer, sexuality has become more of a rule than a taboo; it has emerged from the provinces of the sacred and has now been banalized to degrees that new ‘blasphemous’ grounds are being broken in the artistic conversations involving it ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾.

Unarguably the place of Adichie is conspicuous amongst Nnolim’s “fleshy school of writers”. Her position is assured amongst 21st century Nigerian writers.

Nigerian literature, like its African counterpart, has always maintained and sustained its social rhetoric. Apparently due to the nation’s colonial and neo-colonial realities, it is unthinkable

for any writer to be apolitical with the economic and socio-political mess the nation has found herself in. In such clime, earlier writers like Achebe, Soyinka, Osofisan, Osundare, Iyayi, Ojaide and Saro-Wiwa dominate the literary landscape with works which elicit cultural nationalism, revolutionary fervour and environmental consciousness. However the 21st century Nigerian literature has occasioned new creative temperament. Instead of the nationalist, revolutionary and radical dispositions of established writers, recent writers adore craft-consciousness above socio-political commentaries. While identifying Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie as “a leading exponent of the ethos of new Nigeria writing and the most recognized young voice in Nigerian literature”, Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010:116) attest to the dominant role form plays over content in post military Nigerian literature.

With every sense of modesty, Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* can be said to provide a seminal representation of Nigerian civil war better than many creative works of similar historical persuasion. Its skillful documentation of a sordid but decisive era in Nigeria’s history and its craft-mindedness are legendary. Although hostile criticism continues to trail its vivid description of sex and sexuality, its prominent status as a ‘credible’ historical narrative is note-worthy. In the opinion of Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010:31), Adiche remains “one of the most remarkable stories of literary success the 21st century world has known” despite having written only “three major books” till date. They posit that no recent African writer deserves to be inducted into the revered “African writers’ hall of fame” more than her ⁽³⁴⁾. This position is anchored on the premise that her works “have sufficiently demythified and demystified the Nigerian literary canon, and its seemingly calcified socio-political underpinnings” ⁽⁴¹⁾. They go ahead to buttress their conclusion with undisguised references from the perspectives of three revered Nigerian critics of the earlier generation: Achebe, Nnolim and Obumsele. Achebe is quoted to have referred to Adichie in glowing terms:

We do not usually associate wisdom with beginners, but here is a new writer endowed with the gift of ancient story-tellers. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie knows what is at stake and what to do about it...Adichie came almost fully made ⁽⁴¹⁾.

On his part, Nnolim sees Adichie’s *Half of a Yellow Sun* as a text which “compels criticism” like every good work of art. In the same vein, Obumsele is of the view that Adichie may have reincarnated “from the chief historian of the royal court of Mata Karibu” because “she has the

slow, patients, assured skill of an old timer”. With ‘endorsements’ coming from these household names in African literary writing and criticism, no one is left in doubt that Adichie occupies a frontal position in recent African writings. No wonder Onukaogu and Onyerionwu (2010:96) liken the “informative quality” of her *Half of a Yellow Sun* on Nigerian civil war only to Homer’s classic, *Illiad and Odyssey*.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 Conclusion

One of the devastating consequences of the World War II is the loss of belief in the ability of science to avert socio-political misfortune in the world. The rather ignominious role for which science was employed for mass destruction foregrounds the conclusion that it was neither capable of guaranteeing and sustaining order in the world, nor enough to promote social harmony. This amounts to a sad commentary for the proponents of the Enlightenment as it adversely affects their philosophical postulation on the so-called age of reason. It overtly justifies the need for a postmodern alternative.

Also, technological wherewithal, which is associated with science in the electronic age, negatively ‘battered’ non-Western cultures. The advent of the Internet and cable satellites promotes unprecedented interconnectivity between diverse cultural groups. In no time, a ‘borderless’ world ensued where heterogeneous cultures cohabit. In this ‘unholy’ relationship, Western culture is preeminent since the West possesses advanced technology. At the peril of non-Western societies, advanced technological enablement invariably translates to outright control of information, attitude, fashion and ideals by the West. Improved communication revolution propels her to infiltrate the world with Western norms and culture effortlessly. This ‘incursion’ has untoward consequences for non-Western writings because the Western philosophical worldview is not sufficient for any credible appraisal of non-Western literature.

Expectedly, a barrage of criticism or outright repudiation becomes the lot of the Enlightenment era. Its promise of progress and development has been discredited. It suffers serious setback with the atrocities perpetrated during socialist regimes. The eventual end of the ‘Cold War’ further decimates its political philosophy. Also, its recourse to the ‘myth’ of science to replace Victorian myth, its totalitarian disposition, its Western lining, and its subjectivity in employing state ideology to achieve socio-political ends are all evidences of its limitations. Without doubt, a new dawn of ‘liberation,’ when a reasoned order for the interpretation of social development is no longer fancied, has become a *fait accompli*. The postmodern era is here with us.

Postmodern thinkers assert the credibility of their philosophical sophistry with so many assumptions aimed at discrediting the modern epoch. If Josef Stalin, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler are leaders associated with the age of Enlightenment, anti-Enlightenment critics have no choice other than to discountenance modern era for its inability to fulfill the high expectation and

the 'exaggerated' promises it advances in the society. They doubt its neutrality in the sustenance of the authority of the state in the face of injustice and inequality. They accuse modern thinkers of replacing Victorian myth with the 'myth' of science. They argue that Western totalitarian philosophy has largely undermined a relativist, non-Western interpretation of social processes. They do not see how development can be advanced and measured only on modernist terms and criteria. They observe a contradiction in modernist thinking which promises freedom and justice on one hand, only to sustain capitalist oppression and inequality on the other. They conclude that the failure of marxism to achieve utopia invariably translates to the global disillusionment which characterised the post 'Cold War' period. However, they fail to realise that the core tenet of the Enlightenment, particularly its disposition towards the attainment of a free, egalitarian society, is clearly at variance with the dictatorial posture of Josef Stalin, Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. In fact, biological theories have shown that irrespective of racial differences, there is no significant difference in the mental make-up of man. Also, the limitations of science do not imply that it is no longer a virile articulator of human emancipation. Besides, public or personal prejudice is not permitted in scientific postulations else science loses its value neutrality. In fact, the state merely exercises her authority for national development in trust for the citizens who cannot imagine drifting back to the Hobbesian state of nature. Similarly, the oppression and alienation in the capitalist societies notwithstanding, improved technology, mass production of goods and services at a relatively low cost, division of labour, and effective and efficient allocation of resources are associated with free-market capitalist economic order. Also, capitalism has never claimed to be without limitations. Therefore, we aver that the shortcomings of the Enlightenment are not enough to sound its death knell and signal the 'triumph' of an experimental, 'crisis-free' postmodern alternative.

Arguably, post-colonial African writings have been largely influenced by colonial and neo-colonial 'affronts' which have 'engulfed' the contemporary African mind. Euro-American critics are committed to the wholesale imposition of Western standpoint which they perceive to be the apposite benchmark to critique literature regardless of cultural specificities. In their own wisdom, they 'coined' the world universal and gave it a self-serving interpretation to suit their whim and caprice. In other words, any worthwhile venture which does not meet this 'parochial' consideration is unworthy of scholarly inquiry. The consequence of the wholesale transfer of foreign culture into another without a modicum of respect for non-Western cultural peculiarities is

seen in the outward denigration of African culture. African culture, and invariably African literature, is classified as 'others' hence unworthy of any critical inquiry, unlike its 'totalising' Western counterpart!

The hybrid nature of African literature is occasioned by the incidences of slave trade and colonialism. This peculiarity produces a blend of traditional ancestral culture and West-induced prose tradition. It becomes a matter of time before Western culture begins to erode its African counterpart. Western postmodern ideals invariably influence Nigerian literary sensibilities. However, against the backdrop of the fact that cultural idiosyncrasies differ, a Western theory of knowledge cannot be adequate to provide the requisite epistemological template for reading the poetics of Nigerian literature. Even if the Enlightenment epoch is accused of betraying a 'vain' hope of utopia, the postmodern alternative does not fare better. The inadequacy of postmodern theoretical assumptions in the interpretation of non-Western literature has been stressed. Therefore, a "transitional" alternative, from where an African theory of literary interpretation would evolve, becomes inevitable. The 'emerging' theory is thus expected to give rise to functional use of literature for cultural emancipation and, invariably, national development, particularly in Africa.

Despite the 'inadmissibility' of postmodern tendencies in African literary discourse, no one can deny their pervasiveness in recent Nigerian writings. This is clearly evident in the literary *oeuvre* of our selected contemporary Nigerian novelists. As postmodern ideals find their way into the critical stance of Nigerian critics, Western philosophical sentiment influenced Nigerian creative writers unequivocally. However, the essential features of postmodern culture have negative implications for non-Western societies, particularly the African society in dire need of development. The manner it disavows truth claim and quest for knowledge can only promote pessimism and undermine research effort. Its acceptance of the transitory nature of the world is a covert knowledge claim. Its Western lining makes a case for the sustenance of Western hegemonic authority. Its "incredulity towards metanarratives" has been discredited with the allegiance to national and religious sentiments in Africa and the Middle East. Its 'antifoundational', 'antirepresentational' rhetoric is inimical to the feminist quest for liberation, justice and equity. Its insensitive posture of denying the reality of the Gulf War has been called "irresponsible sophistry". Its abstract standard for sustaining objectivity is only a wild goose chase. Its penchant for experimentation gives room for irrationality. Its preference for fragmented, disjointed narration

merely encourages nihilism and social disharmony. Its disclaimer of the marxian's utopia in the face of oppression in a class structured society is more or less a tacit connivance with the status quo. Its deconstructive rhetoric on the "Death of the Author" without a corresponding reverence for the readers leaves much to be desired for hermeneutic philosophy. Its rebuttal of the social relevance of literature is antithetical to African literary discourse which places high premium on the society for literary interpretation. Its so-called 'universal' appeal but Western lining exposes its limitation in articulating development for non-Western society. It also underscores its inherent weakness as a reliable epistemological model. To this end, it is not in consonance with the developmental yearnings and aspirations of African scholars who intend to use literature for social rejuvenation. Therefore, the need to checkmate abysmal application of postmodern tendencies in the literary *oeuvres* of our selected Nigerian novelists makes the quest for a development-conscious indigenous alternative theory for literary interpretation necessary.

Ironically, some post-colonial African scholars are comfortable with the implantation of Western critical polemic into African consciousness. They, therefore, continue to pay lip service to the need to denounce Africa's overdependence on Western canon. They erroneously believe that 'alien' standards can provide the requisite critical template to investigate African society! In fact, majority of them imbibed European worldview uncritically as the 'gospel' truth, apparently to gain 'undue advantage' from Western publishing authority. However, even if it is indisputable that the West provided the launch-pad for prose writing, over-reliance on Western canon has the tendency to encumber African history and thought system from giving rise to an indigenous African theory devoid of Western sentiment. Thus, as a counter theoretical discourse, post-colonial African scholars are committed to an outright renunciation of Western theoretical standpoint. An African-centred alternative, in line with Afrocentric philosophical tradition, is thus required.

The quest for an African theory of literary interpretation should lead African scholars in the direction of African culture and tradition. Although colonial 'intrusion' has encouraged diverse cultural experiences in Africa, her "relative cultural homogeneity" has positioned her as a reliable repertoire of the African worldview. Also, the fact that indigenous African societies are peopled by "culturally diverse" groups of people, who are heterogeneous in languages, economies, customs, myths and legends, does not becloud the quest for "common denominators in the core African values" which are ensconced in African worldview. This worldview is encapsulated in the traditional African system of thought and it is 'distilled' from Africa's philosophy, history,

religion, oral tradition, myth, legend, folktales, riddles, proverbs and cosmogony. A thorough and consistent investigation of the basic assumptions of her worldview would reveal a reliable African epistemology which researchers can advance in the quest for an African-specific theory for global consumption vis-a-vis the reconstruction of knowledge. A fuller understanding of African epistemology would evidently show the contradiction in equating it with Western standpoint.

Therefore, since only an African theory can articulate a credible interpretation of African texts, postmodern sophistry should be confined to the trash can of history, a place where it rightly belongs. Its philosophical assumptions should never be permitted further in-road into African literary discourse. Once this is achieved, it becomes a matter of time before Nigerian novelists begin to churn out works which promote African values, moral uprightness, heroic deeds, patriotism, dignity of labour, and selfless service to mankind. Charging Nigerian writers to discard the esoteric, D.B. Amos (2010) advises them to begin to produce works which are geared towards national rebirth and social rejuvenation else they become irrelevant in the scheme of things in the society:

It is therefore, pertinent for the contemporary Nigerian writer like his African counterparts to possess at all times, the highest degree of national consciousness and patriotism. For he cannot as maintained by Nnolim, be a hypocrite chasing with the hounds and at the same time running with the deer (152).

If this can be achieved, the death knell of postmodernism, as well as other Western theoretical postulations, would have been sounded, at least in African critical discourse.

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