CHAPTER ONE:
GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The functionality of the theatre towards the attainment of a peaceful and prosperous democratic society and a political environment congruous to national development cannot be overemphasised; so also, the relationship between theatre and politics. Therefore, this study examines the politics of space in the selected drama and theatre of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu. The study considers the important need to employ the instrumentality of art to press for concrete socio-political changes that can sustain and improve the nation's democratic experiment. In this study, politics of space denotes the competitive "divisive" activities that surround the search for political power, the attainment of political power, the use to which political power is put, the retention of power and the response to power.

Adeniyi (1993, p. v) has stressed the fact that, "studies by theatre historians such as Joel Adedeji, Wole Soyinka, Michael Echeruo and their kindred spirits in the academia reveal that the development of theatre has always followed the contours of evolution of our political systems". This, perhaps, accounts for why Obafemi (2008, p. 113) notes that politics and theatre derive from the same source; just as Gbilekaa (2016, p. 15) also submits that "in Africa, there has been a symbiotic relationship between writers and politics". Most of what the artist reflects or refracts are said to be struggles or conflicts for space, and in general, art is the symbolic expression of the contest for power, and theatre the most expressive of art as politics (Adeniyi, 1993, p. iv).

Political theorists and scholars, such as Kui (1972) and Joseph (2014) have defined politics from different perspectives. For example, Kui (1972, p. 415) holds the view that politics is the competitive divisive activities surrounding the search for power. Joseph argues (2014, p. 1) that it is "fundamentally about the struggle over scarce resources". This seems to concur with Lasswell's (as cited in Hanley, 2010, para. 2) position that politics is all about "who gets what, when, and how". Words like competitive, power, struggle, and divisive, among others, in these

definitions are pointers to the possible volatile and sly nature of politics and the political space, with possible profound implications for any nation. The description of politics by the three is interwoven and not too different from our perception of politics as access to power provides access to resources. Therefore, the struggle for power is ultimately a struggle for resources.

In a democracy, however, argument still exists on the interests that the political parties ought to serve. This becomes important, particularly with African countries, whose democracies are still fledgling. While it is generally agreed that attainment of power is central to the political parties, Hawksworth and Kogan (2002, p. 394) note that there is no consensus yet about the definition of political parties, especially from the angle of the various interests they serve. These interests are mainly divided into two - "public interest" or "private gain." These two, as they note, often polarise the position of scholars of politics. For instance, Schattschneider (as cited in Olaniyi 2006, p. 96) posits that "the essence of party is the urge to gain and keep power."

The age-long argument about the relevance of arts, particularly the concern of theatre with politics is equally attested to by Boal (1979, p. vii), who notes that "the argument about the relations between theatre and politics is as old as theatre and … as politics". Two notable schools (extrinsic and intrinsic theorists) of thought advance clear-cut positions, each justifying its argument. Munro and Scruton (2016, para. 59) note that the extrinsic theorists, such as Aristotle, Humes, Burke, and Coleridge argue that art should educate, correct, and instruct, because it has "the power to correct and corrupt our emotions".

The extrinsic theorists regard art and the appreciation of art "as means to some recognised moral good" (Munro and Scruton, 2014, para. 102). On the contrary, Munro and Scruton (2014, para. 102) also note that the intrinsic theorists like Pater, Wilde, Groce and Collingwood, insist that "art is valuable not instrumentally but as ends in themselves". By this, they argue for the autonomy of art. Art on one hand, as expatiated further by Boal (1979, p. vii), is affirmed to be pure contemplation, and on the other hand, it is considered to present always a vision of the world in transformation, a situation that actually accounts for its being political "in so far as it shows the

means of carrying out that transformation or delaying it". Even within the rank of the extrinsic theorists of the value of art there is polarity. For instance, Plato believes that poetry (art) could have a negative extrinsic value within the political space. According to Gbilekaa (1997, p. 1), Plato submits that the poet (the artist) should be expelled from The Ideal Republic because poetry only makes sense when it exalts the figures and deeds that should serve as examples; "theatre imitates the things of the world, but the world is no more than an imitation of ideas – thus theatre comes to be an imitation of an imitation".

` Poets like Aristophanes and Strabo, however, feel that poetry is desirable and so "the dramatist should not only offer pleasure but should besides that, be a teacher of morality and political adviser" (as cited in Boal, 1979, p. vii). The politician and the dramatist have many things in common. Created by the same reality of the world, they both trade in words, and in the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2004, p. 71), their activity and concern centre on "human relationships. Imaginative literature … deals with human relationships and attempts to influence a people's consciousness and politics … deals with and is about operation of power and relationship of power in society". This implies that the way power is organised in a society can affect the theatre as the product of the writer becomes a reflection of the society, "its economic structure, its class formation, its conflicts and contradictions; its political and cultural struggles; its structure of value" (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2004, p. 72). In post-colonial Nigeria, the way power is organised, right from independence to date, and the relationship of power, has thrown up serious political issues with dire political and socio-economic consequences such as accusation of marginalisation, resource control, restructuring, power sharing formula or contention over federalism, and of recent gender politics, and all these could not be ignored by the dramatists.

In the third wave of democratisation of post-independence Africa, pro-democracy activities hit African nations in the 1990s, sweeping away authoritarian regimes and one-party system that had dominated African political space since independence (El-Khawas, 2001, p. 85). Nigeria is not an exception in this tidal wave. Previous attempts at democratic rule had twice been

aborted by the military, always due to allegation of one form of unpatriotic attitude, or the other, against the political class. The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, in which M.K.O. Abiola was widely acclaimed to have won, offers an egregious example. By 1999, a democratic government had been put in place with the election of General Olusegun Obasanjo (rtd.) as the new President of the nation. This done, the nation finds herself in what Bhabha (1994, p. 1) calls "the moment of transit, where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" within the political space.

Hitherto, the nation had been ruled under the noose of authoritarian military regimes for close to sixteen uninterrupted years. During those years, citizens were held coercively under an atmosphere that limited freedom and thus free expression of difference and identity restricted. Having terminated the nation's second attempt at democratic system of governance on 31st December, 1983, and that military government toppled by another junta two years later, military dictatorship soon became repugnant to the civil society. Consequently, the civil society resumed agitation for democratisation few years after, since it considered the military regimes illegitimate. This forced the hand of the military to reluctantly begin an inconclusive Third Republic which some people believed was contrived to fail.

Scholarly activities in form of playwriting, drama and theatre criticism and in the area of theatrical productions had attempted at different times, between 1960 and 1998, to mediate the malaise identified with political practice (military or civilian). Efforts in this area produced historic plays like *A Dance of the Forests* (1960), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971), *Kongi's Harvest* (1977) and *A Play of Giants* (1984) all by Wole Soyinka, *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* (1977) by Ola Rotimi, *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980), *Another Raft* and *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (2003) by Femi Osofisan, to mention just a few. These creative efforts have been given various appellations such as "animist metaphysics theatre" (Obafemi, 2009, p. 67-68) theatre of "alternative tradition" (Amuta, 1989, p. 57; Osofisan, as cited in Awodiya,

1993, p. 21), "radical theatre" (Gbilekaa, 1997, p. 73), and other forms, most especially because of the discernible character of their play-texts.

The advent of democracy since 1999 to date has, however, posed a more profound challenge to Nigerian dramatists, because of the unique topography of power offered by a democratic system of government, especially the presidential system that is usually characterised by a complex power relation. This study, therefore, examines the politics of space as encapsulated in selected postcolonial plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu. The plays are *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* (2001), *Sweet Revenge* (2004), *More than Dancing* (2006) and *Idia, the Warrior queen of Benin* (2008), by Salami-Agunloye, and *Ata Igala the great* (2008), *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* (2013), *Another Odolu Kingdom* (2016) and *Great Odolu Kingdom (2018)* by Idegu.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Arguably, political issues seem to command more attention from creative writers and critics than any other thematic concern in the African theatre. This is probably because man's manipulation of his environment, including all the facets of production, unavoidably requires decisions and actions that are often political. The struggle for power and its appurtenances in post-independence Nigeria has significantly dictated its postcolonial history to date. Regrettably, however, the atrocious political strategies employed in the process of politicking have created sordid quagmires that constitute unmitigated obstacles in the nation's drive for a meaningful and holistic national development.

In Nigeria, theatre scholars have confronted these postcolonial problems with the production of different creative works. They include playwrights like Wole Soyinka, John Clark-Bekederemo, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola and so on, who represent the first generation of Nigerian dramatists and whose works are seen as bourgeois, tragic and esoteric. However, the second generation of Nigerian dramatists such as Femi Osofisan, Tunde Fatunde, Olu Obafemi, Bode Sowande, Tess Onwueme and a few others pander to the historical materialism or social-realism

philosophy in their dramatic oeuvre and also demand radical change to societal problems. That is to say, critics believe that this group is more revolutionary than the first generation of Nigerian dramatists, because they demand a more radical change to societal problems than do the earlier dramatists

It is important to note that the political atmosphere of post-colonial Nigeria has been unstable, oppressive, exploitative and repressive. This has been due, largely, to two significant factors - the long years of military rule and the incessant failed attempts at democratisation (1960-1966, 1979-1983 and 1990-1993). With the present democracy, the fear of failure of the political process, due to this political highhandedness, is still palpable. This sentiment has been expressed and demonstrated by different theatre practitioners in scholarly publications. For instance, the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) has, from time to time, dedicated some of its annual conferences and consequently some editions of its publications to conversations that are critical of the political dystopia of Nigeria. In particular, two of these publications are *Theatre and Politics in Nigeria* (1993) and *Theatre and Democracy in Nigeria* (2002). The former, edited by Jide Malomo and Saint Gbilekaa was meant to safeguard the third Republic, but unfortunately, the objective was not achieved. The latter, edited by Ahmed Yerima and Ayo Akinwale, on the other hand, was a repeat attempt to tackle the vices that pose threat to the present fledgling democracy. Notwithstanding, the "Augean's stable" (in this case, Nigeria's political space and practice) still remains uncleansed and democracy still threatened.

Since the post and neo-colonial realities which threaten our democratic struggle are yet to be eliminated, especially going by the atrocious and divisive manner the politicians go about politicking in Nigeria in the current political dispensation (the Fourth Republic), we considered it important to research into what the problems are and proffer possible remedial strategies as our modest contributions to enhancing Nigeria's political stability through the literary lens of the selected playwrights.

1.3 Research Questions

This study is hinged on the critical investigation of certain research questions which are too significant to be ignored. As a result, it is needful to contextualise these questions within the praxis of our analysis in order to define the trajectories of this research. Therefore, the following were the research questions of this study:

(i.) What are the problems of the post-colonial Nigeria, in relation to the politics of space (as portrayed in the selected play-texts)?

(ii.) What is the context of politics of space in Nigeria's post-colonial theatre?

(iii.) What are the differences in the dramatic representation of politics of space in the military and the democratic dispensations?

(iv.) What are the dramatic concerns of the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu?

(v.) What is the nature of theatrical intersections of postcolonialism in the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu?

(vi.) What are the relevant alternatives, in relation to good governance and democracy, in the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study covers the mapping of politics of space in drama within the mileage of Nigeria's new democracy (1999 to date). These are problems that characterise political competitions that have influenced drama to respond, in some particular ways, within this period and thus inscribing on drama, a peculiar outlook or a combination of identifiable nuances that are peculiar to this period. In doing this, selected works of two Nigerian dramatists, namely, Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu, serve as paradigms. They are *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* (2001), *Sweet Revenge* (2004), *More than Dancing* (2006), and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* (2008) by Salami-Agunloye, and *Ata Igala the Great* (2008), *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*

(2013) *Another Odolu Kingdom* (2015) and *Great Odolu Kingdom* (2018) by Idegu. This is not without giving a cursory look at other works by these dramatists and relevant works of other dramatists.

Our choice of the two playwrights is informed by a number of factors of which three stand out. One, the two playwrights' works have profound political connotations. Two, one has enunciated her political message clearly from the feminist's perspective while the other comes from the masculine – two distinct dimensions of the political space. Lastly, Idegu's play, *Atah Igala, the Great* and Salami's *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* provides us with the colonial background that bred the postcolonial problems associated with politics of the political space.

As we examine these creative works, our areas of interest is to look at the dramatic elements that can, individually or in combination with others, explicate politics of the political space, particularly power struggle, its retention, its use, the resistance against it and its impact on the society in which it is exercised. In the same way, the postcolonial temperament to their works is also a subject of interest to this study. The corollary is to suggest possible solutions to issues thrown up by the works. Therefore, literary elements like theme, characterisation, language, plot, form, genre and dramatic devices that enhance the political message(s) of the plays are analysed. However, the contributions of other scholars – critics, dramatists, poets, novelists, artists (fine and applied), and other producers of arts – published within this same period towards a better democratic Nigeria are also examined as illustrative examples.

1.5 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyse the works of the two playwrights (Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu) as political texts within the politics of space. Thus, the objectives of the study were to:

(i.) identify the problems of the post-colonial Nigeria, in relation to the politics of space;

(ii.) examine the context of the politics of space in Nigeria's post-colonial theatre;

(iii.) investigate the dramatic representation of politics of space in the military era and the democratic dispensations;

(iv.) analyse the dramatic concerns of the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu;

(v.) assess the nature of theatrical intersections of postcolonialism in the selected play-texts; and

(vi.) evaluate the relevant alternatives, in relation to good governance and democracy, in the play-texts of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in a number of ways. First, it is a common practice for theatre researchers to study popular and established playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, John Clark-Bekederemo, Ola Rotimi, and Zulu Sofola, who are considered Nigeria's first-generation dramatists. The commonly held notion about these playwrights is that numerous studies and scholarly works have been done on their works. Examples of such work are Ashaolu (1979), Abati (1990), Coker (1991), Obafemi (1996), Obafemi and Yerima (2004), Musa (2007) and Daniel (2015). Such works have contributed to making these first-generation dramatists popular, hence the need for budding researchers to look elsewhere. Similarly, the second-generation dramatists such as Femi Osofisan, Olu Obafemi, Bode Sowande, Tunde Fatunde, and others in their group can also be said to have enjoyed fairly good attention from researchers. Studies and publications such as Gbilekaa (1997), Awodiya (1995) and Abubakar (2006) bear testimony to this.

However, the third-generation dramatists like Irene Salami-Agunloye, Emmy Unuja Idegu, and many others alike, though have produced sizeable number of creative works that speak well to the problems of their society, their works still remain relatively ignored by literary critics. Our choice of the two playwrights for this study is a likely contribution, we hope, not just to

further the exposure (popularisation of their dramatic cannons and their associated revolutionary prowess) of this new generation of playwrights, but also to further open up new insights that can be explored in their works. By doing this, the body of knowledge in this art of mimesis is further enlarged. This may also help us to identify the characteristics of the Nigerian drama in this democratic dispensation.

Apart from that, the study is significant because, while a handful of study has been done on Salami-Agunloye, they are majorly focused on her as a feminist playwright. However, we are doing a re-examination of this dramatist as a political, creative artist in this study; a similar thing we are doing with Idegu's works. The different positions that we are exploring, are to open up new perspectives to reading and interpreting the works of these playwrights both in theory and practice of the African drama.

In addition, the study analyses the topography of power, dissecting its power relation, thus delineating its multi-currents manifestation of political occurrences in the various forms in which they play out globally and nationally. This approach is meant to enhance a better understanding of the political space and make it more accessible to dramatists, particularly those who operate within the thematic constructs of politics and related interests.

Our concept of space also expands beyond the binary of the tangible and semiotics to the realm of space as a metaphor, a stand-in for political privilege. This is significant as we conceptualise this in the Nigerian context, for it explains the prebendal (client-patron relationship) nature of the nation's politics and at the same time provides the locus for the various theatricalities characteristic of the political space, which constitute potent materials for drama, of which Reilly and Phillips (1998, p. 41) affirm that, "the playwright creates drama out of the dramatic events of our day-to-day living ... not part of the dull stuff ... the dull stuff does not lend itself to drama; the non-dull stuff does".

In all this, the study is significant to scholarship generally, but particularly to theatre scholarship, as, we hope, it will in its own modest manner add to knowledge in this area. Such

areas could include theory and criticism, playwriting, directing, acting and critical thinking. The government and the society at large could also benefit from this work.

1.7 Research Methods

The content analysis and comparative research methods are adopted for this study. These are also completmented with the tool of interview. The content analysis falls within the realm of textual interpretation and it allows us to examine our chosen plays, give them necessary interpretations as best as we can and at the same time, mutate such interpretations towards the prevailing socio-political atmosphere and their consequent group or national exigencies that, in our view, could enhance peace and national development. The selection of these two dramatists, among the numerous others in Nigeria, is purposive and carefully done, after considering many other dramatists. It is because their plays are highly political and lend themselves well to critical analysis within the realm of politics. While doing this, however, the works of other playwrights are also given necessary attention in order to provide a general feel of the prevailing direction of literary drama in Nigeria within the period covered by this study.

The comparative method affords us the opportunity to appraise the differences and similarities between the positions of our chosen playwrights - Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu – in their portrayal of the politics of space in Nigeria. This helps us to identify the areas in which they are in tandem and those in which they are not. All these, put together, help us to arrive at necessary conclusions in this study.

The tool of interview was instrumental to our access to information that were not readily available in the play-texts but which are of tremendous benefit to us in our attempt to understand the plays. This is because some of the revelations made by the playwrights assisted in shedding light on the circumstances and the world that produced some of the plays.

Both primary and secondary sources of information are employed in this study. Our primary sources are Salami-Agunloye's four published play-texts and Idegu's five that have been chosen for examination. The secondary sources include studies of early researchers and scholars

who have written, either directly or otherwise, on politics and power struggle in postcolonial Nigeria. These include published works like books, journals, monographs and proceedings; unpublished works such as theses and dissertations; speeches delivered at public forums; internet reference materials; mass media, such as newspapers, magazines and other relevant materials.

1.8 Limitations of the Research

Every research work comes with its limitations, which could be in diverse forms. For us, the challenges are two-fold. Scarcity of materials to do the research posed some challenges, especially in the aspect of space theory, which we intend to subject to some interrogation vis-a-vis theories of power with a view to providing a conceptual framework for this study. However, a lot of surfing of the internet, combing the library and consulting some experts attenuated this problem. Also, we experienced a lot of strains in getting the attention of one of our playwrights, precisely Irene Salami-Agunloye, for an interview. For three years we were on her trail without success, only to learn later that she had been out of the country for some academic programmes. We, however, succeeded in getting the interview when she returned. The interview and that of Emmy Unuja Idegu were very useful as they have helped to strengthen our findings in this study because they provided good insights into some of the ideologies and artistic visions that produced the works of the two playwrights.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms and Concepts

The terms and concepts relevant to this study include politics, space, postcolonial, democracy, power, political theatre, and political theatricality. Defining them is indeed useful for proper understanding of their main themes and tendencies.

Politics

In this study, politics is regarded as the conflicting struggle for power and its appurtenances between and among interest groups or individuals; and the practice of state and government functions. We agree that theatre always attempts to project an interest against another at any particular time, which is also a political action. Notwithstanding, taking every theatre as a

lump in political terms will be unmanageable for our purpose in this study. Therefore, our chosen definition affords us the opportunity to combine the two periods – pre-attainment of power (period of struggle for power) and post-attainment of power (use of power) - as may be necessary to examine the political activities of a postcolonial state like Nigeria.

Space

Space as a phenomenon has never ceased to engage attention, competing as it were with time. As there are physical and cartographic spaces such as arenas and structures so also are geographical spaces in form of land mass. However, our concept of space in this study is not only representational but also metaphoric. We use space here to represent the combination of pockets and nuances of power, power structures and superstructures that constitute the environment within which, and for which the political actors ply their "trade" of politicking. This provides us a window into the political environment of Nigeria, and forms part of the basis for interrogating the Nigerian drama of the present democratic dispensation, particularly through the prisms of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu's works. Space here is construed as consisting of political positions and powers that are open to political actors for competitive activities within the national grid. These positions and power, and the privileges (resources) accruing from them may not necessarily be elective, they may also be appointed ones; sometimes they may even be appropriated.

Post-colonial

Post-colonial, as used in this study, looks at the cultural productions of Nigeria as reflected in the literary works of the nation's dramatists in the historical period subsequent to colonisation. It is apt to note that though a lot of these narratives employ indigenous source materials, many times they do so with reflections of Western ideologies and culture. Notwithstanding the influence of the dominant centre, however, noticeable threads of how these issues are mapped both thematically and in plot-treatment show that the postcolonial literatures are also counter-hegemonic. All this, therefore, brings to the front burner certain postcolonial

theories or concepts such as hegemony, ambivalence, hybridity, subalternism, and Empire/Metropolis binary, among others in this study.

Democracy

We define democracy as a rule by the majority, attained through free, fair and competitive election in which all eligible and willing citizens are given the freedom to vote for any candidate(s) of their choice. Beyond this, their votes are allowed to count and their rights protected without any fear or favour. To us, any political arrangement that does not guarantee the rights of the citizens signifies a partial democracy, because of the restrictions, or better still infringements. Therefore, democracy must be a government of the people by the people and for the people.

Garrison democracy

By garrison democracy, we refer to a type of democracy that is characterised by some form of force or coercion, even if it is subtle force. It is a democracy in which those who possess power use it illegally or lawlessly against those who do not, as if the nation is a lawless state. It is a nation where state institutions are abused with impunity.

Agency

This is a reference to a political system that empowers post-colonial subjects to take action to defend themselves or to achieve set goals and objectives.

Power and Political power

Our notion of power is the ability to participate in decisions, and political power as the ability to produce intended effects on other people. These intended effects, as we suppose, are either to “build up” or “pull down” or even sometimes bring about the maintenance of the status quo. In this circumstance, the direction in which the person/group involved activates the power reflects his/her/their composite humanity or otherwise. The word “build up” and “pull down” as used here are flexible as they have application in many of the theories of power which means it can be coercive, subtle, can be an influence, intimidation, manipulation and variegated others.

Political Drama and Theatre

In this study, we define political theatre as drama/theatre/any performing art which emphasises a political issue or issues in its theme or plot. It could also be a drama or theatre that explores themes that are more universal and central to society itself, especially when that society defines itself as politically conscious.

Political Theatricality

By political theatricality, we mean the spectacular (dramatic) things that happen amongst the politicians in their political outings (legislative sessions, party conventions, nocturnal meetings of different shades between and among party stalwarts etc). Examples include exchange of offensive, damaging, and unprintable words, exchange of blows, use of harmful weapons against one another, intense struggle over the mace, brandish of diabolical objects like charms or even ridiculous dancing, particularly when there are sharp disagreements over issues that they consider sensitive to their varied interests. All of these lend themselves well to drama.

Having provided the general introduction and necessary background to the study in this chapter, the next chapter contains the review of literatures that are relevant to politics, power, and drama/theatre, especially in Nigeria.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO:
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section is a review of relevant literatures that are connected with politics and politics-related matters that have to do with contestation in the political space, power, and the interplay of these with the development of Nigerian drama. It, however, commences with a conceptualisation of what politics of space is and how this is synonymous with the socio-political relations within the space of politics. It also reviews literatures that relate to postcolonial discourse and the relevance of same to the trajectory and development efforts of post-colonial Nigeria. The interplay of these two bodies of literatures is expected to provide us with the necessary illumination that will enable us to speak to the phenomena of politics of space in the works of our chosen playwrights – Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu in the chapters that are subsequent to this.

2.2 A Conceptual Framework on Politics of Space

Space as a phenomenon, and the politics surrounding it, has been a subject of increased debate in recent times. Massey (1994, pp. 65-84), writing about the politics associated with space and time, attempts an argument in favour of space which she believes has been relegated to the background for long as a phenomenon devoid of politics, at the expense of time. According to her, space as a phenomenon has never ceased to engage attention, competing as it were with time.

The scholarly works of the French Marxist Philosopher, Henry Lefebvre, who Elden (2007, p. 102), notes "was always interested in the relationship between Hegel and Marx and thus in idealism and historical materialism", has also provoked other scholarly and critical works that serve as window into understanding the concept of politics and its spatiality. However, Elden (2007, p.102), insists that, "Lefebvre's works can also provide the political theorist with a useful set of conceptual tools for mapping the spatiality of politics and history, rather than simply explaining the politics and history of space." By this, Eden means that Lefebvre's works, some of which attempt the explication of the construction and lived experience of social space, can provide the instruments

that can be useful in the formulation of political theories. While we acknowledge that this study does not directly reside in politics, which belongs to the social sciences, it is nonetheless interdisciplinary, being a study in political theatre. But, as Achebe, cited in Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2004, p. 74), rightly notes, the creative writer, who wants to be relevant in his society, cannot avoid the political issues of his time. Therefore, Lefebvre's works serve some useful purpose that can help us to conceptualise the politics of space in this study.

Lefebvre (2000), writing on the production of space, suggested that until recently one view of space dominated the academic discourse. According to Elden (2007, p. 109), this was the view of space "based on the division established by Descartes (1967) between *res cognitans and res extensa,* … Space was formulated on the basis of extension, thought of in terms of coordinates, lines and planes, as Euclidean geometry". Immanuel Kant, as Elden (2007, p. 109), further explicates, complicates the picture further, by conceiving of space and time as "forms of sensibility, structuring all experience".

Laclau, as cited in Massey (1994, p. 66), contends that "Politics and space are antinomic terms. Politics only exists insofar as the spacial eludes us." Laclau, here, however, is speaking about geographic/geometric space. Even at that, Massey (1994, p. 67-69), an apostle of space as the realm of politics or the political, expresses her disappointment at such claim as she enthuses, "this was clearly provocative. There are a number of ways in which, it seems … this manner of characterising space and the realm of the spacial is questionable." Therefore, Lefebvre (2000) insists, among others, on the importance of considering not only what might be called "the geometry" of space but also its lived practices and the symbolic meaning and significance of particular spaces and specialisations (as cited in Massey, 1994, p. 67). In the same vein, Tsaaior (2011, p. 26), submits that "space is often understood in physical, geographic and cartographic terms, but it is not limited to it". To him, it also manifests in abstraction such as ideology and language, among others.

Lefebvre (1991, p. 26) posits that "space has taken on, within the present mode of production, within society as it actually is, a sort of reality of its own", farther from Descartes' position. According to him, any already produced space can be decoded, can be read. Such space implies a process of signification. As he further submits:

> Schematically speaking, each society offers up its own peculiar space, as it were, as an 'object' for analysis and overall theoretical explication. I say each society, but it would be more accurate to say each mode of production, along with its specific relations of production ((Lefebvre, 1991, pp. 17, 26),

This applies also to the political space which forms the fulcrum of our discourse in this study. We hold that politics is structurally part of a society. Actually, Marx (1977), as cited in Molyneux (2013, p. 66), refers to it, along with others like art, philosophy, religion and many more as part of the superstructure of a society **(**Marx, in theorising history or what is widely known as historical materialism identified forces and relations of production as constituting the economic base of the society while other human endeavours such as politics, religion, art, philosophy and so on are the superstructure and that their development depends on and is conditioned by the development of the base).

Arguably, politics could also, largely, be a mode of production, because the professional politicians see politics as their occupation, and politics has produced its own space - the political space - with all its lived activities, which are both socially and politically constructed. It can be argued, therefore, that these lived activities, which Lefebvre refers to as "lived practices" (as cited in Massey, 1994, p. 67), are what constitute the greater part of politics of space and dictate the occurrences within the political space. The political space can, therefore, not only be decoded, it can also be read. In like manner though, the realm of the social is also politically constructed.

Kui (1972, p. 415), has argued that there are sites (physical space such as open fields, town/city squares; and structures such as public edifices) with political significations, which can or are actually "interpreted, and manipulated in political situations by different sets of people at the

same times, and by the same sets of people at different times." Kui's argument here adds another dimension to the politics of space. It introduces another perspective, which is the relationship between space (sites) and political events. It means there is a language of sites in the context of the politics of space. This is the kind of space that Tsaaior (2011, p. 26) describes, when he notes that "space could be urban or rural, public or private, enclosed or open, free or dominated, expansive or restricted." This notion of space is what Lefebvre, as cited in Elden (2007, p. 110), calls "our perception of space", which is "concrete, material and physical", different from what he refers to as "our conception of space", that is "abstract, mental and geometric". This angle to politics of space is similar to one of the points stressed by Massey (2009, p. 16) in her article entitled, "Concept of space and power in theory and in political practice." As she notes:

> There are those relations of power which are intrinsic to neoliberal globalisation and which tie different places together, subordinating some to the dictates of the others. There are places within our own local areas which we might find it difficult to enter because they are alienating (we do not conform to the characteristics required of those who normally gain admission).

We, therefore, submit that in the politics of space, physical structures may have strong relationship and attachment to interpreting political behaviour, decisions, actions and reactions.

For a holistic understanding of space then, Elden (2007, p. 110) proposes that "we need to grasp the concrete and the abstract together ... here, there is obvious use of idealism and materialism together. Space is mental and material construct." This, Eden notes, is congruous to Lefebvre's advocacy of a merging of Hegel's idealism (the process of change in society brought about by dialectical reasoning, that is, intellectual proposition of an idea – thesis – which also attracts a reaction in terms of a negation of the original idea – antithesis – but resolved by reconciling the common truths of the two conflicting ideas, thereby forming a new idea – synthesis – which is superior to both) and Marx's historical materialism (a theory that analyses history and the condition of the society based on the material wellbeing of its citizens, rather than proposition

of ideas and also demands radical change to society's problem) in the conception, understanding and analysis of the society, with all its problems, in pursuit of ways to change it (the world).

Interestingly, the triad terms already discussed- perceived space (physical), conceived space (mental), and lived space (social) - find accommodation in the political space and become relevant in the politics of space. As Elden (2007, pp. 110-111) explicates,

> the first of these takes space as physical form, real space, space that is generated and used. The second is the space of *savoir* (knowledge) and logic... that is space as a mental construct, imagined space. The third considers space as produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning... space as real and imagined.

It is the combination of these three within the realm of politics that we take as constituting the political space, and around which politics is being played.

Tsaaior (2011, p. 26) further stresses that space, though more commonly taken as geographic, could actually manifest in order forms:

> But space quite often manifests itself in abstractions which are no less significant to postcolonial textual discourses and the representational ways in which they are mapped, negotiated and executed. These abstract spaces could be in the paradigm of gender, class, ideology, language, religion, and culture. These spatial structures and structured spaces confer enormous power, agency and control on the subjects that wields them. In contradistinction, lack of access to space severely limits, weakens and disables the individuals and significantly erases subjectivity on the contours of discourse.

It then means that the political space could be a stratified space in the paradigm of gender, class, ideology, language, religion, and culture.

Space in this study, therefore, expands to political metaphor that represents the collective heritage of a people. That means political space also offers privileges. In the Nigerian context, this

becomes more relevant in terms of occupying space and having access to resources. It is our thesis, therefore, that to understand political drama, the central organising principle is the notion of the political space as a malleable, negotiable, elastic, flexible and pliable category of space. It is a space that is susceptible to gross manipulation, with actors employing the physical, mental, and social phenomena within the political realm. Political contest is very pluralistic, and it is our belief that it is this kind of multi-dimensional concept of space that will enhance a good understanding and explain the peculiar way in which politics is played in the way it is done in Africa, particularly in Nigeria.

In the politics of space, space becomes attractive to political players and interest groups because of various reasons. For instance, Lefebvre (1991, p. 26) notes that space is the locus of power, domination and control:

> The more so in view of the further claim that the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power.

Tsaaior (2011, p. 26) lends credence to this when he notes that:

> These spacial constructions are not just cartographic. They are representatives of specific power structures, ideological networks and political formations willed into existence by dominant imperial forces to institute their hegemony over others. This is why the elemental struggle (politics) for the control of space is most importantly the struggle for the control of power. For whoever wins the war for the control of space also wins the struggle for power.

Tsaaior's submission here brings to focus another important characteristic of space, which is space as the locus of struggle and contestation, a characteristic that equally makes it attractive and most times inevitable for its "subjects", as Lefebvre (1991, p. 17) puts it. Lefebvre (1991, p. 27) argues that space is the ultimate locus and medium of struggle, and is, therefore, a crucial political issue: "There is a politics of space because space is political." Of this, Eden (2007, p.107)

speaks of the language peculiar to space: “much spacial language deals with contestation, struggle and productivity. This is because it mirrors the actual uses and experiences of space... Space is a social and political product.”

The epistemic and cultural nuances of politics of space cannot also be ignored as this plays a significant role in determining the extent to which the dominant forces can exercise control and have access to resources. This is the angle explicated by Tsaaior (2011, pp. 26-27), when he notes the imperial project of Europe in Africa, as a critical post-colonial subject: “The conquest of physical space and the inscription of the European self into it were paramount because this provided the locus for the conquest and domination of the epistemology and cultural ontology of the colonised”. This view is also shared by Singh (1996, pp. 1-2), who observes that European imperial suzerainty over marginal “Others” was most fully accomplished with control of the epistemic and cultural spaces “on which they could inscribe their linguistic, cultural and later, territorial claims”.

If space is the locus of struggle and control, it then means that there will be resistance within space. This is one of the views of many scholars, particularly postcolonial theorists such as Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin (1989), Spivak and Harasym (1990), Slemon (1991) and others who have observed that space offers this opportunity to the “Subject” against his “Principal”, to the “Other” against the “Self” to the “Margin” against the “Centre”, precisely to the “Oppressed” against the “Oppressor” or to the “Dominated” against the “Dominant”. This implies that there is politics of resistance within space, resistance against colonialism and neo-colonialism of different nuances. This actually is a core area of politics of space and a core interest of postcolonial literature. Tsaaior (2011, p. 27) calls it **“**a counter hegemonic inversion to...colonialist and imperialist programme of spacial domination...” This seemingly radical literary reaction is commonly found in the writings of a number of Africans, known for politics of anti-colonial and neo-colonial resistance. Such writers, whose styles of writing are personified, not only by resistance but also subversion, include Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) and Meja Mwangi in Kenya (1987), and in

the writings of Femi Osofisan (1975, 1977, 1980 and 1982), Bode Sowande (1979), Omafume Onoge (1974), Olu Obafemi (1986, 1993) and a host of others in Nigeria. It also features, generally, in the writings of creative writers of countries that either experienced colonialism or have a political class that is "imperialistic", exploitative or that subscribe heavily to the strangulating dictates of the neo-colonial West.

We have examined the submissions of others in respect of politics of space. While we agree that in concepts, politics of space can be all that have been reviewed, for us politics of space denotes the competitive struggle for power by political actors with the intention to have access to the control of the polity and its resources. While the struggle for power in politics is legitimate, we hold the view that power struggle can sometimes be chaotic, malignant, violent and fraudulent.

In politics of space, there should be no sentimental attachment to power, if the intention to serve is genuine and not self-serving, but evidences abound of gross abuse of power after it has been gotten. Rather than employ it to the benefit of the citizens who, in the real sense of it, are supposed to be the custodian of power, it is oftentime paradoxically employed to oppress, suppress or repress those who give it, even in a democracy.

In democracies that are still nascent or fledgling, such as Kenya, Southern Sudan, Somalia, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia, politics of space can assume very ridiculous dimension in which sometimes unexpected phenomena or objects such as infrastructure, religion, animals, gender and so on and so forth can become targets of political manipulation, which in turn may inflame passion, and threaten such democracies. However, politics of space, if played by the rules and properly managed, offers a lot of promises for peace, progress, prosperity and development as seen in the United State of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France. Since it seems obvious that power is at the centre of politics of space, it becomes apposite for us to examine how power has been sought for and used by political players in post-colonial Nigeria. As we do this, conscious cognisance will be taken of the response of drama to this development and how this interface has in turn impacted Nigerian drama.

2.3 Politics and Power in Nigeria's Post-colonial Drama

Politics and power are two closely related phenomena as the urge for the latter is most often a major motivation for the former. Therefore, this being a study in political theatre, it is apt to examine the way drama has been interrogating this power relation and the problem associated with it. In his *Interventions V* (2007, p. 3), Soyinka ponders on the subject of power thus:

> The theme of power is one that remains all too pertinent to a continent which, having freed itself from colonial tyrany, still finds itself obliged with a renewed colonisation, this time from within. Inevitably, its occupants, confronted with the bane of repetition, must take time off to ponder on the entire phenomenon of power, what is it that invest the human psyche with the need to dominate others, irrespective of race, state of development or environment, and with continued blindness to the lessons of history.

In the above, Soyinka is of the view that post-colonial Africa is obsessed with power. He insinuates the presence of neo-colonialism, despite being free from colonialism.

Soyinka (2007, p. 41) further wonders, "what could be easier, more seductive than to embrace, for instance, that one challengeable concept of the Divine Right of Kings – for 'Kings' these days, we would of course substitute the Dictator – Military, Civilian or Theocratic . . .". By this, he refers to dictatorial power. He is of the opinion that the desire to dominate others and stifle independent opinions spreads across the spectrume of the society – political leaders, religious leaders and even across class and race (Soyinka, 2007, pp. 1-5). Soyinka (2007, p. 44) insists on the dominant characteristics of power: "Power! The Ecstasy of Power. The Space of Domination. Parasitical on both secular and theocratic spaces alike".

There are other kinds of power that have been excercised in Nigerian political space as reflected in Nigerian drama. Political theorists and philosophers have also written about the existence of such powers that could be used. For instance, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007, p. 6) note that agency theory "is particularly important in post-colonial theory, because it refers to the

ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power". This theory of self-expression and self-assertion is what Veneklasen and Miller (2002, p. 55), describe as "power to" and "power with", among the four categories of power they discuss. Others are "power over" and "power within".

Briefly explained, the most commonly recognised form of power is "power over", and it has many negative associations for people. These include repression, force, coercion, discrimination, corruption, and abuse. Power here is seen as a win-lose kind of relationship. "Power with" borders on finding common grounds among different interests and building collective strength. This kind of power, based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, is capable of multiplying individual talents and knowledge. "Power to" refers to the unique potential of every person to shape his or her life and world. When based upon mutual support, it opens up the possibilities of joint action, or "power with". Both "power to" and "power with" are referred to as agency – the ability to act and change the world – by scholars writing about development and social change. "Power within" has to do with a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge (Veneclasen and Miller, 2010, pp. 1-2).

Similarly, hegemony as a theory of power, which was a term used in the past, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007, p. 106), when referring to "the dominance of one state within a confederation, is now generally understood to mean domination by consent". In the same manner there is the theory of power of ideology. Ambivalence describes the complex medley of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. In binary opposition theory, the operation of power can be clearly seen, for instance, the power of the signifier over the signified. Binary means a combination of two things, a pair, "two", and duality. While not all binaries are harmful, imperial binarisms always assume a movement in one direction – from the coloniser to the colonised, from the explorer to the explored.

As mentioned above, Veneclasen and Miller, (2010, p. 1) refer to coercion as 'power over', and observes that it has many negative associations for people. Many scholars and playwrights in

Nigeria decry this kind of power. For instance, Osofisan (2001, p. 51) describes coercive power in official political circle as "Terror of the state" and insists that it must be demystified. This also forms the pre-occupation of Ndigirigi (2014), in his book, *Unmasking the African Dictator*. This dictatorial indulgence of African leaders is what Wole Soyinka condemns in *Kongi's Harvest* (1970), *A Play of Giants* (1984), *King Baabu* (2002) and some of his other plays. Femi Osofisan lampoons it in *The Chaterring and the Song* (1976), Sowande rejects it in *Farewell to Babylon* (1978), and Alex Asigbo berates the same malaise in *The Reign of Pascal Amusu* (2008). "Power to" is venerated in Akinwumi Ishola's *Madam Tinubu*, in the two contending leaders in Ahmed Yerima's *The Silent Gods* and in the leadership prowess of Erelu Kuti in *Erelu Kuti* by the same author (Yerima). "Power with" is demonstrated in Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robers* and *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* (after the girls resolve their differences and act as one), in *Attahiru* by Ahmed Yerima and in *The Wives*' *Revolt* by John Pepper Clark.

In post-colonial Africa, the theories already discussed, among many others, regulate the power relation in the political sphere and dictate the direction to which the pendulum of power swings, in that they are replicated in day-to-day socio-political relations of the nations. This in itself has gone a long way in defining the political development of many African countries and their economic growth.

The Nigerian political space has recorded intense significant activities since independence to date. From this, a distinct dichotomy can be identified: the period of military dictatorship and that of democratic rule. While some of the nation's political experiences are good, examples of which are utilising the regionalism for development and maintaining centrality in multiculturalism, the majority are condemnable as they have threatened the very foundation of the nation and constituted great set-back in terms of peace, development and greatness. To this, drama/dramatists have responded in various ways in attempts to mediate the socio-political problematic engendered by politics and power.

2.4 Critical Studies on Politics and Theatre in Nigeria

Having reviewed the relationship between power and politics, we like to review some critical studies on politics and theatre in Nigeria with a view to gaining some insight into what has been done in this area.

2.4.1 Nigeria's Post-colonial Drama of Early Independence Years

The concern and reaction of Nigerian dramatists, since independence, to the absurdities in the political space have in no small way continued to define the content and form of dramaturgy of Nigerian playwrights. In the two decades preceding Nigeria's independence, the general atmosphere within the political sphere was a high expectation and clamour for independence from the colonial masters. According to Toyo (1993, pp. 15-16), the major concern of the ethnic groups "during the independence struggle was how to attain self-rule, independence and full sovereignty from white rule". In consonance with the political mood of that period Nigerian dramatists, apart from using drama for the purpose of entertainment, also actively employed same for nationalism, in the form of political struggle for independence of Nigeria colony. It is important to emphasise at this point that this nationalist's' struggle itself was for the repossession and control of the Nigerian political space by Nigerians. Drama, therefore, played a complementary role in that onerous task. Ògúndé was the leading light of the drama of this period. As noted by Adedeji and Ekwazi (1998, p. 12), the political climate had been stirred by a new crop of political nationalists "clamouring for a new consciousness ... and independence from the colonial heritage. It is to this nationalistic fervour that the popularity of the Ògúndé concert party must be traced…"

In 1946 and 1947, according to Clark (2008, pp. xvii-xviii) Ògúndé staged "Tiger's Empire" and "Towards Liberty" respectively. Both attacked colonial rule, and advocated self-rule for Nigeria. His "Strike and Hunger" (1946), and "Bread and Bullet" (1950) also castigated the colonial overlords for their high-handedness in managing civil crises. The dramatic exploits of Ògúndé, which was considered to be highly political by the colonial government, drew the ire of

the authority severally. A typical instance, according to Clark (2008, p. 37), was his arrest and trial in Jos, a city in the northern part of Nigeria, in October, 1946, for staging "Strike and Hunger". The outcome of the court case was that "Ògúndé and five other members of the party were found guilty of the charges against them and fined £125 (₦250.00)".

Jéyifò (1984, p. 122) too bears testimony to the nationalist fervour of Ògúndé's theatre when he notes that:

> When the mostly Igbo miners at the Iva Vally Colliery were killed and maimed by the colonial police while they were demonstrating against their intolerable working conditions in 1948, Ògúndé's identification with their cause knew no ethnic boundaries. His play on the incident, "Bread and Bullet" had Igbo characters as the heroes and protagonists of the play. And earlier in his career, Ògúndé had embraced the supraethnic nationalism of the immediate post-war period before the nationalist movement fatefully split into regional factions.

Ògúndé's commitment to political themes continued well into the post-colonial period of Nigeria. His "Song of Unity" (1960) was produced for the independence celebration, "Keep Nigeria One" (1968) was a pro-federalist production at the height of the Nigerian civil war (Jeyifo, 1984, p. 122).

Commenting on Ògúndé's nationalistic fervour, and his theatre's apparent support for the agitation for self-governance, Etherton (1982, p. 45) notes that Ògúndé "saw his company as the means by which he could help establish the cultural independence of the Africans in Nigeria as a back-up to the growing movement for political and economic independence, or, as it was called, self-government. Ògúndé was determined to lend full support to those pushing to displace the colonial hegemony from Nigeria's political space and possess it for the native political elite waiting in the wing to hoist their own hegemony. He, therefore, changed his African Music Research party, later (in 1947) to Ògúndé Theatre Company and continued to stage plays that clearly reflected "the desire for the creation of a modern state, independent of the colonial authority on the basis of the

Nigerian's present achievements ... There was no need to become more 'civilised': Ògúndé's plays framed the insult of colonialism for all to see" (Etherton, 1982, p. 45).

The attainment of independence brought a new dimension to Nigerian politics and thus a new outlook to Nigerian drama. At that time political struggle in Nigeria assumed a clear ethnic and violent trend. There were common intra and inter-party collisions as well as accusations and counter accusations of political impropriety by politicians against one another. Kaiser (2005, p. 14) observes that "this was the start of a trend that has continued until the present. Indeed, the lack of cross-cutting cleavages has made it difficult for truly national political movements to emerge…" The emergence of a new generation of Nigeria dramatists of English expression at this time, now generally referred to by scholars as the first generation of Nigeria dramatists (of English expression), privileged drama with a prompt response to this political dystopia of the First Republic.

For instance, Wolé Sóyinká's *A Dance of the Forests* (1960) and J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's *The Raft* (1964) are tragic commentary on the irritating jostling of Nigerians for the positions vacated by the colonialists as they disengaged from the administration of the country. Both plays frown at the attitude of the still inchoate political class which, rather than assume a sober reflection on the transitory state of the new nation and embark on permutation concerning its ordering, demonstrated lack of political sagacity. The uncertain location of the A*biku* or Half Child in *A Dance of the Forests* carries a lot of metaphorical and dramatic signification. It points to some of the dilemmas Nigeria would face in the following decades after independence. "Just as the *Abiku* is neither living nor dead, neither body nor spirit, neither recognised nor forgotten, Nigeria's independence augurs an ambivalent future" (Gilbert and Tompkins, 2002, p. 219). Ògúndé's *Yorùbá Ronú* (Yorùbá – Think), produced in 1964, in Ib adan, cannot go unmentioned. It is a comment on the political situation in the then Western part of Nigeria, and at the same time a serious warning to the political class in the region to check their excesses, as refusal to do so could result in dire consequences. A bitter rivalry between two opposing political parties - the Action

Group (AG) and the National Congress of the Nigerians and the Cameroons (NCNC) – had heated the polity unnecessarily and Ògúndé, in the play, warned against allowing it degenerate into violence. Refusal to heed the warning, two years later, partly led to the incursion of the military into governance.

Largely at this time, however, drama in Nigeria, as it was the case with many African independent countries, became Afrocentric, attacking colonial impositions of European cultures, ethics and values and at the same time "recuperating and reconstituting the social and cultural histories of the postcolony as part of the knowledge infrastructure with which to assert its energies and cultural self-presence" (Tsaaior, 2011, p. 10). Clark's *The Masquerade;* and *Song of a Goat (1964)*, including Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* are typical examples in this regard. This was a way of re-establishing the African way of life in the consciousness of the home society. In addition to Soyinka and Clark-Bekederemo, there were also Ola Rotimi and Zulu Sofola. The drama of this quartet is what Obafemi (2009, p. 67) refers to as "self-conscious, individualist and metaphysical dramatic theatre creations". The drama of this period mostly employed myths, legends, rituals, festivals and history in order to dispel what Nnoli (1980, p. 107-112) describes as "traditional devaluation of Nigerian culture and the corresponding glorification of European values". Such plays include *The Strong Breed,* by Wole Soyinka; *The Gods are not to Blame*, by Ola Rotimi; and *Wedlock of the Gods,* by Zulu Sofola.

The drama of this period which also reflected the disillusionment of this new generation of playwrights with the unfulfilled promises and hooliganism of the political class gave room for anxiety about the future of the young nation and, therefore, culminated in their tragic (pessimistic) view of the future. This mindset produced a number of plays with tragic and fated protagonists such as *A Dance of the Forests,* and *The Strong Breed* by Wole Soyinka, *Song of a Goat*; *The Raft*; and *The Masquerade*, by J.P. Clark; *The Gods are not to Blame,* by Ola Rotimi; and *Wedlock of the Gods;* and *King Emene,* by Zulu Sofola. However, as Ogunbiyi (1981, p. 33), rightly notes, this tragic world-view of the first-generation playwright "bespeaks a cynicism, … a cynicism which

sometimes lack the compassion and hope which ought to accompany our perception of reality, considering that reality even in its darkest moment is not totally bleak".

2.4.2 Drama and Politics in the Military Dispensations of Nigeria

Military incursion into politics in 1966 culminated in the reckless abuse of political power. For twenty-nine years, Nigeria's political space experienced usurpation of political power with all its attendant dictatorship and military authoritarianism, intolerance of opposition, repressive and oppressive state apparatus (Abass, 2013, p. 62). In the same vein, this view is also shared by Frank and Ukpere (2012, pp. 290-291). For this period, power was concentrated more in the hands of the Northerners, particularly the Hausa-Fulani military hegemony and their collaborators. As Agboola (2008, pp. 42-43) notes, between 1960 (at independence) and 1999 before former President Olusegun Obasanjo of the South-West assumed the leadership of the country as a civilian President, "there had been eleven administrations (ten substantives, one interim). Out of the eleven, eight were headed by Northerners, two by South-Westerners and one by an Easterner".

The three years avoidable civil war of 1967-1970 was a sad commentary on the socio-political history of Nigeria. The dirty politics within the Nigerian Army, which was actually a conflict of power, led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, both on the Biafra and the Federal sides. This deepened the already noticeable ethnic distrust in the country, and increased mutual suspicion between the linguistic configurations of the nation and further polarised it. Therefore, this further redefined the dramaturgy of theatre practitioners. Plays such as Ola Rotimi's *Kúrunmí,* Wale Ogunyemi's *Kírìjì*, and Adebayo Faleti's *Basòrun Gáà,* published soon after this unfortunate period of Nigerian history, bare thematic symmetry with that war period. In his assessment of Soyinka's *Madmen and Specialists,* published at this time, Jones (1973, p. 91) notes that "it appears the central enveloping theme is the erosion of humanity in a well-organised tightly controlled authoritarian society". Also, Ogunyemi's *Lángbódò* (a commissioned play by the Federal Government of Nigeria as part of the activities to celebrate the Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), held in Nigeria in 1977), was a humanist approach to a national search for a cathartic

release from the residual trauma of the war experience. This is because, as rightly observed by TNV (2012, para. 3), the play (and its performance at the time) was "a timely political drama which chronicles the virtues of resilience, love, humility, courage, valour and peaceful resolution of conflicts . . .".

The dramatic increase in national income due to increased exploitation and exportation of crude oil after the civil war somewhat altered the theatrical and dramatic development in the country. The massive income from oil regrettably widened the gap between the rich and the poor since the political elites who were to manage the proceeds, according to Tsaaior (2011, pp. 17-18), "think in one direction: towards themselves". It means substantial parts of the funds that were supposed to be disbursed for national development, such as infrastructure - roads, water, communication, standard health facilities, transport and power – were diverted, for private use. Drama, during this time became very critical of the "politicians" in uniform and their civilian collaborators, with the aim of dislodging them from the political space, which they occupied by force and ruled by coercion. Osofisan (2001, p. 53) elucidates on this:

> But the soldiers were everywhere with their gun and bayonets, haughtily feathering their own nests alone, stifling initiative with their decrees. Power for them was merely an excuse to line their pockets, and all the noisy program of "development" announced with tedious … fanfare became convenient drainage pipes through which national wealth was greedily siphoned into foreign banks… against the inner silence which autocrats seek to impose upon their subjects.

Osofisan (2001, p. 51) tags his dramatic approach to theatrical performance in the face of military dictatorship and exploitation a "surreptitious insurrection".

Ukeje (1999, p. 141) argues that the issue of poverty in Nigeria is one that is deliberately created by the elite in the society in order to perpetually remain relevant. He considers it a class war as he notes that "Nigeria remains a country of two nations: the rich and the very poor, almost impervious to each other and living together in tense and distrustful enmity". While we may agree

with Ukeje's claim that the selfish actions of the elite caused the extreme poverty of the poor we may not totally agree that it was deliberate. It is not unlikely that other factors may have also contributed to the situation, such as poor management of the economy, long years of militry rule, dependent economic foundation laid by the colonialists and the self-acclaimed messiahship mission of the Brentwood institutions that often laid the burden of debt upon the unsuspecting postcolonial states through the foreign-induced economic reforms. Some of these are devices by the imperialists to indirectly maintain their foothold (gaining space) in the post-colonial state, in spite of independence.

Nonetheless, this odious development, coupled with the dictatorship of the military, was unacceptable to the then new generation of dramatists in the Ife-Ibadan axis of Nigerian universities, later joined by the Nnsuka School. This includes Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Kole Omotosho, and Bode Osanyin. They responded to this anomaly by deploying their theatrical and dramatic skills to evolve another type of drama that was driven by socialist ideological ethos. Rather than perceive solution to the problem of the time with an individualistic heroism associated with the theatre of the first-generation dramatists, they made the masses the centre of their drama.

Their dramaturgy pressed for a radical (revolutionary) change in the society through a mass movement of the people to overthrow a system they perceived as neo-colonial and exploitative. This forms the basis of Gbilekaa's (1997) notion of "Radical Theatre". Obafemi and Yerima (2004, p. 5) refer to it as "dialectical theatrical tradition", but Osofisan, (as cited in Awodiya, 1993, p. 21), describes it as theatre of "alternative tradition". The plays of this period include *A Restless Run of the Locusts* (1975), *The Chattering and the Song* (1977), *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980), and *Midnight Hotel* (1982), by Osofisan, *The Night Before; Farewell to Babylon;* and, *Sanctus for Women* (1979), by Sowande. Obafemi later joined the fray as he wrote *Night of a Mystical Beast; The New Dawn; and Suicide Syndrome* (1986), and later *Naira Has No Gender* (1993).

The political experience of Nigeria between 1990 and 1999, when Ibrahim Babangida and late Sani Abacha ruled the country, was not just that of dictatorial regimes but also of severe

repression of the citizens the government was to serve. If one considers the reign of Babangida to be appalling, then that of Abacha was disastrous. This was a period the government of the day threw all caution to the wind, organised state-sponsored terrorism and assassination of its subjects and turned the country into a pariah state before the international community in a desperate bid to perpetuate itself. Brain drain (emigration of Nigerian professionals to foreign countries) was also massive. All sectors of the economy were hit, including education. The nation was in chaos due to lack of commitment of the military regime to the implementation of the programme of transition to civil rule, a situation which resulted in many deaths, including that of Abacha, and M.K.O Abiola, whose election was annulled. In response to this "political theatre of the absurd", the nation's dramatists came up with political plays that condemned this evil. Such plays include *The Silent Gods* (1996) and *Kaffir's Last Game* (1998*)* by Ahmed Yerima, *Drums of War* and *Ògbòdìyàn* (1994) by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and Wole Soyinka's *Beatification of Area Boy* (1999), to mention but a few.

2.4.3 Drama and the Democratic Space of Nigeria

Unlike in the military regimes, politics of space in the democratic dispensation, more often than not, takes the form of competitive elections. However, that does not imply that it does not also assume some of the dimensions that are somewhat similar to what obtained in the early independence period and during the military regimes. In a democracy, power struggle is a multi-level process, because politics itself is pluralistic, but essentially spearheaded by a political party that nurses what Olaniyi (2006, p. 96) calls "political interest." To actualise this interest, he notes, political parties usually contest elections "with a bid to control political power." Schattschneider, cited in Olaniyi (2006, p. 96), actually premises his view of parties on the power-centred nature of politics", and remarks that "the essence of parties is the urge to gain and keep power," Similarly, Schumpeter (1976, p. 283), defines parties as "a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for power." All this, again, goes to show that power as we have assumed in

this study is central to the politics of space, because power offers control over both human and material resources of certain population and magnitude.

While attainment of power is central to the political parties, Hawksworth and Kogan (2002, p. 394), note that there is no consensus yet about the definition of parties, especially from the angle of the interest they serve – "public interest" or "private gain." These two, as they note, often polarise the position of scholars of party politics. For instance, Burke, as cited in Olaniyi, (2006, p. 96), regarded as the first and most eloquent spokesperson of 'public interest', holds that "party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavour in the national interest… some particular principles upon which they are all agreed." However, both Schumpeter (1976) and Schattschneider, whose views we have earlier referred to in Olaniyi (2006), are of the opinion that parties exist to promote "private interest."

For instance, Schattschneider as cited in Olaniyi (2006, p. 96), posits that "the essence of party is the urge to gain and keep power." This, to us, is true but the questions that need to be answered is, for who, and to what end? To serve self or the citizens? To us, we see parties as serving a dual purpose, both public and private interests. It will be hypocritical, so we think, to assume that no private interest is being served in the course of serving public interest. However, we argue that private interest should be served only to the extent that it does not negatively infringe on public interest, and where there is a conflict between the two, public interest should take precedence.

Yerima and Akinwale (2002) in *Theatre and Democracy in Nigeria* (an edited publication of SONTA) targets making the Nigeria's new democracy an enduring one. However, at that time the democracy was less than three years old, therefore, it had not borne out its character substantially as it has now. Between that time and now the nation has conducted four general elections at interval of four years. It means the nation has experienced sixteen years of democratic rule in this fourth republic. In the publication, Obafemi (2002, p. 5) notes the need to adopt dramatic options for "revaluing and re-inventing our societies in the context of contemporary post

and neocolonial realities which endanger our democratic struggle for equity, justice and a humane social environment", among others. Today, the nation's playwrights seem to be responding, in their works, to the wake-up call by Obafemi. The political space since that period has witnessed the good, the bad and the ugly. This development appears to have also heralded another paradigm shift in dramatic engagement in the nation.

For instance, in the Niger Delta area, there is high rate of environmental pollution, which has not only rendered the land infertile, but has also killed the fish in the rivers, thus incapacitating the people of the region from productively engaging in fish farming, which is their major occupation and source of income. This is the subject of Yerima's play, *Hard Ground* (2006). Yerima shows that the problem of the people of Niger Delta is not only economic, but also political. A people highly marginalized, deprived of social amenities that could have made life meaningful and a people disempowered politically could vividly be seen in the *Hard Ground.* At the same time, he captures the socio-political implications of a society in conflict with itself. He believes that the decision of the people of the region to break away from the rest of the country due to perceived marginalisation is politically ill-advised and possibly suicidal.

Worse still, while the by-products of the oil extracted from the zone – Premium Motor Spirit, Automotive Gasoline Oil, and Kerosene – are available to other zones of the nation, ironically, they are acutely scarce in the zone that produces it. Where they are available, they are sold at near-prohibitive prices that are at variance with what obtained in the other parts of the same country. Today, the situation has degenerated further with the resurgence of militancy in the region. Perhaps, most notorious here is the activities of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), a new subversive group in the area, which have persistently been blowing up oil pipelines with a prime target of depleting Nigeria's oil production capacity and grinding the economy unless a number of their demands are met. The multiple implications of these are: economically, the nation suffers in terms of income for development; politically, the nation is further subjected to the danger of more cleavages, insecurity and image problems.

The coercion being applied against the people of the Niger Delta and the collusion of the state with her foreign collaborators in this theatre amounts to another form of colonialism - neo-colonialism - that is still evident in a post-colonial state. The reaction of the people of the zone to these oppressive activities of the state, which comes in form of vandalisation of oil pipes, taking expatriate workers hostage in exchange for ransom, occupying oil flow stations and disrupting oil exploration constitute a typical example of space manifesting as a locus of resistance, which is correspondingly the manifestation of a counter hegemony. The mapping of this struggle for space in the Niger Delta, which has strong political and economic motif, can also be seen in the plays of other Nigerian dramatists, apart from Yerima. They include Clark-Bekederemo's *All for Oil* (2000) and Onwueme's *Then She Said It* (2002).

Osofisan (2008, p. xvi) paints a grim picture of dearth of performances on the Nigerian stage, especially in this democratic dispensation, contrary to its ebullient culture in the era of the military:

> Now, when the soldiers have been driven from power and the concept of democratic government … is solidly reinstated in the constitution, it is precisely at this very moment that the creative energy on the stage seems to have drained out.

While Osofisan's concerns about productions are truly founded, the same cannot be said of playwriting, except, their popularity. One can observe that the older generations have not halted their creative output, and many new playwrights have since emerged to confront the devastating absurdities of post-military Nigeria's political climate. Inegbe (2006, p. 46) identifies such playwrights as Effiong Johnson, Toni Duraku, Uwedimo Atakpo, Bakare Ojo-Rasaki, Chris Egharevba, Greg Mbajiorgu, Ahmed Yerima, Alex Asigbo, Barclays Ayakoroma and Solomon Iguanre. Akoh (2009, p. 268) adds the likes of Julie Okoh, Stella Oyedepo, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh, Irene Salami, and Hagher as current, active playwrights. We can equally add others like A. A. Adeoye, Osita Ezenwanebe, Ziky Kofoworola, Felix Akinsipe, Otun Rasheed, Bode Ojoniyi and Yemi Atanda, just to mention a few.

The dramas of this age, of which Akoh (2006, pp. 146-168) refers to its actors as "new voices", have not altogether abandoned the employment of myths, ritual and historical materials in their compositions. However, drama now seems to have descended from the ladder of orthodox Marxism into the realm of critical realism. The earlier radical dramatists have mellowed their stand a little, somewhat, as we hope, now demanding a change that is realistic only within the framework of democratic possibilities. Examples of these are Osofisan's *Many Colours Make the Thunder King,* his revised *Aringindin, and the Nightwatchmen* (2003) and *The Life of Ajayi Crowther.* About this, Akoh (2009, p. 266) observes: "…Osofisan now opts for a more sympathetic and subtle approach to the problem of leadership, poverty and inter-group relations…"

Even Soyinka, in his *King Baabu* (2002) and *Beatification of Area Boy* (1999), seems to have altered his ritualistic fervour and individual heroism in favour of the public proletariat space. This toning down in theatricality of radicalism by the likes of Osofisan, we think, may be attributable to factors like the collapse, towards the end of the 20th century, of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), bedrock of socialist ideology that served as inspiration for the theatre of alternative tradition in Nigeria, and the termination of military rule in 1999. Military rule having come to an end, drama appears to beckon for a "rest", even if momentary. This, Akoh (2009, p. 268) cautions, could be a miscalculation:

> For both the old and new playwrights, one hurdle however to cross is the simple assumption that the battle has already been won over dictatorial regimes after the exit of the military. This … assumption … can make the theatre of any nation to slumber or compromise its call.

It may be noted that feminist theatre experienced an upsurge in the early 1990 to the turn of the century as writers advocated more for gender equality (probably due to the 1995 Beijing Declaration). Recent studies (Inegbe, 2006 and Akoh, 2009) show that, this type of theatre now seems to have reverted to the womanist ideology of the first-generation playwrights as epitomised in Sofola's plays - *The Sweet Trap* (1979) and *Old Wines are Tasty (1979*). Emmy Idegu's *Six and*

Half a Dozen (2010) and Tess Onwueme's *What Mama Said* and *Tell it to Women* (1997) amplify this new temperament. Same can be said of Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh's *Our Wives have Gone Mad Again*. To us, possibilities offered by democracy in the diagnosis and settlement of societal problems seem to be a major influence factor at play here.

Other plays of this period that refract the political absurdities of this nation include Soyinka's *King Baabu* (2002); *All for Oil* (2000) and *The Wives' Revolt* (2009) by Clark-Bekederomo; *Ade Ire* (2004) and *Hard Ground* (2006) by Yerima; Alex Asigbo's *Reign of Paschal Amusu* (2008); *Dance of the Mosquitoes* (2011), *Queen Ghasenghe* (2007), and *Chambers of Cockroaches* (2013) by E. O. Kofoworola; *What Hope*? (2005) *Dawn of Awareness* (2007, *Pregnant King* (2008) and *Accursed Ceremony* (2009) by F. A. Akinsipe*;* and *Giddy Festival* (2009) by Osita Ezenwanebe.

2.4.4 Nigeria's Socio-political Dynamics and its Post-colonial Drama

Western type of politics in Nigeria dates back to the period of colonialisation when emerging political elites began their nationalism drive towards attainment of independence. However, with the birth of independence and self-rule the political ferment of the Nigerian nation began to take shape. As the socio-political dynamics of the nation began to manifest in different forms, drama and theatre too responded to the development as it mirrored its society, interrogated it and proffered remedies to identified problems. The dramatic representations of this socio-political dynamics elucidate various characteristics of politics which could enhance our understanding of the nature or characteristics of the Nigerian politics and equally influence our perception and mechanics of political theatre. It is, therefore, important to us that we explicate such phenomena in this section. There are various political iconographies which combine to confer some peculiar identities on Nigerian politics and go a long way to shape the socio-economic fortune of Nigeria, resulting in political obfuscation, economic retardation and jaundiced national development, just as they have also elicited primordial allegiance within the nation's pluralist society. Some of the icons

include prebendal politics, political clientelism, neopatrimonialism, ethnic politics, garrison democracy, political theatrics (alities), godfatherism, and class–related politics.

Prebendalism (Joseph, 2014), clientelism (Fox, 2012) and neopatrimonialism (Alemazung, 2011) are a set of predominant political behaviours which may not be completely the same, but scholars who have examined them hold them as identical or interrelated. Prebendalism refers to political systems where elected officials and government workers feel they have the right to a share of government revenues, and use them to benefit their supporters, co-religionists and members of their ethnic group. Joseph (2014, p. 10), who used the term to describe patron-client or neopatrimonialism in Nigeria, observes that "it is often wasteful, unproductive, and contributes to the increasing affluence of a relative few, paltry gains for a larger number and misery for the great majority of the people." Its mode of operation is such that it politicises ethnic, regional and linguistic differences and "serves to make the Nigeria polity a simmering cauldron of unresolvable tensions over which a lid must regularly be clamped, and just as regularly removed" (Joseph, 2014, p. 10).

Political clientelism, on the other hand, often referred to as patron-clients ties, is caste within the framework of general clientelism, that is, it is a subset of the phenomenon known as clientelism (Joseph, 2014; Van de Walle, 2009). Generally, in the classic anthropology, clientelism refers to "a voluntary exchange relationship between social unequals, typically embedded in a complex social relationship" (Van de Walle, 2009, p. 3). Joseph (2014, p. 56) expatiates further on this:

> An individual seeks the protection or support of the "ogá" or a "godfather," while trying to acquire the basic social and material goods – loans, scholarships, licenses, plots of urban land, employment, promotion – and the main resources of the patron in meeting these requests is quite literally a piece of the state.

Extrapolated to the political space, "political clientelism is the clientelistic (patron-clients) relationships that structure the relationship between the state and citizens" (Van de Walle, 2009, p.

3). In other words, political clientelism is the "exchange of services or state resources for political support from ethnic based politicians serving as clients to the ruling patron (Alemazung, 2011, p. 34). In the case of Nigeria, patron-client ties reflect both a social relationship as well as mechanism for power, that is, a crucial element of governmental process.

Neopatrimonialism may be described as another name for prebendalism, because it also revolves more around the arrangement of services and resources between clients and political patrons. Exchanges involve the transfer of public resources in form of money, ministerial positions, contracts and other things alike by the political patrons as a reward for loyalty or support from the people (Weber, 1978, pp. 133 - 136). This implies that it is clientelism that provides a sustaining framework for neopatrimonialism and prebendalism.

The relationship of democratic politics and prebendal politics is described as two sides of the same coin in Nigeria (Joseph, 2014, p.10). For example, Achebe (1969, p. 2) has a reflection of this. Odili reflects ruefully as he watches the crowd of supporters which await the arrival of politician and Government minister, Chief M. A. Nanga:

> They were not only ignorant but cynical. Tell them that this man had used his position to enrich himself and they would ask you – as my father did – if you thought that a sensible man would spit out the juicy morsel that good fortune placed in his mouth.

Soon afterwards, Odili himself becomes a double-barrelled (individual/communal) justification for prebendalism by the Honourable Nanga:

> I think you are wasting your talent here. I want you to come to the capital and take up a strategic post in the civil service. We shouldn't leave everything to the highland tribes. My security is from there; our people must press for their fair share of the national cake (p. 11).

As Joseph (2014, pp. 55, 56) contends, "clientelism and prebendalism are two fundamental principles of political organisation and behaviour in Nigeria." The significance of the three political

behaviours to this study lies in the fact that they are all political instruments deployed by politicians to win the support of voters (sometimes non-voters) for both political legitimacy and electoral patronage, most of the time using state resources. Soyinka's *King Baabu* reflects this client-patron relationship. King Baabu wants to transform from a military to civilian president and political clients from various ethnic group begin to emerge to drum up support for his candidature. This is not done without any expectation of political reward in various forms. So also Salami-Agunloye's *Sweet Revenge*, the women team together to sponsor his candidature to the National Assembly (the Senate) and after the election Sota fails to live up to the traditional demand of a client-patron relationship of paying back to his clients, either in cash or in kind, and that leads to his fall as they plot against him.

Similarly, *The Trial of Pascal Amusu* (2008) by Asigbo is not only grounded in political intrigues and mischief it also has a strong reflection of patron-client relationship. ODIBO as a client needs the support and protection of PASCAL AMUSU, a political patron in charge of wide array of political perquisite so he serves the patron, giving him his allegiance. In turn, the patron's reward for ODIBO's loyalty is in form of a Governorship ticket: "You see what I mean? We own this country. In fact, Odibo, for serving me diligently these past years, I'm going to make you the Governor of your state whether your people like it or not." Examples cited already are some of the numerous ways in which the intersection and complementarities of clientelism and neopatrimonialism/prebendal politicking entrench political abuses with its negative effects on the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria. All the rewards are done using state resources.

The above explains why contestants for political offices in Nigeria spend large sums of money to prosecute their campaigns. For instance, President Muhammadu Buhari and ex-President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, in the course of their campaigns for the 2015 Presidential election spent eight billion, seven hundred and forty six million, six hundred and eighty five thousand, two hundred and ninety five naira (₦8, 789, 685, 295.00) and two billion, nine hundred and fifteen

million, eight hundred and forty six thousand, seven hundred and thirty seven naira respectively (₦2, 915, 846, 737.00) respectfully (as cited in Olorunmola, 2016, pp. 1 - 11).

Related to the phenomenon of prebendal politics and political clientelism is the phenomenon of "godfatherism." This is one issue that also plays out clearly in Nigerian politics. A neophyte to politics, who aspires to move up the ladder of politics in terms of political appointments or elective positions, seeks a strong political patron to whom he gives his loyalty and service, mobilises support for him at the grassroots where he is coming from, promotes his name, defends him and justifies his actions and decisions. He does this in anticipation of patronage from the patron who also does everything possible to seek his elevation in the political circle, particularly by sourcing political appointments for him or scheming for him to get a "ticket" that can enable him run for elective office. Examples of this type of relationship exist in nearly all the political parties in Nigeria. Such godfathers include late Adedibu of Ibadan, late Dr. Olushola Saraki of Kwara State, Senator Bola Tinubu of Lagos State, Late Chief Tony Anini of Edo State and Dr. Bukola Saraki of Kwara State (son of late Olushola Saraki). Many more still exist in Nigerian politics today. While at the public and official level they are referred to as godfathers, investigation conducted by us revealed that they are called "Leaders" at the party level, particularly in their caucuses.

It is either both the godson and the godfather are acting alone or they are representatives of some interest groups. This is the relationship between Pascal Amusu and Odibo in *The trial of Pascal Amusu*. All of this is done to build and strengthen clientele groups and utilise this to struggle for pockets of space within the political space and by so doing struggle for state resources. This kind of struggle is what Joseph (2014, p. 56) refers to when he notes that:

> The expansion of petroleum production in Nigeria, which amounts in years of high output to 85-90 percent of state revenues heightens the centrality of the state as the locus of the struggle for resources for personal advancement and group security.

In addition, the phenomenon of ethnic politics has been a disturbing political behaviour over the years in the country. Political scientists, such as Nnoli (1980, p. 5), Sklar (1967, pp. 6 - 8), Osaghae (1995, p. 25) and Onyeoziri (2002, p. 8) have acknowledged the fact that playing up the ethnic sentiment by Nigerian political elite in furtherance of their political interests often stirred political violence and rivalry in the relations between multiple nationalities (ethnic groups) in Nigeria. This, coupled with historical facts, point to the existence of ethnic politics in Nigeria. As Joseph (2014, p. 43) enunciates, "competitive politics in Nigeria encouraged recourse to sectional identities", and it still does. The contours of Nigerian politics towards ethnic politics started right from the First Republic (at independence).

The need to bring an end to ethnic politics was probably the drive behind the government of Gen. Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida's (rtd.) decision, when in an attempt to birth the Third Republic, his government decreed and enforced the establishment of two political parties with "national" outlook and with different ideological bents – the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (a little to the left) and the National Republican Convention (NRC) (a little to the right). The attempts yielded no fruitful outcome as it resulted in the inconclusiveness of the Third Republic, because the result of the presidential election was annulled by the same government that financed it. Critics of the government believed that the socio-political dynamics of the time produced a winner that was unacceptable to the government of the day. The public outcry across the nation, the protests, the political riots, violence and arson that greeted the annulment bore testimony to how dissatisfied the masses were, generally but more particularly from the South, were.

We view the act of the annulment as an abuse of power and the disparate shades of reaction as what Ashcroft, Tiffin, and Griffith (1989) refer to as "resistance to power", both within the same political space, "a counter hegemonic inversion to...imperialist programme of spacial domination..." (Tsaaior, 2011, p. 27). The Nigerian drama responded profoundly to this anomaly, and two of them serve as cogent examples here. They are *The Silent Gods* by Ahmed Yerima and *Ògbòdìyàn* (crises), by Ojo Rasaki. Both plays satirise the indecision of the government of

Babangida to declare a winner and the violent demonstration that accompanied it. Similarly, Femi Osofisan's *Yungba and Yungba and the Dance Contes*t and Sunnie Ododo's *The Hard Choice* dramatise the important necessity for ethnic unity, understanding and cooperation, if Nigeria must build a strong, united and developed nation.

With the advent of the Fourth Republic, it was expected that formation of political parties would take a more national structure. However, the scenario of the Second Republic nearly repeated itself, which rather than attenuate the fear of sectionalism (ethnic politics) exacerbated it. Out of the three political parties that contested the 1999 general elections, only the People's Democratic Party (PDP) had a national outlook. The Alliance for Democracy (AD) was demonstrably a Yorùbá party that won all the Yorùbá States – Èkìtì, Lagos, Òndó, Òsun, and Òyó. The All People's Party (APP) won in nine states of the federation – Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Kwara, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. Today, however, the story seems to be changing as the nation has two strong political parties, the All Progressive Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), with sixty-six other small parties that are not politically viable (have not won any election), except the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) which has its foothold in Anambra State, having won the state consistently since 2006 to date.

One other thread of Nigerian politics is the class conflict. The representation of class conflicts in the politics of post-colonial Nigeria has featured prominently in her drama since the nation's independence, and all point to the struggle to gain control of the political space. The purpose is to influence decisions for socio-political change, protect class interests and or evolve a more egalitarian society. Nigerian drama and theatre began to represent this class-structured political struggle right from the period of the nationalists' struggle for independence to date. Some of the plays that reflect this phenomenon include *Towards Liberty*, *Strike* and *Hunger*, *Bread* and *Bullet*, all by Hubert Ògúndé. Ògúndé's *Strike* and *Hunger* draws its material from the Aba women's riot of 1929 which was a response to the imposition of taxes on women in Nigeria. His Bread and Bullet" was a satire of the killing of eighteen coal miners in Enugu during their strike to

demand for higher wages commensurate to the cost of living in 1949. The politics of wages is the politics of allocation of resources, and it is controlled largely by the political leaders (the bourgeois), which is the dominant class in the society. However, the workers have always struggled and fought for more share of this resources whenever they sense that the socio-economic string is skewed against them. In these three plays, the working class is pitted against the ruling class, this time the colonialists, who are obsessed with exploitation and brutalisation of the latter. Some other political plays with class conflicts are *Kongi's Harvest*, by Wole Soyinka, *Ovonramwen N'ogbaisi*, *Our Husband has gone Mad Again* and *If: The Tragedy of the Oppressed,* by Ola Rotimi, *A Restless Run of the Locust*, *Red is the Freedom Road*, *The Chattering and the Song*, *Moróuntódùn* and *Once Upon Four Robbers,* by Femi Osofisan, *The New Dawn*, *Suicide Syndrome,* and *Naira has No Gender,* by Olu Obafemi, *Hard Ground*, *Attahiru*, *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* and *The Silent Gods*, by Ahmed Yerima, *Ògbòdìyàn* and *Drums of War*, by Ojo Bakare.

Joseph (2014, p. 20) has observed that the process by which democracy was liberalised "ties together notions of capitalist development, class formation and class conflict, as well as such essentials of liberal democracy as competitive parties and majority rule". This gives us the idea that politics is premised on the socio groupings in the society, which makes stratification inevitable. Macpherson, as cited in Joseph, (2014. p. 20) identifies what constitute the essence of the liberal state as, "the system of alternate or multiple parties whereby government could be held responsible to different sections of the class or classes that had a political view….". This dispels the denial by the political elite about the presence of class interests in the new African states like Nigeria, insisting that African traditional societies operated on the principle of "egalitarianism" and "African humanism" (Onimode, 1983, p. 222). On the contrary, in the traditional African context, the "Osu" caste system in precolonial Igbo society, the Àgbékòyà peasants in Yorùbá and the downtrodden "talakawa" poor masses in Hausa land, all point to the existence of classes in African societies (Adilieje, Nnedinma and Osoku, 2009, p. 3).

The failure of leadership, in Nigeria, to be accountable to the masses has produced frictions within the political space of the post-colonial state, obviously between the classes. This group of people is always at the receiving end (discriminated against and exploited). *Moróuntódùn,* by Osofisan and *Farewell to Babylon,* by Bode Sowande employ the 1968-1969 revolt of the "Àgbékòyà" in the Western Region of Nigeria against the government of the region in the construction of their plays which are highly political. The politics behind the plays is the playwrights' deft move to re-emphasise the reaction of the peasant group (Àgbékòyà) as a platform to agitate, through their plays, for the reconstruction of the inter-group relation between the masses and the political leaders of Nigeria. They call for a reversal of the oppressive and exploitative act of the political class against the less privileged in the society. The prolonged resistance put up by the peasant farmers against the government of the day for insisting that politics be played in a humane manner that gives recognition, accommodation and a deserved space to the mass of the people is the playwrights' way of pressing for necessary changes within the political process and space, though the farmers too have their foibles as evident in the plays.

Perhaps the most intriguing play that captures the stratification of the political space in Nigeria's dramatic and theatrical oeuvre is Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980). The play dramatises the social consequence of the failure of the political class, of whom Farah (1983, p. 11) says: "the African politician … moves only in one direction – towards himself." It satirises their failure in the management of Nigeria's socio-economic affairs and the greedy appropriation of the nation's resources to themselves, at the expense of the larger populace. The play itself was borne out of Osofisan's determination to conscientise the society that the scourging phenomenon of the armed robbers in its alarming scale in the 70s was a failure of the political class and that the public execution of the robbers was too simplistic an approach to problem-solving.

As far as Osofisan is concerned, "the robbers, with all their repellent acts were themselves the victims of an unjust socio-economic set-up; and … the rest of us … already directly implicated in some form or other of public looting, undetected because more covert" (Osofisan, 2001, p. 64).

He argues that the public executions, staged before camera, rather than sanitise the society, were "further brutalising us, killing our sensitivity, numbing us to the horror of death, degrading our sense of the worth of human life" (Osofisan, 2001, p. 63). He describes the practice as a "collective barbarity, a terrifying hysteria, obviously stage-managed by the property owners of our ruling class" (Osofisan, 2001, pp. 63, 64). Osofisan, who believes that the robbers were a creation of their society, argues that the hardship created by the poor management of the nation by the ruling class had made crime "an obligatory practice in the rites of survival" and since "we … ourselves manufactured our own robbers, the solution therefore lays in a more sobering prescription" (2001, p. 64), it lays in what Osundare, as cited in Osofisan (2001, p. 64) prescribes, "altering our social and political set-up, creating a more equitable society and democratising our polity…".

Adilieje, Nnedinma and Osoku (2009, p. 1), have noted that evidences of class conflict in Nigeria could include "… the Anglo-Nigeria defence pact imbroglio, the Ali-must-go episode, the Anti-structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) riot, … the face-off between the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) cum the people of Nigeria and the Nigeria ruling class over the pump price of petroleum…" The prolonged protests of the public over the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and the persistent protest by the Niger Delta youths over marginalisation of the region in the distribution of national resources can also be added. All of these issues are political phenomena and the distribution of resources is a central motif in the organisation of power in any given society and a strong factor in the struggle for power. This is why Gbilekaa's (1997, 2016) argues that a historical materialist approach is imperative for the diagnosis of Nigeria's problem by the nation's dramatists, if genuine efforts will be made to source solutions.

2.5 Theoretical Framework:

Our theoretical framework for this study is Postcolonial Theory. African literary critics have applied different literary theories to appraise or analyse literary works till date. Such theories include structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics, formalism, and psychoanalysis. However, the emergence of the postcolonial theory has shown it as a very relevant theory that could be used to

analyse creative outputs of the third world people, particularly the literary works. While some of these Western-oriented theories provide indepth analysis of language and style, they provide, as rightly noted by Adeyemi (2003, p. 92), "little about the relationship between language and society". This inadequacy of Western theories to sufficiently explain typical African socio-cultural and political trauma in the hands of the imperialists is also adduced to by Gandhi (1998, p. ix) who agrees that "neither the assertions of Marxism nor those of poststructuralism, however, can exhaustively account for the meanings and consequences of the colonial encounter". Though these theories are relevant to postcolonial analysis, however, postcolonial theory is more encompassing and possessing the material facts to account for the then (past actions) and now (the relics) of colonialism.

Although these Western-oriented theories have been adapted by critics for the analysis of cultural productions of Africans (third world generally), such theories do not reckon with typical African socio-cultural practices such as mysticism and so lack the analytical potency to thoroughly analyse typical African literary texts. Examples of these are Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis and structuralism. Marxism even considers literature as an instrument of oppression of the masses by the bourgeoisie, an instrument of indoctrination by the ruling class, and does not give room for explanation of religious worship in the socio-cultural worldview of societies but conluded that it is the opium of the masses. On its part, feminism mainly advances the interest of the female gender against patriarchal domination. Since theories are analytical tools made up of rules and principles formulated by proponent(s) to enhance guided interrogation (analysis) of scholarly and creative works, a theory that, from conception and inception, was designed to suit the interrogation of Third World countries' (such as Africa) literary and cultural productions such as plays-texts, novels and poems is considered necessary to be adopted as framework to examine the plays of our chosen dramatists in this study, hence our choice of postcolonial theory.

The scholarly activities of the colonial writers and theorists, such as William Shakespeare, Joseph Conrad, Daniel Dafoe, J. M. Cotezee, and Ruth Finnegan, constitute another device applied

by the West to inscribe European culture and beliefs on the colonised people of Africa. The writing of these people which have been described as colonial discourse constitutes an affront on the humanity of the third world, particularly Africa. The main aim of this group was to demean the colonised by portraying them in their writings as backward, uncultured, without history, lacking initiatives and with extreme poor intelligence to manage their own affairs. In contradinstinction, the Westerners (Europeans) are portrayed in the same writing as civilised, wise, progressive, having the fine cultures, possessing concrete history, and intelligent to manage their own affairs. Such sentiments are engraved in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Dafoe; in *Heart of Darkness* (1902) by Joseph Conrad; in *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare; and in *Foe* by Cotezee (1986).

In all, the colonial discourse tended to create the impression that the Western culture was supreme to all others: that the languages of the colonised were unusable; that the religion of the colonised was occultic, barbaric and unacceptable to global humanity, which they measured only by themselves as reference point; that the personality of the colonised was primitive and uncivilised; that the performance/entertainment forms of the colonised were not drama, because they did not correlate to that of Europe; that the colonised was weak and incapable of governing themselves; that the political system of the colonised was uncivilsed, ineffective and must be discarded; and that the entire lifestyle of the colonised was a sham that must be stopped at all cost. For the colonialists, on the other hand, they had the belief that everything about them was perfect; therefore, they must be the standard of measurement in all facets of life. This claim to universalism persisted, arguably for close to four centuries.

Postcolonialism as a theory of literature that is geared towards addressing the power of representation in colonised societies neither started as a spontaneous practice nor can be ascribed to any individual. The consensus among scholars is that it evolved through an interdisciplinary area of study that was preoccupied with discourses relating to historical, cultural, political, economic and social consequences of colonialism on the third world countries. Notwithstanding, as Qayson (2000, p. 3) explicates, “it is generally agreed that the single most influential work to define the

purview of the term was Said's *Orientalism* published in 1978". Although Said himself did not mention the term 'postcolonialism' in the book, he, however, establishes the link between knowledge and power. Quayson (2000, p. 3) also observes that, "Said's contribution made a clear connection between knowledge and power, thereby inserting a postructuralist problematics into the study of colonialism that was central to concerns being developed in other discourses". Said's main argument was that the Western academic discipline of the Orientalism was "a means by which the orient was produced as a figment of Western imagination for consumption in the West, and also as a means of sub-serving imperial domination" (Quayson, 2000, p. 4).

Postcolonialsim is a home-grown theory that originated from intellectuals from the third world countries and finds suitable application in colonialism, imperialism and their consequences on third world countries. Apart from the trios of Said, Spivak and Bhabha, who are considered champions of the theory, other scholars who have made significant contributions to postcolonial theory include Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, George Lamming, Stephen Slemon, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Alan Lawnson, and Charles Larson. There are others, such as Flemming Brahms, Benita parry, Allan J. Bishop, Ahijaz Ahmad, Jenny SharpSimon During, Linda Hutcheon, Narayan Wilson Harris, and Diana Brydon, to mention but a few.

Models of Postcolonial Theory

The diverse application of postcolonial theory, as have already been mentioned implies that its users are many – from Africa, Austrialia, Caribbean, South-East Asia, New Zealand, West Indies, South America, and the minority population of British Isles. This perhaps accounts for why there are different models (versions) of the theory, based on the peculiarity and persuasion of its users. Some of these models include the school of orientalism, the subaltern school and the nativists' school. Others are National model, Regional model, Race model, comparative models, language and place model, and models of hybridity and syncreticity, among others. While the national model emphasises the cultural peculiarity of the nation with a view to establishing a national literature; the regional model crosses the boundaries of language, nationality and race to

generate the concept of a regional literature. The comparison model involves itself in producing literature that makes the literary and cultural tradition of the cooperating regions the centre of its framework (Ashcroft et. al., 1989, pp. 14-37).

Several of these models of postcolonial theory have been developed such that it may be unwieldy to apprehend all of them in a single study. However, three categories of these models have been discussed by Adeyemi (2003, pp. 101-121). They are the "Metropolitan model", "Eclecticist model" and "Nativist model". We shall provide a brief explanation of these models, highlight the characteristics and aesthetics of the models and adopt two of them to interrogate the selected play-texts of the playwrights whose works are under consideration in this study.

The Metropolitan Model

The Metropolitan model is also known as the Exhilic, Interstial, Luminal model (Raji, as cited in Adeyemi, 2003, p. 103). In the class of this model are third world intellectuals that are trained by the colonisers. Most of them evolve their own creation of African culture, having had no concrete contact with the original culture of the people. Such writers do not possess the conviction that the colonised can muster enough courage to speak against his condition, in the face of the imperialist's threat to his identity. To them, the colonised should as well manage his condition of domination. In this group are Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha.

This model always attempts to find justification for colonialism. For instance, in her famous essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak"? (1988), Spivak, who borrowed the word subaltern from the Italian, Antonio Gramsci, who used it to refer to people of 'inferior rank' in the society, that is, the group who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling class, criticises the colonialists for the heinous act of colonialism, but concluded that the subaltern is mute and so 'cannot speak'. Although, like Said, she reiterates the Foucauldian views that "*Knowledge is not innocent, it is always operated by power*" (as cited in Kumar, 2019, p. 918), and insists that the construction of the east by the west is flawed and manipulated by the power, arguing also that there is an hidden agenda behind this (Kumar, 2019, p. 918), her assertion about the muteness of the subaltern is a way of arrogating

absolute power to the colonialist in the area of literature, a disposition that is not shared by many other postcolonial theorists in the other models.

The metropolitan model believes that it is not possible to use literature to effect any change of opinion or reverse perceived oppression and domination. Spivak shared this view with this researcher during a conversation on July 26, 2018, at Ilorin, before a reading of Ahmed Yerima's play, *Aetu*, in her honour at the Kwara State University (KWASU)'s conference centre. After the researcher had explained the intention of the department (performing arts) to do the play-reading and gave the summary of the play, she asked for the genre of the play and this researcher replied, satire. The researcher went further to explain that it satirises the act of maltreatment of women by the malefolk and seeks to alter the patriarchal attitude of male domination of their women counterparts. She responded with a question: "do you believe that literature can correct such ills in the society?" The researcher's reply in the affirmative was rejected ourightly. This pessimism by Spivak about the subaltern having a voice is also noted by Chakrabarty (2000, p. 24):

> Spivak's famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", a critical and challenging reading of a conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, forcefully raised these and related questions by mounting deconstructive and philosophical objections to any straightforward program of "letting the subaltern speak.

Although they recognise the dislocation of the colonised by the coloniser through how knowledge is constructed, and describe it as "epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1988, p. 281), yet they seem not to hold any significant hope in the epistemic liberation of the subaltern. The model believes that the impact of colonialism and imperialism on the "native" has been so much that the "periphery" cannot catch up with the "centre".

Other strand of the metropolitan model is the group which believe that the language of the "metropolitan centre" has become so predominant universally that the "margin" no longer needs to struggle to reverse it. Rather the margin should "appropriate" the language. In other words, the margin should adapt it as it may suit their own need, since, as this model feels, it may be

unnecessary to dissipate energy on trying to reverse a language that had taken roots in the life of the colonised society many years back. This is a way of these theorists asking the colonised to forget their language and promote the language of the coloniser. Works like *The Empire Writes Back* (1989) by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffiin represent this line of thought.

The metropolitan model also shares some of the views of the liberal colonialists such as John Stuart Mills, who claimed not to believe as did many of his contemporaries, that the third world colonies were inherently inferior, yet believed that it was inevitable that they needed paternal intervention from more civilised, progressive societies like Europe in order to stimulate growth in that spontaneous human development (as cited in Campbell, 2010, pp. 63-73). By this, the so-called liberal had, paradoxically, supported colonialism. In contradiction, they are also of the view that since colonialism brought along with it some positive development to the colonised such as education, railway and electricity it is unnecessary to mount total opposition to it; there should be some form of tolerance and acknowledgement of the good side of colonialism.

We are not in support of this view for a number of reasons: it still tactically inferiorises the personality of the colonised as if both the colonised and the colonisers do not belong to the same humanity; it still indirectly accepts the colonised as "Other" and places the coloniser as "Self"; it fails to admit that cultures may differ they are not superior to each other, as it is the way of life of a people; this theoretical strand of postcolonialism sounds too defeatist for a group that wants to turn the table against "negative constructionist" of the "Other" that the coloniser is and; finally, it may be interpreted to be a tacit approval of colonialism.

The Eclecticist Model

The Eclecticist model is a nation model which seeks to create a national identity for the "margin" through literature. It strives to make the culture and tradition of the colonised the centre of its framework. The aim of the eclecticist model is to achieve cultural rejuvenation, re-invigorated political consciousness and socio-economic transformation in order to shake off the pains of colonialism. The model targets the obliteration of "Otherness" position that European imperialists

have confined the third world by engaging in a literary engagement that emphasises the humanity of the colonised. It therefore, embarks on an anti-imperialist mission through the employment of various media of identity formation, assertion and impression as may promote the image of the "periphery". By doing this, it seeks to correct wrong and negative impression which had been created by the West about the "Periphery".

Although the model acknowledges the reality of colonialism and its effects on the "margin", it strongly believes that a lot can be done to significantly obliterate its effects on its population. This model rejects in its entirety the "Master"/"Servant" relationship picture of Europe and the third world that have been created by the coloniser. It seeks to advocate through its literature equal humanity of both the coloniser and the colonised. Since citizens of many third world countries have subconsciously believed and accepted the "civilising mission" of Europe and have acted in affirmation of this, such as in their preference for products made by the "centre" and learning the language of the centre as a top priority, the eclecticist model strives to awake the "margin" and to expose fallacy of the civilising mission as a décor by the colonialists to allow for the continued oppression, exploitation and domination of the "margin", and to make the margin to accept the condition of its domination without grumbling.

The eclecticist model realises that the reference point of postcolonialism is colonialism; hence history of the occurrence of the period of colonialism is of tremendous significance. It, therefore, holds historiography (both of the colonial and pre-colonial) as one of the significant tools to address the reality of the present. Its mission is to recall the past in an attempt to reconstruct the present. In like manner, it recognises the tradition and culture of the colonised which Europe had rejected as barbaric and occultic in their attempt to impose their culture on the colonised people. The model therefore, employs these cultural and traditional materials in the construction of it literatures.

Confronted with the reality of colonialism, the eclecticist model accepts the fact that the contact of the third world population with its colonisers has created a form of double identity for

the natives due to the foreign culture which the colonisers imposed on them. Therefore, the confusion generated by this hybridity needs to be managed with utmost care. One of the instruments of oppression, as observed by (Ashcroft et. al., 1998, p. 7), is "control over language. The imperial education system installs a "standard" version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalised all "variants" as impurities". Since language is a medium power, the eclecticist model of postcolonial theory considers that the postcolonial literature must define itself through linguistic assertiveness.

Rather than reject the language of the colonisers which have become part of the local populace outrightly, this model decides to live by this reality. Nonetheless, it has devised a way to walk around this social/cultural problem by seizing the language of the centre and replacing it through the process of abrogation and appropriation. These practices give the eclecticist model an opportunity to exercise a great measure of control over the language of the "Master". In doing this, this model targets the dismantling of the "standard English", officially known as Received English (RE). The reason is because, though this English had become part of the populace, especially its intellectuals and a good number of the political elite, the eclecticist model views the "standard English" as the language that has "become the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and medium through which conceptions of "truth" "order" and "reality" become established" (Ashcroft et al, 1998, p. 7); simply put, the language of oppression. Ashcroft et al. (1998, p. 38) explicates abrogation this way:

> Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetics, its illusory standard of normative or "correct" usage, and its assumption of traditional or fixed meaning "inscribed" in the words. It is a vital moment in the decolonising of the word and the writing of "english".

On the other hand, appropriation is described as "a process by which the language is taken and made to "bear the burden" of one's own cultural experience, or, as Raja Rao puts it, "to convey in a

language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own" (as cited in Ashcroft et al., 1998, pp. 38-39).

Therefore, it is the practice of the eclecticist model to dismantle (simplify) the "standard" English so as to bring it closer and more acceptable to the local populace. This it does in different ways which, as has been explicated above, include reversal of the assumptions of privilege and normal and "correct" inscription intended by the "standard" English, and introducing into it various linguistic paraphernalia that are products of the colonisers' native languages. This could be done through the process of diffusion, inflection, adulteration, addition, omission, and silence. An example is by stripping the Master's language of its essential ingredients, without filling the gaps created by such removal, in order to present it as inadequate or unsuitable to satisfy the communication needs of the colonised people.

Another way is to infuse it with traditional linguistic paraphernalia such as proverbs idioms, tropes, panegyrics, and some culture-laden traditionally-inspired figures of speech. These practices deny the imperial language the colonial privilege and empower the local languages to subordinate the "standard" English by way of a domineering presence of the local language in its usage. This is a way of rejecting the position of "Otherness" and negotiating "Self" for the "periphery". Some notable exponents of this model in Nigeria are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan and Olu Obafemi. From the West Indies or Caribbean, we have writers like Derek Walcott and Wilsoon Harris. Others are Ama atto Aidoo and Efua Sutherland from Ghana, and from Kenya, we have playwrights like Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

The eclecticist model even goes to the extent of recalling pre-colonial history in its cultural productions and literary engagements in its attempts to assert itself as the literature of the Africans and reject the idea of "Otherness". Notwithstanding, it does not subscribe to the idea of a wholesale return to the pre-colonial, socio-cultural and economic lifestyle. Rather, the model employs these historical recollections for the purpose of identity assertion and for what Tsaaior (2011) refers to as reconstituting global regime of knowledge. This is also a recognition of the culture and traditions of

the "periphery" as a critical source of episteme and at the same time a critical pointer to the ontology of the populace.

Similarly, the ecleticist model recognises the site of traditional politics and its apparatuses as a potent process of communal ordering, tool of societal peace and avenue where conflicts are resolved amicably. Therefore, in the creative endeavours of the eclecticist theorist, there is still regard for the traditional form of politics as bonafide part of the political arrangement of the society to which they belong or where they originate. As a matter of fact, this model of theory rever the traditional political institution as the closest administrative institution to the grassroots and one that understands the temperament of the citizens more than the orthodox political system imposed by the colonisers. This does not, however, mean that the model rejects the western or orthodox political systems that are prevalent now in the African landscape. In fact, in consonance with its acceptance of the socio-political and religious hybridity that has been engendered by the contact with Europe and the consequent unequal relation, the theory acknowledges a "medley" of these two political frameworks, either working side by side simultaneously or together occasionally, in the ordering and management of the society.

Although critics of this model have pointed out that its use of the English language in its literary endeavours is an extension of the colonial literary form and is subjected to colonial literary conventions, but one thing to bear in mind is that it squarely rejects the condition of domination by the West and uses the language of the "Master" to attack the "Master". Besides, the use of the Master's English is not a wholesale; it has been deprived of its hegemonic privileges and streamlined or manipulated to suit the need of the native population, especially where there is always the need to communicate across cultures in African countries that are peculiarly multicultural and multilinguistic in constitution and characteristics. In addition, the English as a linguistic medium provides a good opportunity for synergy between the home-based Africans and Africans in diaspora. The aesthetics of this model can be seen in the works of notable members of the model. This include Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Soyinka's *Interpreters*, *The Lion and the*

Jewel, and *Bacchae of Euripedes*, Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame*, Yerima's *Oba Ovonramwen*, and Idegu's *Ata Igala*, to mention just a few.

The Nativist Model or Nativism

This model of postcolonial theory has a lot in common with the eclecticist model, though there are also points of departure. The nativists are of the opinion that colonialism has done a great damage to the very existence of the colonised societies globally, as it was not only a practice of domination but a product of slavery and an organised exploitative process that threatens to anihilate its victims. Therefore, call of the nativist is to go back to root. The model believes that politically, socially, economically and in terms of religion, colonialism eroded so much of the natives' norms and values. The position of the nativist is to reinvent, reconstruct and reconstitute the traditions of the natives that the "Master" had destroyed. Ashcroft et. al. (2007, p. 143) describe nativism within the context of postcolonialism as, "a term for the desire to return to indigenous practices and cultural forms as they existed in pre-colonial society".

The nativists call for the recovery and promotion of the pre-colonial, indigenous ways, therefore, nativism calls for African traditional approach to literary criticism, by being political in the criticism of the African literature. The writers of the nativist model are highly political in their works and they brazenly advocate for the decolonisation of the African literature through various means. Their crusade is that the literature of the third world should be stripped of anything that could privilege the colonial master. By this, it implies that the literature should be fraught with cultural, political and traditional nuances of the colonised's lifestyle and worldview, particularly pre-colonial forms as much as possible.

Notable writers of the nativist model include Ngugi wa Thiong'o from Africa, Le Roi Jones, who later, in protest against racial discrimination, converted to Islam and changed his name to Amiri Baraka (just as did Casius Clay, former heavyweight boxing champion, who for the same reason converted to Islam and changed his name to Mohammed Ali) from America, Okot P'Bitek, Obi Wali, Chiwenzu, Onwuchukwu, Ikechukwu, and Achille Mbembe among others. The works of

the Africans among these people just mentioned reflect Africa as the centre of their writing. Their creative works are imbued with traditional African cultural and traditional norms and values; their critical works are no less constituted. The clarion calls to other Africans to Afrocentricise their cultural productions are also strong.

As noted by Adeyemi (2003, p. 115), "Chinwenzu, Onwuchukwu and Ikechukwu (1980)'s work entitled, *Towards the Decolonisation of African Literature* seems to inaugurate the new spirit of Afrocentricity in the criticism of African literature". The argument of the work is that since the colonialists have mindlessly oppressed African and exhibited unrestrained aggression and domination over the continent, the culture of such people and all they represent do not worth embracing. The cultural, political, economic, social, and religious deprivations suffered by Africans as a result of the imperialists' aggression, they argue, should be "repudiated" through a total rejection of European ideologies and lifestyle and a radical Africanisation of education, politics, religion, media and cultural and economic policies.

Another typical exponent of the nativist model is Ngugi wa Thiong'o from Kenya. In his book, *Decolonising the Mind*, he engages in the mission to debunk the imperialist propagandist idea of pointing to tribal differences as the cause of African problems. This is an engagement which Ngugi (1986, p. 1) considers as a ploy by the West to deflect attention of the world from the atrocities of colonialism and imperialism, "This misleading stock interpretation of the African realities has been popularised by the western media which likes to deflect people from seeing that imperialism is still the root cause of many problems in Africa".

In Afrocentricising African literature, the nativist model insists that the language of African literature must reflect the language of Africa, precisely the native languages. This is the point at which one discovers the dual position of some of the African writers in terms of commitment to the postcolonial theory. For instance, Ngugi is known to be a staunch advocate of nativism, but he seems to be oscillating between this model of postcolonialism and the Eclecticist model, as his creative endeavours have proved. He is known to have written many of his plays in the language of

the “Master”, though highly tempered with the local linguistic idioms. These include *The Black Hermit* (1962), *This Time Tomorrow* (1966), and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathy*, which he wrote with Micero Mugo in 1976.

Later on, in his career, Ngugi turned to writing in Gikuyu, a major language of the people of Kenyan, through a studio theatre experimentation, by name Kamiriithu, in which he involved the Kenya peasants, as actors and actresses, including singers and musicians and collaborators in other necessary ways. Along with Ngugi wa Miiri, he wrote and produced *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (*I will Marry When I Want*) in 1977. They also wrote a second one in 1982, entitled *Maitu Njugira* (*Mother Sing for Me*) but was never allowed to be staged (performed) by the Kamiriithu group. The experiment was shortlived when the post-colonial government in Kenya violently stopped the project. Soon after, he reverted back to writing in English. Ngugi (1986, pp. 8-44) advanced reasons for his decision to go back to the root, that is, to write in Gikuyu language:

> As a writer who believes in the utilisation of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. … For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people . . .

Critics of nativist model, such as the colonial discourse theorists like Spivak, and Bhabha, argue that to realise the objective of retrieval of a pre-colonial culture with a view to returning to it will be a little problematic considering the intermingling of cultures which was one of the ideologies promoted by colonialism which is difficult to dismantle. Besides, the multicultural components of the present African society make this ambition a pipe dream that may be difficult to achieve. The problem of the minority groups that will resist their possible emasculation also constitutes obvious obstacle. Besides, some of the proponents of the theory who are not grounded

in the native languages have found it very difficult to sustain writing in the original language of their people. Example here is Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

As we proceed to the next chapter of this study where we will engage in critical analysis of the selected play-texts that we have chosen for that purpose, we shall do so applying a combination of the Eclecticist and the Nativist models.

Justification for Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory, as at today, provides the framework for a realistic interrogation of peculiar African literature because its theoretical premise is the struggle against colonialism. More specifically, it is a reaction and resistance to political, economic, social, religious and cultural domination of the third world by the West. More so, it seeks to negotiate an intellectual identity for the African literature, socio-politically and culturally. As we have earlier stated, foreign-formulated theories of the West have been inadequate in explaining the socio-political and the cultural life of Africa, especially the dysfunction of the African society which are actually the consequences of its colonial experience. Since the proponents of Western theories are culpable in the imperialism meted to Africa, their theories often compromise the facts of African current post-colonial predicaments. The truth is that in reality, many spheres of life of the African post-independence states are dictated by Western influence through colonisation and neo-colonisation and only postcolonial theory will be sufficient to explain many of these influences.

Being a home-grown theory, postcolonialism is specifically propounded to explain the prevalent and historical trajectory of the third world. Its aesthetic of striving to carve an identity (a "self" image) for the African literature, different from the position of "other" that the literature of the West has confined it, is a welcome development that is capable of enhancing the realisation and advancement of the African literature. The explanation offered by the colonial discourse for colonialism and the state of the third world (past and present) is hypocritical, one-sided and still imperialistic. Postcolonial theory, therefore, helps to expose the hypocritical and insincere practices

of the colonial discourse and points to the real reasons behind the subjugation of Africa and its attendant neo-colonial presence of the West in the third world.

The wide canvas of application provided by postcolonial theory also makes it more suitable for the analysis of African literature, especially our selected play-texts. Postcolonial theory is known to have derived its contents and aesthetics from various disciplines such as economics, sociology, politics, religion, history anthropology and of recent in ecosystem. Therefore, it has a wide range of application which also makes cross-disciplinary approach to the theory quite utilitarian. This, in particular, even makes the theory very useful to our own analysis as this study operates not just within the arts but also in politics. It will, therefore, assist us in investigating issues that are thrown up across various disciplines by the contents of our selected play-texts and correct previously held notions that have hitherto been informed by western representations of the third world (this time Africa) via the literatures of the West.

A number of reasons account for why we have decided to combine the eclecticist and nativist models for our textual analysis in this study. One, though both the Eclecticist and the Nativist models have some overlapping aesthetics, each of them cannot independently account for an adequate analysis of our play-texts. For instance, the nativists advocate for a complete jettison of the language of the coloniser and that postcolonial literature should be written in the language of the colonised. The eclecticist model does not call for this. Rather, it believes in the "replacement" of the language of the coloniser in form of abrogation and appropriation. Considering that our primary sources of material in this study are written in English language (language of the coloniser), it becomes inevitable for us to apply the eclecticist model.

Also, the featuring of mysticism (magic) or mystical phenomena in African literature is highly favoured by nativist model. This provides accommodation for related theories such as magic realism. Though the eclecticist does not reject this, it also does not fetishise it. It, therefore, also becomes advisable for us to apply some aspects of this model in order to foreclose the risk of inadequate analysis. Finally, eclecticist theory does not call for a total return to the root of the

colonised as does the nativist model, as it considers it an impracticable ambition in this postmodern age. While it is possible to write, for instance, African literatures in African languages (many Africans are already doing this), it is incontrovertible that the audience will be limited compared to those literatures written in the colonialists' languages, especially English. Besides, the problem of publishing is also a factor as majority of the available publishing outlets, especially ones with international status and strength, are controlled by the West.

As we proceed to analyse our play-texts with postcolonial theory, we shall do so within the purview of the eclecticist and nativist models to examine features such as theme, structure and style that are adopted by the playwrights. There are two types of theme in the plays – main and sub themes. We shall examine the main themes and explicate in the process how the sub-themes have helped to further the main themes, which reflect the politics of space. The main themes to be examined are politics of exclusion/gender politics, betrayal/poor representation, political injustice and betrayal, politics and societal survival, colonialism and resistance, politics and ethnicity, rejection and response, and politics of restructuring. The sub-themes which shall not be diiscussed separately but identified under the main themes are money and politics, violence in politics, magic and mystical realism, corruption, hybridity and ambivalence, electoral fraud and religious politics. Under structure and style, we shall examine plot construct, characterisation, language, dramatic techniques, symbolism. All of these will be used with a view to drawing out how the playwrights have employed them to portray the politics of space.

This chapter has critically reviewed the major themes and inclinations surrounding relevant discourses on Nigeria's socio-political dynamics and its postcolonial drama, drama and the democratic space of Nigeria, drama and politics in the military dispensations of Nigeria, Nigeria's post-colonial drama of the early independence years, and politics and power in Nigeria's post-colonial drama. The following chapter of this study examines the politics of space in the selected plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye.

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICS OF SPACE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF IRENE SALAMI-AGUNLOYE

3.1 Introduction

This study projects Salami-Agunloye as a post-colonial playwright who expends her creative endowment majorly on the political praxis of her nation. Consequently, in this chapter, we examine the aesthetics of politics in her plays, especially in relation to the politics of the postcolonial literature, with its dual crystallisation of the politics of the post-colonial state.

Before we proceed, however, we hereby present a brief biography of our playwright. Doing this is necessary, as it will provide us with certain knowledge of her person, what inform her creative oeuvre, particularly playwriting, her cultural production till date and, probably, what she is currently working on. This in turn may enhance our understanding of some of her works as we proceed with our analysis.

3.2 A Biography of Irene Salami-Agunloye

Professor Irene Isokene Salami-Agunloye was born on January 1, 1958 to Chief D. N. Oronsaye and Princess Florence Iriowen Oronsaye, at Benin City. She is a native of Iguogbe town, in Uhunmwode Local Government Area of Edo State. She attended Esigie Demonstration School, Abudu from 1963 to 1969. She proceeded to St. Maria Goretti Girls' Grammar School, Benin City in 1970 and finished her secondary education there in 1974. In 1976, she was admitted to the University of Jos and completed her first degree in 1980, graduating with a B.A (Hons.), (Second Class Upper) in Theatre Arts. In 1981 she was employed by her Alma Matter to where she began her teaching career. In 1982, she began her Master's degree course in Theatre Arts at the Nigerian Premier University, the University of Ibadan, and graduated in 1983. She gained admission into the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 1986 to pursue her doctorate degree in Theatre Arts, specialising in Drama in Education, and completed the programme in 1990, at the end of which she was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. She was given a Chair by the University of Jos, in 2004 when she became a Professor of Theatre Arts. Professor Irene Isokene Salami-Agunloye is

the current Director, Centre for Gender & Women's Studies, University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Professor Salami-Agunloye has published articles in many academic journals and has edited many books. Among them are *Women, Theatre and Politics: Contemporary Perspectives* (2006); *Emerging Gender Issues and Gender Policy Development in Nigerian Universities* (2006), *Gender, Development and Higher Education* (2006) and *African Women: Drama and Performance* (2008). "Retelling History, Restaging African Heroines in Drama and Film" is currently at the press to be published soon. Apart from that, she is also an accomplished playwright who has published a good number of plays. Among them are *Short Plays for Juniors* (1986), *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* (2001), *The Queen Sisters (Ubi & Ewere*) (2002), *More than Dancing (2003), Sweet Revenge* (2004) and *Idia the Warrior Queen of Benin* (2008). Another of her plays, "Disposable Womb" is currently at the press and may soon be published". Professor Irene Salami-Agunloye is the current Director, Centre for Gender and Women's Studies, University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria.

Professor Irene Salami-Agunloye is influenced by a number of factors in her creative endeavour. One of these is the literary output of many historians who have written about Benin Female historical figures. Salami-Agunloye considered their literary production as too scanty and at the same time discriminatory against women. Interestingly, her father, Chief D. N. Oronsaye was one of them. She believed that the female historical figures of Benin have not been given enough historical space that could have documented their contributions to the development of Benin Kingdom.

In addition, she is disenchanted by what she perceived as deliberate discrimination against women in the political space. She is not satisfied that in the history of Nigeria, no woman has risen politically to the level of a State Governor, the highest they have ever climbed politically is the position of a deputy governor, whereas men have been everything politically – local government councillors, local government chairmen, state governors and head of federal governments.

Consequently, Salami-Agunloye takes it upon herself to employ creative writing, this time play writing to redress these perceived unfair treatments of women by their male counterparts in the society. Although Salami-Agunloye belongs to the middle class in the society, she belongs, specifically, to the elite of the society. This has placed her in a vantage position that makes her well-informed about the socio-political occurrences in her society and also enables her to "associate" with important political figures in her society. The fact that her father was a Senior Minister and a member of the National Assembly in the Second Republic might also have been an influence on her in writing plays with political themes. Although she is not a politician herself, her closeness to political figures gives her access to privileged information about her country and she is correspondingly encouraged by such political figures to put some of these things (anomalies and impunities) into the public domain through the instrumentality of drama, with a view to pressing for change.

In addition, having been once the President of the Association of Women in Academics (AWA), she has a lot of exposure to pressing and burning issues about women, particularly their needs and nuances of perception about the socio-economic and issues of their society, including the strong feelings women have about the political development of their nation. This presidency has also taken her to various local and international fora which exposed her to peculiar roles of women in national development and the kind of rights and privileges that should be accorded women in nation building.

Ideologically, Salami-Agunloye belongs to the right of the ideological spectrum, she is a liberalist-humanist. She does not subscribe to the socialist ideology, but she confessed to being a feminist, and her works also confirms this confession. She cannot tolerate women's interests being submerged or compromised. However, her kind of feminism is African feminism, which can be explained in its different forms, such as womanism, motherism or stiwanism. She does not press for women being elevated above men but she believes there must be gender complimentality. In addition, she is a Christian, who believes in the word of God and believes also that human activities

should be dictated by the fear of God, fairness to humanity, love, forgiveness and compassion. This and all the aforementioned factors influence and motivate Salami-Agunloye as a creative writer.

The post-colonial environment in which Salami-Agunloye operates has necessitated a dramatic engagement that elicits political commentary from creative writers and Salami-Agunloye responds appropriately to this. While Irene Salami-Agunloye (also known in the past as Irene Isoken Salami) may have written many gender-sensitive plays, the fact is that she has significantly exploited serious political themes and placed them within the political domain. This in turn, unavoidably, lends them to profound political interpretations.

The thrust of her plays, mainly, is the push for change from existing socio-political order from the critical realist ideological spectrum. For instance, her play, *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* is weaved around the power struggle between two political heirs and the intervention of an ethno-national heroine to ensure justice by effecting change in the political order through a subterranean plot. *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* is "a revolutionary" play that questions the status quo - the parochial mischievous political demand for the death of the Queen Mother - and the converse exertion of feminist agency that situates the play within Gender Politics. *Sweet Revenge* is also political, having been set within the democratic space of Nigeria with all its political trappings and power play. *More than Dancing* negotiates women's political agency within the realm of politics, particularly democracy. The Queen Sister, though may not be as overtly political as others it, nonetheless, depicts some measure of politics as Ubi is bent on asserting her position within the palace.

The political relevance of Salami-Agunloye's works is so strong that it could apply to any national setting. Idoko and Ademiju-Bepo (2009, p. 220) observe something in this direction concerning Salami-Agunloye's works that,

> the fact remains that Agunloye's plays exhibit strong thematic relevance both at the immediate national and international settings. Of such universal thematic relevance are the issues of generational transfer and good leadership which have bedevilled Africa's and indeed Nigeria's ethos and politics for some time now.

In terms of gender politics, Salami-Agunloye is a key player. For instance, her works transcend the male-female binary system and move to the realm of politics that explore the experiences that Monro (2005**,** p. 1) refers to as "the implications of gender and sexual fluidity and multiplicity for social policy, citizenship, new social movements, and democracy."

Salami-Agunloye also employs historical materials in the construction of her works which are meant to make political commentaries rather than mere historical recollection. *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*; *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin;* and *More than Dancing* are typical examples in this regard. This is an indication that the socio-cultural milieu of this playwright influences her greatly. Salami-Agunloye's recall of the images of past female political iconographies – heroines, political activists, successful business personages and political office holders – to reinforce her political message in *More than Dancing* demonstrates a rich knowledge of his nation's past. Apart from this, the deft treatment of the socio-political themes in her plays also reveal her deep understanding of the politics of her nation and at the same time demonstrates her overt aversion for the impunities that characterise the politics of her country. Beyond this, however, Salami-Agunloye's plays afford us the privilege of seeing through the mode, structure, components and other characteristics of Nigerian politics, generally since independence, but particularly in the latest political dispensation that started in 1999.

Her works also reveal her philosophical view of life as someone who recognises the problems of the society but always optimistic of a better society, given consistent and sincere remedial efforts on the part of the leaders. More so, she believes that leadership must be sacrificial if we must achieve an enduring socio-political re-engineering. This is a departure from the political praxis of the first generation of Nigeria playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Ola Rotimi (in his early plays) and Zulu Sofola. Osofisan (2001, p. 6) notes that Soyinka referred to his generation (this same group) as "a wasted generation" which denotes a pessimistic view of their society. Besides, the argument of critics is that the bulk of their works always denote what Osofisan

calls “tragic perspective” and argues that “unlike our elders, we could not accept the tragic resolution prevalent in the works of our eminent predecessors.”

3.3 Political Themes and the Politics of Space in the Selected Plays of Salami-Agunloye

In this sub-heading, we explicate the political themes in Salami-Agunloye’s selected plays. The four plays, once again, are *More than Dancing*, *Sweet Revenge, Emotan: A Benin Heroine* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*. Salami-Agunloye makes profound political statements that have cogent political significations for her society in these plays. In all of these plays, the unhealthy rivalry aimed at attaining power, entrenching oneself in power and the antinomic response of resistant forces in reaction to power - politics of space - constitute their thematic concerns.

Salami-Agunloye employs both the media of traditional and modern political institutions to express her concern about the socio-political and economic realities of her society, and at the same time provides necessary possible solutions. Both of these politcal frameworks represent the politics of the political space that can be appropriated to interpret the political activities within the Nigerian nation in particular and Africa in general. Besides that, the gender politics that incessantly plays out in the political terrain also becomes plausibly relevant for consideration in the process of this analysis.

3.3.1 Politics of Exclusion/Gender Politics in Salami-Agunloye’s *More than Dancing*

In *More than Dancing,* the politics of space reflects the contentious subject of gender discrimination in the political space and creatively expressed in form of struggle to reverse the trend. The attempt to exclude women from the mainstream political representation is overtly demonstrated as a political concern in the play. Although there are other sub-themes in the play, they are only employed to reinforce the main subject of politics of exclusion or what we have referred to as gender politics. Therefore, the sub-themes will only be treated as supplementary subjects to the politics of exclusion. Before going ahead with analysis, we present below is a brief story of the play.

Synopsis of *More than Dancing*

It is time for general elections and a presidential candidate is supposed to emerge for the United People's Liberation Party (UPLP). The male members of the political party take it as given that as usual, a male candidate will emerge. However, the women, led by Madam Bisi Adigun, would not tolerate the relegation of women to the background this time as far as representation is concerned. Rather than allow women to continue in the customary singing and dancing to promote the ambition of the men folk she rejects such appendage slot, sensitises the women politically, and mobilises them into a formidable front within the party. In spite of the massive opposition from the male members of the party, a woman candidate emerges and goes ahead to win as the president of the nation.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *More than Dancing*

As already mentioned, the central political theme of *More than Dancing,* is politics of exclusion. At the beginning of this play, Madam Bisi (the Women Leader) stops the women who are dancing from entertaining the guests at the UPLP mini-convention. Her grouse is that women are significantly excluded from political participation and representation by the patriarchal configurations of her society. According to her, only women dance at political rallies and similar events, whereas the men take the power and positions, insisting that the women's subjection to subordination must stop. This sparks the conflict of the play that is one of Salami-Agunloye's many creative fora of rejecting men's domination of the women in African politics, particularly in Nigeria. It is also her ploy to encourage, more precisely, instigate greater participation of women in politics and earn them more representation in government.

This struggle is nothing but the politics of space, engaged in by the women to pressurise the men for political recognition and secure a significant space in the management of the affairs of their nation, thereby having access to equally significant resources that can cater more meaningfully to the needs of the women. The conflicts that the attempt generates in the play mount as the women strategise to, not only denounce the masculine and chauvinistic practice of the men, but also

organise themselves to sponsor a woman presidential aspirant in their party's (UPLP) forthcoming primaries. The ultimate goal here is to produce the party's aspirant who will fly the flag of the UPLP in the forthcoming Presidential election. They are no longer satisfied with the crumbs extended to them by the men whom they believe only use such things as inducements to enlist their support for their (men's) aspiration to attain political power. This is clearly seen in Madam Bisi's resentment of the treatment meted to the women of UPLP by the men:

> Look at the high table … How many women do you see up there? …Look at us dancing and collecting two bags of rice, one bag of salt, one carton of magi cubes and two wrappers to be shared among thirty-five women! Women, these are distractions. These are meant to perpetually keep us in subordinate position (*More than Dancing*, p. 1).

As the struggle for power, position and recognition continues in the play, we see a kind of convergence of hegemonies to dislodge a dominant hegemony represented by the men of UPLP who are bent on exerting their political power, since they control the party's machinery and structure as revealed in the words of Madam Bisi:

> Men are chairpersons, secretaries, vice chairpersons, treasurers, public relations officers, financial secretaries, publicity secretaries and so on. They are members of the board of trustees. Then we are remembered as women leaders. We are supposed to be a United People's Liberation Party; the liberation is for only men not for women (*More than Dancing*, p. 2).

Characteristically, the postcolonial literature is a counter hegemonic literature that opposes domination of the "Other" by the people who constitute themselves as "Self". The ruling elite in Nigeria, like the UPLP leaders, have always striven to convince the other classes in Nigeria that their interests are those of all citizens, but postcolonial theory has detected the hypocrisy of this kind of political system, that it was the brainchild of the colonial hegemony. Not until the consciousness of people like Madam Bisi, Nona Odaro and Aisha begins to come alive, the men

have consistently and successfully employed the strategy against the women and over the years have made them work to strengthen the insatiable ambition of their men counterparts. Again, Madam Bisi's reaction to the entertainment offered by the women dancers attests to this:

> Enough of the dancing! … Year in, year out, primaries come and party elections go, all we do is dance. Is dancing all we can do? Look at the entire dancing troupes, how many men do you see? … For how long must we be denied our constitutional right? For how long must we continue dancing? (*More than Dancing*, pp. 1-2).

This is a common practice in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, where no female president has emerged since her independence and only a few of them have been Senators or members of the House of Representatives. The same scenario plays out at the state and local government levels; women representation in the government is very low compared to that of men. This has reflected since independence in the drama of Nigeria as already shown in chapter three of this study. As far as Madu is concerned, women "have no place in politics! Not in African politics or decision-making process!" (p. 30). Therefore, the men exert their power in a way that distracts the women from cultivating any serious interest in acquiring power. The statements by some of the characters in the play speak volume about this domineering strategy. For instance, Madu sees no reason why the party chairman should spearhead the nomination of a woman as intelligent, articulate and educated as Madam Bisi to become the Women Leader. Now that she has surrounded herself with many educated and enlightened women such as doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, university lecturers and many others, and have mobilised women from all works of life for political interest, the men, as exemplified in Madu's statement, conclude, "that is dangerous, very dangerous" (p. 32). Also, Sani laments that the women "have become so wise that it is very difficult to use them now. They are awake from their long slumber" (p. 32). In fact, Terna is even more emphatic about this at a meeting called to discuss the implications of the women's action:

> We did not call this meeting to … readjust anything; we called this meeting to stop the women from contesting the presidency. We called this meeting to distract the

> women from desiring to participate. We succeeded in the past, we will succeed again. They demand for political space, we want them to know that there is no vacancy (p. 34).

Statements like the above indicate that the men in Nigerian politics have been using their women counterparts to further their own political ambition. This is precisely the style of colonial domination which both the eclecticist and the nativist models of postcolonial theory object. The two models hold the coloniser culpable on this problem because he (coloniser) suppressed the traditional politics of African nations. Colonialism was not only domineering; it was also imperialistic. The coloniser considered only African men to be active in the public domain to fend for their families. For this reason, men were allowed greater access to the little educational assistance provided by the colonial administration. This gave the men an undue advantage over the women and that "marked the beginning of women under-representation in formal agencies of government" (Assie-Lumuba, as cited in Awofeso and Odeyemi 2014, p. 105).

The discrimination of the colonial administration against the women did not stop at the education sector; it also affected the economic life of the African women. The restructure of African traditional economy and subsequent linkage of same to the capitalist international colonial economy of Europe for the purpose of siphoning produces from Africa to the "Centre" also accounted for the empowerment of men. African men who became producers of these export crops became financially better than their women counterparts and were able to fund elections both in the decolonisasion and the post-independence periods. The resultant effect of this is that, once they have tasted power and found it "sweet", the men consolidated on it and started excluding the women from decision-making avenues, with different kind of strategies. In essence, therefore, the men who engage in this practice within the space of politics are inheritors of colonialism, and so are not acceptable to Salami-Agunloye.

The choice of the name of the political party, United People's Liberation Party (UPLP), by Salami-Agunloye is somewhat strategic as everything that happens in the party contradicts the

meaning of the name. The party is neither cohesive nor the women members liberated as the statement of Madam Bisi above indicates. This appears a dramatic devise to give fillip to the conflict of the play. The party is somehow "torn apart" with different people going in different directions – people like Madu, Femi, Balat, Terna, Sani and others alike going in one direction to stop the women from gaining power; Hakeem also going in the opposite direction of those men, the chairman of the party and some governors operating in a subterranean way that initially lacks a definite direction until much later, and the unstable husband of Nona, Uyi, who is somehow convoluted and cannot be predicted – until later when there is a convergence of these power structures and groups, signifying nuances and strands of hegemony, into two opposing blocks, the stronger of which gives Nona the party's presidential ticket.

In their bid to keep power, the men of UPLP employ various forms of political strategies, both orthodox and unorthodox as reminiscent of the occurrences in Nigeria's murky political space. These include persuasion, intimidation, bribery, divisive methods, intrigues, deceptions, inducements, threats, character assassination, thuggery and vote buying. However, the women and other power blocks in the play employ legitimate, but potent political weapons (strategies) to upstage the men. The weapons include persuasion, suspense and pretence. For instance, while the men are putting pressure on them to back down on their move to nominate and sponsor a female presidential candidate, the women themselves are secretly wooing some men in the party to support their cause. In this they eventually succeed in drawing Hakeem (a senator), the chairman of the party, some governors and some Senators, to their side. When the pressure becomes too intense on the women, they are left with no option than to pretend to agree with the demand of the men to drop their decision to feature a woman presidential nominee during the party's primary election, only to spring a surprise later on.

This aforementioned dramatic device is an indication that Salami-Agunloye has a vast knowledge of the political terrain of her society and its operational aesthetics. She has a good knowledge of the antics of the politicians. This strategy becomes important to the women because

the men are bent on having their way, and the women probably fear that if care is not taken the men may apply force as they had done in a previous primary election, just to prevent them from attaining political power. Nona complains to Mama Nigeria over this:

> Our women are already being intimidated and are getting discouraged. Look at the primaries conducted last week. All sorts of gimmicks were marshalled to prevent women from participating at the various party primaries. In some cases, their male campaign managers sold out women candidates to their opponents; others were forced to step down for no tangible reasons. Our women leader, Madam Bisi shouted foul, no one took her serious. Men always keep shifting the goal post (p. 85).

It should be noted that the use of force and violence as a political strategy were the invention of the colonialists to subjugate the Africans; through threats and force, they intimidated the Africans to relinquish their political authority and surrender to the power of the "Metropolitan Centre" to administer the colonies. However, it needs to be understood that force does not only jeopardise the agency of the victim but also retard political development through loss of faith in the political process, due to a real sense of exclusion felt by the victims. Also associated with the vice of force is electoral violence. Both are twin brothers as, usually, people are forced to do the bidding of another through violence, since the reason for force is unwillingness to carry out the expectation of the aggressor. This brings into the picture the concept of oppression and imperialism which the colonial administration represented in Africa, and which postcolonial theory strongly condemns and rejects.

Among all the political vices already mentioned, the sub-theme of vote buying in this play seems to become more popular in recent times in Nigeria, although violence and ballot box snatching have also not stopped. In response to Hakeem's argument that democracy cannot afford to be gender-blind and that it must strive to achieve equality and representation of women and men in decision-making process, Terna insists: "Mr. Hakeem, what is all this talk about? If women want votes then they should be prepared to pay for it, just as we do" (p. 37). This characteristic of

Nigerian politics is not acceptable to Salami-Agunloye. This is because she is aware that it is one of the inventions of the male-dominated political space to intimidate and sideline the women from political involvement.

One of the crusades by Salami-Agunloye in this play is against the excessive use of money in the struggle for political space. This is reflected in the lines of some of the characters such as Alero: "However, politics doesn't have to cost so much money. A good electoral education will teach the people that virtue is better than price" (p. 3). Even when the men offer to give them thirty million naira to mobilise women for a male candidate, in addition to the 15 ministerial slots they promise to give to the women, they still reject it, citing impropriety of such offer as could be seen in the following conversation:

BISI: Keep your money; we do not need to moblise our women with money

SANI: Madam Bisi, don't deceive yourself. No Nigerian will respond to your call without money.

AISHA: That is because you have made it so (p. 96).

The above conversation also reveals the mental and socio-psychological temperament of the Nigerian voters, which make them vulnerable to manipulation through financial inducement by the political elite. It's like the Nigerian voters have been compromised politically, irretrievably addicted to the allurement of money, therefore, every political aspirant resorts to the use of money to mobilise them. This becomes more disturbing when Aisha's reply to Sani's does not seem to disprove Sani's statement but confirms it, though apportions blame. This vulnerability to financial inducement and manipulation may, however, also be attributed to other factors, particularly socio-economic and exposure to western ways of politicking. The traditional African political system in the pre-colonial period relied heavily on selection by the "Afobaje" (kingkmakers) enabled by Ifá divination to make the right choices. This practice is heavily supported by the nativist model of postcolonial theory. This attraction of money is accountable for the tension and violence that surround the election of political office holders today using the European methods.

Rather than receive illicit money from their male counterparts, the women of different status take it upon themselves to contribute the money required to fund their own campaign. While money is unavoidable in political contest all over the world, the excessive monetisation of the political process and the resort to stealing public fund to fund political contests is reprehensible. Money became a major feature in the contest for political offices through colonialism and imposition of foreign culture. If money was in use in the past, and if people were bribed in the pre-colonial African politics in the past, it was limited to one or two kingmakers out of many, and not as abused as it is in the imposed political system. The fact that the women reject the money is the playwright's way of rejecting the obnoxious act.

In Nona's conversation with Mama Nigeria, Nona highlights the odds against women in politics in Nigeria:

> the women are discouraged; most lack confidence in themselves; popular belief that men are born leaders; culture of fear prevents them from contesting elections; cultural view about the women; political life is based on male norms and values, and even in some cases, male lifestyle; women who enter into politics find the political, cultural and social environment often unfriendly and sometimes hostile; strong male cultures in all the existing political parties, so these limit the participation of women; the media would rather portray women as beauticians, fashion designers, movie stars, lovers, good or bad wives, husband snatchers, good dressers, wonderful teachers and nurses, thus perpetrating existing stereotypes in the society (pp. 85-88).

The observation of Nona Odaro is a confirmation of the colonial discourse theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, about the seeming inability of the 'subalterns' to speak out against their oppression. As far as these theorists are concerned, the subaltern cannot speak. Chakravorty (2000, p. 24) makes this observation: Spivak's famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" … forcefully raised these and related questions by mounting deconstructive and philosophical objections to any straightforward program of "letting the subaltern speak."

Mama Nigeria, however, seems to have answers to how the women could gain access to space (power) in Nigerian politics: “With determination, women can reach the highest levels in government” (p. 86). Therefore, women should continue to fight for liberty and social equality (p. 87); do more media relation, using the media for aggressive advocacy to promote equal participation and representation of men and women (p. 88); fight for the implementation of the Affirmative Action to the letter (p. 89); encourage women to team up against male hegemony and tokenism in political representation, and to be assertive in political ideas (pp. 88-89).

It is worth noting that the weak and discouraged voices of women like Minika may not augur well for the interest of women in Nigeria’s democratic development: “We are women under authority. Must we break our homes simply because we want political liberty?” (p. 11). This kind of defeatist attitude should not be encouraged in Nigeria’s democracy as iit will be unhelpful to the development of the women agency. This unwholesome attitude is a reflection of the damage colonialism has done to the personality and sense of self-worth of the African woman.

Another aspect of politics that Salami-Agunloye attempts to castigate is ethnic politics. However, the way it is handled suggests the problem as inconsequential. While the women attempt to suggest who their presidential candidate will be, the suggestion by Alero, Ebele, Azira and Ejura portrays allegiance to primordial interests, as the people they nominate are from their geographical areas or zone (p. 12). The way this big issue in Nigerian politics is put in check in the play by Aisha appears too simplistic. A mere rebuke, by Aisha, of those who moot the idea buries it. It is not so in Nigerian politics. Though ethnic politics is less emphasised now than before, it is still an issue that has not totally faded away. Similarly, for a party that will win at the national level, the way Aisha steps down for Nona who picks the presidential ticket is not a common practice in Nigerian politics; it appears too cheap and does not represent the kind of challenges and contentions that are usually generated by the struggle for picking party tickets to contest for elections in the country (pp. 14-15).

As a matter of fact, the men consider the women who are their political rivals as enemies and political contest itself as war: "… Do you expect me to give the weapon of war to my enemy?" (Balat's line, p. 37). Women in Nigeria operate within the same political clime as men, so they cannot be strangers to the dynamics of their locale. The concept of politics as war in Nigerian political space is still very much playing out. This, as earlier mentioned, is a colonial reprehensible pedigree inscribed upon the political space of Africa through the imperialist system of competitive struggle for very few available political offices that were "forced" on the colonies. It is, however, our view that what the playwright intends to achieve by making the heroines appear three times could as well be achieved if they appear only once. It appears that Salami-Agunloye is so obsessed by the desire to wrest power from the men and establish the agency of the women, hence the repeated appearance of the heroines to refresh the readers' mind of their heroic contributions to the socio-economic and political development of their societies. Apart from that, Salami-Agunloye's creative approach here also conforms to the postcolonial theory of recourse to history in order to validate the present. The reference to historical antecedents here by the playwright enlivens the consciousness of Nona Odaro to the fact that pre-colonial and colonial period African women had attained great feats, so she too can repeat history.

In all, Salami-Agunloye, in *More than Dancing*, tries to deconstruct the wrongly held patriarchal notion of the superiority of men to women, a notion that is so pervasive in Africa, particularly Nigeria, where men have literally taken over everywhere, and everything, particularly the political space. Through the eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory we have seen that characteristic of postcolonial writing; the playwright allows the eventual emergence of a woman presidential candidate. This is to dispel the claim of the colonial discourse that the "subaltern cannot speak". By so doing, Salami-Agunloye equally dismisses what Nazer (1987) refers to as the colonisers' assumption of their own superiority which they contrasted with the alleged inferiority of native people. Their belief in their own "*metropolitan* status", which is

exemplified by the dominant posturing of the male political actors of UPLP is ourightly rejected by Salami-Agunloye. Therefore, the play, in its entirety, negates the canon of the colonialists.

3.3.2 Political Betrayal and Poor Representation in *Sweet Revenge*

The problem of politics of space tackled by Salami-Agunloye in *Sweet Revenge* borders on the betrayal of trust reposed in elected political office holders and political appointees. This manifests in form of poor representation or "no representation at all" because they only represent themselves and forget the interests of those who give them the mandate. The irony, however, is even the bigger problem of their unwillingness to vacate the space of politics for more "responsible" politicians who may be willing, genuinely, to serve the masses well. By so doing, they deny the electorate the benefit of good governance and democratic dividends. Before we address the playwright's treatment of these themes, a brief storyline of the play is necessary.

Synopsis of *Sweet Revenge*

Sota travelled to Britain, leaving behind Aisosa, his wife, and four children, with a promise to return after four years, within which period he would have bagged a doctoral degree. Rather than return, he settles down with Cheryl, a British lady. When he finally returns eight years after, to contest for a Senatorial seat, his wife, Aisosa, becomes repulsive to him, having already given his heart to another. Succeeding at the polls, in which Aisosa plays a leading role by mobilising voters, he decides to abandon her in Benin and arranges for Cheryl to join him in Abuja, his new base. As the Senate Chief Whip, he becomes fraudulent and ignores the people of his constituency. They in turn mastermind his recall from the Senate, and his wife wins the vacant seat, with their support. With this development, condition takes a downward trend for Sota. Now that the reverse is the case with Sota and Aisosa (one negative, the other positive), he is left with no alternative than to beg Aisosa, now two-term Senate President, who, however, refuses his plea.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *Sweet Revenge*

Symbolically, the playwright begins the story of this play from the site of the colonial master, Britain, where Sota, Aisosa's husband goes to further his education. This is one of

postcolonial theory's method of revealing the inheritors or beneficiary of colonialism; those who take over the ways of the colonial "Masters" and their mechanisms of oppression and imperial power. Sota's desire in the politics of space reflects in his decision to accept the invitation of his constituency in Nigeria to return home to vie for the position of a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The lust for power in him becomes clear in the fact that until the invitation he seems to have made up his mind not to return to Nigeria, even though he left a wife and four children there. Evidences of this are**:** he has stayed in Britain for eight years, contrary to the four years that he promised his wife, Aisosa before leaving Nigeria; he has married another wife (a Briton), by name Cheryl, with a firm agreement with her to live in Britain permanently; and Cheryl is already pregnant for him. His decision to permanently switch his place of abode also means a readiness to imbibe the way of the colonised, though this leads to hybridity. Therefore, his sudden decision to go back to Nigeria, because he has been invited shows a longing for power.

The impression Sota has always created in the minds of the people of his local government back home is that of love for his people, and for good governance; that makes them think of him as a suitable candidate to represent their interest well at the Senate:

> The Senatorial seat has been zoned to our Local Government. You are our best choice for this position, the best suited for it. You have always written to us about the need for good governance, you fought for it from over there, now return home to establish these ideals. … You belong here (*Sweet Revenge*, pp. 1-2).

Sota's activities in the Movement for Democracy (a quasi political movement in Europe) to which he belongs, as revealed in the exposition of the play, account for the choice of him by his local government, but they seem to have wrongly assessed him from afar, as later developments prove.

The repeated mention of Britain, England, London and Nigeria in the play-text is a pointer to the fact that the play is set both in Britain and Nigeria. This scenario already creates the picture of a relationship between the coloniser and the colonised or between the "Centre" and "Periphery". This is a deliberate attempt by Salami-Agunloye to portray the scenario of Africans who have

immersed themselves in the so-called European education and civilisation, which the colonisers have flaunted as being better than any other, but have returned home to behave in the most uncivilised way. Sota can be seen as typifying Nigerian politicians who make empty promises to attract votes from Nigerian populace, but only to attain power and turn their back to those who voted them into office. This is pure employment of deceit as a means of gaining access to power. The political attitude of the inheritors of colonialsim in getting to power by deceit is symptomatic of the colonisers' take-over of African land through their deceptive civilising and developmental slogans (mission). Achebe, in *Things Fall Apart* (1958), identifies this type of political strategy as the cleverness of the white man (the coloniser) that was used to displace the traditional religion of the colonised. Obierika, in his conversation with Okwonkwo says:

> The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (pp. 124-125).

From the outset, Sota shows himself as an "unwilling messiah", when it comes to the issue of change (alleviating the problems of his people). This is demonstrated by his response to Cheryl's question about the role women will be allowed to play in the political dispensation of their dream new Nigeria (p. 10). Rather than say something more concrete and reasonable, his response is: "as soon as things are sorted out they will be duly compensated", as if women are outsiders and not part of the political re-engineering. This is a pointer to his imminent failure, even before he leaves England to go and start his so called "putting things right after so many years of damage" (p. 5). Though he promises to "answer the call of his people to recreate and build up this new Nigeria, so that Nigeria can stand tall among the super powers of the world" (p.10), his answer to Cheryl's question totally negates that spirit. Even when Regie, his friend and partner against militocracy, tries to encourage him to approach things differently, his response is nothing to write home about. The following conversation reflects this:

Cheryl: Did I hear you say compensated?

Sota: Yes, what about that?

Cheryl: You talk as if they are not part of the system. They should be involved right from the start.

Sota: Well, things don't work that way in Africa. We take a lot of things into consideration.

Regie: That is why you are going there. Sota, you are going there to join others to change things. Change attitudes, change values positively. You are going for change …

Sota: Changes don't happen so fast …

Regie: … Mainstreaming women into governance is a task we must all carry out at any cost.

Sota: … When I arrive in Nigeria, I will see what the situation is and then work out how women can be integrated into the system.

Regie: And what if the situation is not favourable?

Sota: Then there is nothing I can do (pp. 10-11).

It is not surprising, therefore, that when he comes out plainly that he "cannot make any commitment" (p. 12), Regie advises him: "Sota, if you know that you can't make sacrifices, better remain here. If you go with this attitude you may become a stumbling block or a clog in the wheel of their progress. Your action denotes lack of heroic will" (p. 12). True to Regie's word, Sota's non-performance in office (as a senator) becomes a stumbling block in the developmental aspiration, expectation and yearning for good governance by the constituency that he represents. This amounts to betrayal of the trust reposed in him by his constituency.

Again, Sota's constituency believes that he is the right person to represent them in the Senate, because he is politically conscious and highly educated; a Ph.D. holder for that matter. However, he dashed their hope of credible representation: "Your time has come. Now is your time to lead our people

out of the clutches of the oppressor" (p. 1). Although he sounds determined not to fail his people, "They have reposed their confidence in me and I will not fail them… Together we shall transform our land" (p. 2), all this turns out to be a mirage, mere rhetoric without substance. In the end, he not only fails them, he even rejected them, exerting his power as a Senator excessively and ignobly. For two years after his election, he refuses to visit those who elected him and does not extend any project or dividend of democracy to them. This is a betrayal of the trust the masses that spend their time and resources campaigning for him repose in him. Madam Power Power expresses this resentment: "How interesting. Dr Sota, you seem to have forgotten so soon how you used to bang on my gate at very odd hours just for us to strategise…You surprise me" (p, 46).

The problem of corruption in politics is glaringly associated with betrayal in politics in this play. Though educated and exposed to advanced democracies (such as Britain) yet Sota could not rise above the egocentric desire of cornering state resources for himself. The fact that Sota fraudulently obtains ten million pounds (£10m) state fund is a reflection of the excruciating corruption that has eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian nation, especially through the impunities practiced by the nation's political cum business class in the name of contract award. Aisosa rejects this illicit fund which Cheryl offers to transfer to her account, the same having been lodged in Cheryl's account by Sota: "… don't be too hasty. Do you realise that that is government money? We will become like him if we accept obviously ill-acquired money" (pp. 53-54). This is an evidence of the playwright's rejection of the kind of politics of the coloniser with all its contradictions that are reflected in the self-centrednes of the political players whose interest is merely in what they can siphone from the society.

Sota carries it too far when he refuses to grant audience to the women, who voted massively for him, when they go to see him in Abuja with the intention of persuading him to fulfill his campaign promises. As if that is not enough, he also gets them locked up by the police for three days, because he considers them nuisances, and as Madam Power Power says, "charging us for disturbance of peace and trespass of private property", simply because he is unwilling to see them. His action smacks of what Omotola (2009, pp. 194-220) calls "garrison democracy". This use of

security institution against perceived opposition by privileged people, particularly the political class, also shows that state institutions like this have become ready tools in the hands of the political elite to intimidate the opposition. As a consequence of his action, Sota loses his space in politics to Aisosa. In postcolonial theory's interpretation, Sota's attitude of exerting force and violence against those who gave him the mandate is a colonial mechanism of seizing by force and violence that which did not belong to them, a practice which has been mastered by the inheritors of colonialism. Rappa's (2016, p. 6) observation about such notorious violent activities is germane: "European colonialism developed and managed complex apparatuses to sustain violence against the colonised people, … the non-White natives regardless of race, gender or social class".

It is on record that many courageous pre-colonial and colonial figures that rose against European imperialism were subjected to inhuman treatment, repression and other forms of force and violent subjugation. Typical examples here are Jaja of Okpobo, Nana of Itshekiri, Ovonramwen Nogbaisi of Benin, Atahiru of Sokoto, and Kosoko of Lagos, to mention but a few (Rotimi, 1974; Yerima, 1998; Talton, 2011; Adekoya, 2016).

Salami-Agunloye, however, presents us with a ray of hope for the nation by showing that it is still possible to make the political elite accountable for their actions and inactions. Where found culpable, it is possible to bring them to vote them out. She does this by igniting a nuance of hegemony (a counter hegemony) in the play, this time the electorate, but most particularly the mass of women who voted Sota into power. Using her poetic license, the playwright empowers the electorate to vote Sota out of power through a recall process before the expiration of his four-year tenure. This rightly underscores Oko's (2009, p. 3) argument that, **"**ultimately, the powers of the electorate to reject candidates for elective offices compellingly reinforce the notion that powers in a democracy lie…with the people**".** There may not have been any record of recall of elected political office holder in Nigeria, particularly from 1999 till date; however, the nation has witnessed voting out of such people at the local, state and federal government levels. By this, Salami-Agunloye, urges Nigerians to brace up

courageously and change any undesirable candidates or governments with their vote and that it is by such practices that we can make better and further deepen the nation's democracy.

It is important not lose sight of a subtle foil of Sota created in the play by Salami-Agunloye, in the person of Honourable (Hon.) Nigie. Nigie is also a politician and an elected member of the National Assembly, from the same senatorial district as Sota. He must be a member of the House of Representative, since no two senators can emerge from one senatorial district, by Nigeria's present political arrangement. Though very little is heard about him in the play, but the little we hear about him from Madam Power Power who brings report of their visit to Abuja before the women of the constituency presents him as a responsible politician who is answerable to his constituency:

> Nigie received us very well, apologised for his inability to visit us for the past two years. You all know that he was sick for a long time. He entertained us very well; in short we slept in his house. He will be meeting with our people in two weeks time. However, the story changed when we visited Dr. Sota (p. 42).

Madam Power Power's statement above denotes that Hon. Nigie is the foil of Sota in terms of political responsibility and accountability. Both of them are members of the National Assembly, but he listens to the complaints of the people, whereas Sota does not, he accommodates them whereas Sota attacks them, and even promises to pay them a return visit, whereas Sota does not bother about them at all. It is also pertinent to realise that whereas Sota had his education in the coloniser's land, there is no mention that Nigie ever travels abroad. Therefore, the way the playwright presents both characters here is in conformity with the postcolonial theory's conviction that whoever is rooted in the African way of life and brought up properly within the epistemy provided by the African value system will likely value his people and respond positively to their yearnings and aspirations.

Above all, *Sweet* Revenge is a philosophical testimony to the fact that more often, disappointment is a precursor of blessing. The injustice experienced by Aisosa from her husband, Sota, stirs her from her hitherto lethargic state (full-time housewife) to re-launch her career and rises to become a world-renowned consultant, a senator and Senate President for eight years. Thus, while the

political fortune of Sota crumbles that of Aisosa rises and soars. However, Adeoti (2009, p. 98) has quried the dramaturgical expediency of the seeming sudden rise of Aisosa to wealth "miraculously and life changes thereafter". Besides, her sudden rise to political fortune (two-time senate president) appears obtrusive and facile. Although the playwright defends this critical observation, giving the involvement of Aisosa in a volunteer job at a research institute for the reward that leads to her wealth, after she resigned as a consultant gynaecologist, notwithstanding, her overall change of fortune appears a little cinematic and melodramatic.

It is also noteworthy that Salami-Agunloye has presented this play as if at the political turf only women determine the fate of the contestants. The following scenarios fuel this impression: when Sota contests it is the women that are the brain behind his success, when he is recalled it is the women that do it, when Aisosa contests it is mainly the support of the women that gives her success, in short the women control and determine nearly everything with very little or no input from the men. In *More than Dancing*, a more collaborative picture is presented which confirms Salami-Agunloye's ideology of complementarity between men and women as claimed in an interview with this researcher.

In spite of all this, *Sweet Revenge* conveys a strong political message to Nigeria's political jobbers who approach politics as an avenue to get quick wealth at the expense of the masses as Sota wants to do and those who ignore their constituencies after they have promised heaven and earth while seeking their mandate. The playwright reminds them of the possibility of nemesis as they can be recalled or voted out through the same electoral process. Her eventual elevation of Aisosa, thus giving her a voice, as exemplified in the futile efforts of Sota who comes to apologise to Aisosa, pleading to be accepted back into the life of his former wife conforms to the postcolonial theory's way of empowering the subaltern to speak. This gives agency and recognition to them in the society, meaning that postcolonial theory "has responded with the greatest enthusiasm to Spivak's 'Can the subaltern speak?'" (p. 2). Sota's loss of power to Aisosa is Salami-Agunloye's way of rejecting the politics of the inheritors of colonialism and a negation of the canon of the coloniser.

3.3 Politics of Exclusion and Political Injustice in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*

The main theme of *Emotan: A Benin Heroine is* political injustice, occasioned by the exclusion of Ògún from "mounting" the throne of his father as King of Benin and the various overt and covert schemes spearheaded by Emotan, to retrieve the throne for him from the usurper(s). Kingship in Africa is a unique institution that is held in high esteem and well respected by every citizen of each community. It is the institution of royalty, an ageless phenomenon through which villages and towns are governed. Ever before the arrival of the Europeans at the shores of Africa, kingship had proved to be an effective institution that shaped the lives of the natives and the development of the communities. The king was the head of every community, who spearheaded the administrative and political apparatuses of the community; he was, however, supported by a council of chiefs with whom he administered the affairs of the community.

The administrative structure of the council was such that every chief had a portfolio assigned to him by the king for ease of administration and effective management of community resources for meaningful development. Such portfolios could be in the area of economic, social, political, culture, religious, domestic and women affairs, among others. Usually, however, to ensure a smooth transition from the end of one kingship into the beginning of another, there was always the existence of a special body of chiefs known as Kingmakers. In African communities till date, the body still exists and is known by different names. For instance, in Edoland, particularly in Benin, where this play is set, the body is called "Uzamas"; in Yorùbáland they are called "Afobaje"; "Masu Zabin Sarakuna" in Hausaland and "Ndi nze" in Iboland. The kingship is also popularly known in English language as monarchy while the king himself may also be referred to as a monarch. Again, in Nigeria, the three major languages give the king different titles. The Yorùbás refer to him as "Oba", Ibo call him *Obi*, and Hausa give him the title of "Emir". In Edo, the title is also called "Oba" as the Edo is believed to have some form of ontological relationship with the Yorùbá.

In appointing a new king in Africa, probity and truth were tremendously revered, because a compromise of any of these virtues may result in a wrong choice of the person that would rule over the

entire community and this was believed to portend serious negative implications for the entire community concerned, both of the then generation and many others to come. In view of this, extra care and commitment to the truth was paramount in arriving at a choice. Apart from the criterion that a contestant for the throne must possess royal ontology, he must also possess moral, physical, intellectual and emotional soundness. Whenever a king was finally chosen, he was expected to rule with the best interest of the community at his heart. Since the "Oba" was also known to be the "Aláse Èkejì Òrìshà" (the supreme commander, next only to the gods), whose decisions were sure to affect every citizen of his community and would, himself, become an ancestor after his demise, therefore, the kingmakers must be circumspect in the appointment of one.

The above accounted for the reasons why the process of choosing a king was not also left in the hand of the kingmakers alone, the founders of the land (ancestors) and the "Òrìsàs" (the gods) were also involved. The involvement of these unseen forces was done by consulting "Ifá" (the oracle) through the "Babaalawo" (the diviner) who was "Ifá's" custodian. "Ifá" was known to possess all knowledge and wisdom and was also believed to know the solution to all human problems, just as he was known and still known to always be truthful. It was because of the confidence the generality of pre-colonial Africans had in the supernatural ability of "Ifá" to see clearly into the future with indescribable accuracy, with the capacity to access the inner recesses of the supernatural forces and ability to deliver his discoveries as he found them that made him a reliable and trustworthy medium of enquiry to them all. These unseen forces are also employed in one way or the other in this play.

The institution of kingship is one of the few traditional political phenomena that survived the colonisers' attempts at the "annihilation" of African culture. These above circumstances that surrounded the institution of the Oba in the pre-colonial Africa, prompted the reaction of the historical Emotan. This background will help us to understand the premise for many actions of Emotan, the heroine of the play. While this play is historical, it is not a history book, though it may have contributed in its little way to document a small part of the expansive Benin history.

Synopsis of *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*

Oba Ohen, father to Orobiru, Ògún and Irughe, just died and Orobiru is installed King. However, the Council of Chiefs conspires to pressurise Orobiru, to either kill or excommunicate Ògún, his younger brother, on the account of his growing popularity among all the strata of the kingdom and on a trumped-up allegation that he constitutes himself as a threat, not only to Benin Kingdom, but also the life of Orobiru. Soon after Ògún's exile into the thick forest, Oba Orobiru dies and instead of Ògún to be recalled to ascend the throne, in line with the unambiguous instruction of their late father his younger brother, Irughe, who had earlier followed him into exile returns and is made king, having told the Council of Chiefs that Ògún had died. This development does not go down well with Emotan, a market woman with strong political persuasion, who is sure that Ògún is still alive and has contact with him. Through some subterranean activities, she mobilises the children, market women and some armed men to actualise her determination to ensure that Ògún returns to take "his" throne, though she pays with her life.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*

Political injustice encapsulates the thematic focus of Salami-Agunloye in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*. This is, however, driven by succession crises, bad political advisers, political victimisation, power drunkenness, inordinate ambition and endemic corruption, being sub-themes that combine to complicate the conflict of the play in the bid of the various political personages to gain advantage over each other in the politics of space. Today, all of these have direct relevance to the political situation of many African countries, including Nigeria. However, at the heart of the crisis is the phenomenon of irresponsible, selfish and unpatriotic Council of Chiefs, members of which also double as kingmakers that surround Oba Orobiru, who in turn surrenders to the whims and caprices of his chiefs. Applying the postcolonial theory, the playwright evolves a scenario of "Core" (the imperial power) against the "Margin" (the hapless subjects) as exemplified in the relationship between the European imperialist structure and its terrible subjugation and trauma inflicted upon the colonised Africa.

In addition, two things, as Salami-Agunloye explicates in her prefatory note to this play, prompted her to write the play. They are the prevailing patriarchal attitude of men who write history books to always ignore the contributions of historical women to the development of their kingdoms or just mention them "only in passing", since men are those who write history. The other is to explain the wrong notions held about women, thereby "deconstructing the patriarchal ideology which restricts women in nearly all endeavours" (*Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* p. 4-5).

While Orobiru, and later Oba Uwaifiokun, together with the chiefs constitute themselves as the "Core" or "Centre" (dominant hegemony), resistance rises from Emotan and Ògún who are the "Margin" or "Periphery" in the play, but are bent on reclaiming the throne for Ògún. Other groups of counter hegemony are, however, won over by Emotan to strengthen the resistance against the "Core", reverse the injustice and avenge the betrayal of Ògún by his younger brother, Oba Uwaifiokun. In Emotan's perception, the "Uzamas" instigate the banishment of Ògún from Benin to get him out of the way, being a major threat to the growth of their political power (p. 55).

Another group that offers resistance to challenge the dominant hegemony of the Oba and the chiefs is the market women group. They rise in support of Emotan's determination to ensure that the injustice meted to Ògún is reversed so that he could possess his throne from Oba Uwaifiokun, the usurper. Though Emotan has no child of her own, the Benin children offer her emotional support which gives her satisfaction and buoys her confidence to march forward in her decision to obtain justice for Ògún and save Benin the institutionisation of a culture of installing weaklings as Oba. Finally, we have the secret soldiers who adopt a subterranean approach in their bid to retake the throne for Ògún.

The rallying point of the resistance forces in this play is Emotan. The alternative idea offered by this group and which is the objective pursued by them is the need for the restoration of truth, justice, peace and tranquillity to Benin. This they believe can only be done if the political elite will eschew selfishness and self-centeredness and put Benin first before themselves and before any other person. This nexus of Ògún and justice is synonymous with the personality of Ògún of

the Yorùbá land who has been featured in similar way by other playwrights. Though the playwright has said that there is no relationship between this Ògún and Ògún, the Yorubá god of iron, the symbolism of the fight for justice by Ògún and Emotan here draws a correlation between these two Ògúns as the Yorùbá god is even more famous for fighting for justice. Examples include Soyinka's *The Road* and *Bacchae of Euripedes;* Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* and Yerima's *Yemoja*.

The main concern of the opposition above is more for the future of Benin than for the settlement of the immediate upheavals, but they equally know that for the future to be better the present problem must be rectified. This is implied by the statements of two major personalities from the "Periphery" who mount sustained resistance against the "Centre". They are Emotan and Ògún. First, Emotan:

> I am not just fighting for Ògún. I am fighting for the good of Benin. This injustice must not be allowed to take a bed and lie down in our land. No. Never. … If we don't act they will destabilise the government of Benin, installing only the Obas that they can manipulate. … (pp. 55-56).

Later in the play, Ògún laments the situation of Benin: "Can justice, peace and tranquillity ever reign in Benin again? Are there still men who can stick out their necks for the truth? (p. 81).

The characteristic of postcolonial theory is that it is a liberationist theory, so also the postcolonial text is a liberationist text, which tends to make it political, just as Tsaaior (2011, p. 1) has noted that "politics defines and gives energy to the postcolonial text". Resistance in postcolonial theory is more often mounted through the instrumentality of subversion. This is the observation of Okwori (2000, p. 94), as he acknowledges that subversion is a common character of postcolonial theatre, especially political theatre, the reason being that, "the mission of political theatre is to place power in the hands of people, to energise them and move them into taking decisions which can alter their lives for the better". Thus, the resistance against Oba Uwaifiokun and his chiefs takes different forms of subversion as it grows gradually until it becomes a very strong force that takes the usurper out of the way and enthrones the rightful person (Ògún).

Emotan's subversive strategies are actualised through different ways. They include sustained efforts at convincing her co-market women to see from her perspective the political situation in Benin (that the banishment of Ògún and the enthronement of Irughe as Oba constitute an injustice which must be redressed); enlisting the support of the market women to join forces with her to mount political pressure on the palace to retrace its steps in the matter of Ògún; consultation of the oracle at different times to seek for guidance and obtain spiritual power to excel in the fight; and raising a subterranean army to launch an attack on Oba Uwaifiokun's procession and in the process kill the Oba and take the crown. She does all these successfully and obtains justice, by bringing Ògún back to Benin and to power.

Just like in Nigerian politics, the "Uzamas" prefer to have Orobiru, as the king and another weak heir-apparent on the throne after Orobiru, than Ògún, who is known to be of strong character, and cannot be influenced unduly. The main reason for this is because they need an Oba that they can always manipulate so that they can feed fat on the resources of the nation. This can be deciphered from different conversations in the play. One of these is in the discussion and plan of the chiefs to convince Orobiru to expel Ògún from Benin:

Iyase: Orobiru is not that firm. He is a weakling. He cannot withstand our united force.

Ihama: You may be wrong there my Iyase. … Remember, their father Ohen was also weak, but he was able to withstand the chiefs for a long time till he was taken care of.

Ero: That's true Ihama. … That was why he specifically said that Ògún should succeed him, knowing that Ògún is strong, honest and just. You all know very well that Ògún's reign will not be in our favour (p. 14).

To them, Ògún is becoming too popular among the people of Benin due to his miltary prowess. Ero's statement above suggests that Ògún's strong character will not permit their corrupt and greedy excesses; therefore, he must be stopped from becoming the Oba. To achieve this, he must be banished from the kingdom.

Shortly after his installation, Orobiru dies but the Chiefs are not done yet. They are bent on holding on to power as the principal player in the politics of space. This informs why they install Irughe as Oba, instead of Ògún. By their action, the chiefs fail in their responsibility to ensure that late Oba Ohen's wish that Ògún be installed as king in Benin after his elder brother, Orobiru, is carried out. They seem to be happy to hear that Ògún is dead and so the fear of having him to mount his father's throne is forever gone. In Emotan's observation, "the Uzamas have become too rich from trading with the Portuguese traders that they fear no one. They now arrogate illegitimate power to themselves" (p. 56). The contact with the Portuguese mentioned here brings to mind what postcolonial theory identifies as the ontology of Africa's unequal relation with Europe, as exemplified in the subsequent slavery, colonialism and the present neo-colonialism.

The entry of the Portuguese (first European country to begin trading with the West Africans) merchants into the West African Coast in mid 15th century (Boahen, 1976, p. 128**)** later led to the influx of other European countries (France, Germany, Britain etc) and ignited other forms of unsavoury developments. This included the stripping of Africa of its power, resources, artefacts and humanity through slavery and slave trade and later through colonialism (Rodney, 1972) which was preceded by the balkanisation of the African continent by Europe at the conference held in Berlin, in 1885 (Boahen, 1976, p. 128). The bulk of this and the events that are subsequent to colonialism form the concerns of postcolonial studies today.

In Emotan's assessment, the chiefs who surround Oba Irughe are "self-centred, they are dishonest they are unjust" (p.56). They can be likened, not only to the political elite in Nigeria today, but more particularly to Political Advisers and Cabinet Ministers who more often than not always only seek their own good, rather than the good of the nation. As Ògún laments, "everyone is concerned about what he can gain out of every opportunity. Whether the opportunities are good or evil is not the issue, the benefits are their concern" (p. 81). This refers to the level of fraud and misappropriation of public resources in the land as symptomatic of the Nigerian situation today. It has been said over and over again that the present economic problem and infrastructure deficiency

faced by the country is the result of many years of misrule and corrupt practices of the political elite. From the postcolonial theory's point of view, even the strategy and perfection of corruption by Africans were learnt from the colonial system of administration, which was fraught with corrupt practices. Rapa (2016, p. 3) and other scholars he has identified observe this corrupt tendency of the colonialists: "The Dutch and Belgian colonial masters for example were highly corrupt and efficiently mismanaged their colonies. They also stole profits that were meant to be sent to the royal treasury".

Since majority of African leaders are inheritors of colonial legacies, postcolonial theory argues that many of the vices that are the achille's heels of the African society today have their root in colonialism, including corruption. It is, therefore, necessary to reiterate that while Salami-Agunloye employs historical materials as source for this play, she only uses it as motivation to speak to power in this present age with a view to correcting some of the socio-political realities of her society (Nigeria). Both the banishment of Ògún into the forest (pp. 14 – 18) and the hurried installation of Irughe as Oba Uwaifiokun, even when the rightful heir to the throne is still alive, expectedly generate a chain of reaction, because it is obvious to Emotan, that the actions of Oba Orobiru, Oba Uwaifiokun and the chiefs are borne out of the desire to perpetuate their own political interests. Similarly, in Nigerian politics, nearly the same sets of personages recycle themselves and their families in political power since independence to date.

It is obvious that Irughe rigs himself into power, as it is characteristic of many African leaders who profess to be apostles of democracy today. Along with his royal allies, he resorts to different nuances of political intrigues to retain power. Part of the strategies employed by Uwaifiokun and his chiefs to silence Emotan or bring her to submission, as the playwright puts it, is to "be ẹ igban" Emotan (p. 31), meaning to conscript her as a wife and add her to the harem in Oba's palace. They believe Emotan will jump at this offer that they purport will "turn her from a widow and a poor market woman, without any child, to a wealthy queen with the hope of having her own children" (p. 31), but she rejects what could be termed a "Greek gift". The attempt by the

palace to draw Emotan to its side is akin to one of the various antics of the dominant power blocks in Nigerian politics to neutralise the opposition through bribery and other tempting and juicy offers in order to compromise the outspoken citizens. This strategy may engender a one-party state that ends up with no one to offer alternative opinions to wrong state policies or at best a very weak opposition that has no voice. This is precisely what Oba Uwaifioke and the chiefs want. Emotan does not only reject the offer she also resists the attempt to force her to accept it.

Part of the divisive strategy adopted by the dominant power to cling on to power in this play is also to weaken the opposition offered by the market women in support of Emotan's fight to enthrone justice in Benin. With the use of character assassination, divide- and-rule strategy and different shades of lies, the dominant hegemony paints Emotan in many detestable colours in order to discredit her and the course she is fighting for. She is disparaged as a witch who could bewitch anyone; a dangerous woman who should not be associated with (p. 64); deceptive, fake, evil, and someone engaged in immoral or amorous relationship with Ògún and so driven by that to destroy Benin kingdom (pp. 64 - 70). As Imade rightly observes, all this is "a ploy … to destabilise Emotan" (p. 68) and discourage her from pursuing her noble course. Her society being a patriarchal one, another strategy by the palace is to convince the men in Benin that Emotan is evil and make them to prevail on their wives not to have anything to do with her. This is apart from the meeting held with the women at Iyase's house in furtherance of the same motif. These are part of the political strategies meant to cast aspersion on the opposition, discredit and weaken it from performing the important function of offering alternative voice (ideas) to state policies.

A reign of impunity, political victimisation and godfatherism also become the hallmarks of the chiefs and Oba Uwaifiokun in their desperate bid to retain power. The chiefs see themselves as the godfather to the Oba, because they installed him preposterously, for Irughe himself knows that he is not the rightful candidate for the throne. Since the chiefs have favoured Irughe in this way, they believe he owes them some form of allegiance, so they try to exercise control over him. Emotan detests this kind of political arrangement as shown in her address to the market women:

“They now arrogate illegitimate power to themselves… Right now, the Oba has very little control over them. They manipulate him at will” (p. 56). Also, the banishment of Ògún to the forest is nothing but oppression, political victimisation and strategy by the dominant hegemony to monopolise the political space and thus power. It is to be noted that at the heart of this political brigandage is the fear of Ògún by the chiefs and Oba Uwaifiokun himself. They have a clear knowledge of Ògún as a charismatic and upright man who will give no room for their corrupt and reckless attitude.

The unbridled access of the chiefs to the resources of the state and the no-nonsense personality of Ògún are incompatible. Therefore, as far as they are concerned everything must be done to deny Ògún any space in the corridor of power. This type of political elite has been the bane of many African countries till date. Their influence have foisted many leaders of questionable character on African nations and the corollary is the lack of vision, ineptitude and siphoning of their countries’ resources thereby slowing down development. The actions of Orobiru, Irughe and the Chiefs have demonstrated a gross misuse and abuse of power. They violate the rights of their citizens flagrantly. This act lends credence to the popular pronouncement by the 19th century British politician, Lord Acton, (as cited in the Phrase Finder), "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men" (Martin, 2019, para. 4). Postcolonial theory considers such absolutism in the corridors of power as a vice imported by the coloniser in the colnised body polity and political practice.

Political treachery in the play does not end with that of Irughe against his brother, Ògún. Even Ogiefa attempts to turn Ògún over to his enemy, Irughe. As soon as Ògún sneaks into Benin, having been given the nod by Ovia (a spirit) to proceed to the city to make the final bid to retake the throne, Ogiefa promises to help Ògún: “I will go to the city and solicit for help from some chiefs whom I know do not love the Oba. You will get their support and then take back your throne” (p. 79). If not for the intervention of Edo, Ogiefa’s servant, Ògún would have been cheaply handed over to his enemies. Edo’s disclosure to Ògún of Ogeifa’s treacherous plans saves him from

arrest and possible death. By the time Chief Ogiamien arrives with soldiers from the palace Ògún has disappeared.

The hydra-headed problem of political assassination also comes up in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*. One of the chiefs, Iyase, actually suggests the assassination of Ògún as one of the options to stop the threat of Ògún returning to Benin to retake the throne and also to quench the fire of resistance ignited by Emotan (p. 31). Political assassination remains one of the serious problems confronting the African political process to date. The number of Nigerian politicians who have been killed in mysterious circumstances is legion. They include Funsho Williams, Harry Marshal, Bola Ige (a former Attorney General and Minister for Justice) and Barnabas Igwe and his wife (both of them lawyers and killed the same day), to mention just a few. Violence and political assassination are recognised by postcolonial theory as the brainchild of colonialism because they were instruments employed in the process of forceful domination of the political institution in colonised regions such as Africa. Political figures who offered resistance were either killed or arrested and exiled. Even after decolonisation, some of the African leaders in the post-colonial states who failed to accede to the neo-colonial practices of the "Centre" (Europe) are known to have been violently, but cleverly, taken out of the way (assassinated). Patrice Lumumba of Congo (1961), Sylvanus Olympio of Togo (1963), Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau (1973), and Thomas Sankara of Burkina-Vaso (1987) are typical examples, among others, who were outspoken African leaders against neo-colonialism and were assassinated by agents of the Western imperialists (Chiwanza, 2019, para. 4-5).

It is interesting to note that though the dominant hegemony in is very strong (not in terms of character but desire to grab), cunning and power-drunk, the rank of the opposition that provides the counter hegemony to resist the oppressors and effect the necessary change is stronger, charismatic, resilient and courageous. The conflict of the play is sustained by the resilience of the opposition to upturn the table against the dominant power and effect a change of government. This is Salami-Agunloye's way of rejecting the politics of the inheritors of colonialism and emphasising

the decent approach of the traditional African leaders to politics and administration of their nations, one of which was the Benin Kingdom. The exposure of the chiefs in this play to the trade with the Europeans (Portuguese) has beclouded their sense of decency and instigates a spirit of self-centredness, greed and lust for power that make them to be bent on doing anything to pervert justice so as to maintain their political relevance.

However, the method adopted by the playwright appears to be out of sync with the prevailing political tradition in many parts of Africa today. The seizure of power from Irughe by force and violence detract from the prevailing democratic ideals in the world today, which are governed by dialogue, horse-trading and balloting. Salami-Agunloye's adoption of assassination may, however, be borne out of the historical nature of the play and the desire to tell the story as it happened in actual situation. Though it may be reasoned that failure to tell it as it is may incur the dissatisfaction of the owners of the history, but it should also not be forgotten that this is drama, not history and the dramatist reserves the right of artistic license to employ a source material in ways that sync with the pulse of his/her society, especially when one of the goals is to press for political change. Political assassination was rarely an option in the politics of succession in pre-colonial Africa. The coming of the whites introduced the violence twist into it.

Notwithstanding, the message of the playwright in this play is conveyed mainly through the character of Emotan and Ògún, that Nigeria should reject selfish and fraudulent leaders who are agents of colonialism and embrace selfless leaders who are willing to render sacrificial service to the nation. This is the import of the life lived by Emotan in the play. Though there is neither any pecuniary gain for her in the struggle nor is there any other form of gratification, yet she engages in the struggle and fights on to the end because she believes that Benin needs it for justice, truth and peace to return to the city. Even when the struggle becomes too naughty to be solved and the only solution lies in her laying down her life she does so and achieves result. This practice of self-sacrifice is a common phenomenon in Africa, particularly in Nigerian mythology, and Nigerian dramatists have used this in their dramatic oeuvres over the years. In Duro Ladipo's *Móremí*

(1964), Móremí offers herself to protect Ile-Ife against Igbo invaders; the myth is also employed in Femi Osofisan's *Moróuntódùn* (1982), though dialectically; Emmy Idegu's *Omodoko* and *Inikpi* similarly feature the phenomenon.

The recurrent social problem of patriarchy features prominently in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*. At different times women are denigrated, ridiculed or stereotyped. It is, however, important to quickly note that Salami-Agunloye is not known to relegate the agency of women, instead she resonates it, and many of her works, particularly *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*; *More than Dancing;* and *Sweet Revenge*, testify to this assertion. In these three plays, Salami-Agunloye attempts to condemn and reject political masculinity. The traditional stereotypes about women which paints them in negative colours – weak, unintelligent, frivolous, petty, only good to be men's possessions, just like other properties; also suitable for domestic chores; essential for childbearing and with no ability to handle highly demanding intellectual and physical tasks – are employed in the play. It is important to note that the instances where the above labels are used are deliberate dramatic devices by the playwright to provide the right atmosphere or backdrop for the development of the central character of the play and to establish the profundity of her achievement later on.

To butress the above, Salami-Agunloye admitted to this researcher in an interview that she is a feminist, particularly African feminism: "Like you say, I am a feminist. As a feminist dramatist, I try to deconstruct the very passive female characters that have been created by other drmatists, such as Mosadiwin in Ola Rotimi's *Kúrunmî*" (interview with Salami-Agunloye, 2019). This is a reaffirmation of her earlier explication to Adeoti (2009, p. 84): "I think generally, when you talk about feminist writers, I would say I am a womanist. I subscribe to African Womanism … if you consider feminism or womanism in the African sense. I agree with Okonjo-Ogunyemi's definition of African Womanism". Instances when such labels or stereotyping occur are legion in the play. For example, when the news that Ògún is still alive comes to the chiefs'knowledge, it sends jitters down Chief Ihama's spine. He says, "Well, I fear for Benin. If Ògún is alive then our

lives are in danger" (p. 23), and Chief Iyase replies him, "Coward. When did you become a woman, Chief Ihama?" (p. 23). Angered by being called a woman, Chief Iyase draws his sword. This scenario portrays women as the only gender that can be afraid, as if men are never afraid. Oba Uwaifiokun's intervention does not even help matters: "Enough. Enough, my chiefs. This is very disgraceful. Why do you quarrel and fight like women? This is a bad omen for me" (p. 23). The question is: don't men quarrel and fight?

In another instance, fear is solely attributed to women. This can be seen when Oba Uwaifiokun reprimands Odoligie, one of his courtiers, "When did you become a trader, Odoligie, when? Are you a woman that you are so scared?" (p. 46). Similarly, the women come to pay homage to Oba Uwaifiokun as he celebrates his first Igwe festival and he prays for them. One notable part of the prayer is "Your womb will constantly bring forth male children" (p. 29). Such a prayer creates the impression that female children are not real children or bearing them is unethical. Also, Isoken, Oba Uwaifiokun's wife is worried that her husband's peace is disturbed. She wants to know why so that she can share his concerns and probably counsel her. Initially, he does not want to tell her but after some pressure, he says, "Well, if you insist. You must promise me never to let anyone hear what I tell you tonight. The Benins say that any secret you share with a woman is sure to spread", denoting that women cannot keep secrets (p. 43).

In a similar vein, Adesuwa says, "Eki, honestly, I think we are too hard on Iye, Emotan. I regret all my actions now. Well, what can we do? Our husbands have spoken we just have to obey their words. We have no choice" (p. 70). We consider it unfortunate that somebody's conscience tells her that she is taking a wrong action yet she argues that she is helpless; she has to do it because she must obey her husband. In that case, what happens to the soul of the society? While this stereotyping about women is regrettable, it has been stated earlier in this study that the discriminatory policy of the colonial administrations against the female gender was responsible for this or at least escalated it (Assie-Lumuba, as cited in Awofeso and Odeyemi, 2014). Assie-Lumumber's view tallies with postcolonial theory's that the colonial administration did not only

plunder the economic resources of the colonised nations, it also altered the socio-cultural relationship of same.

Apart from using the market as a place where wares are sold to the public, the playwright also employs it as a metaphor for life and living that must be terminated one day. In his lamentation over the death of Emotan, Oba Ògún retorts, "you have gone too soon. Your market is over" (p. 99). Salami-Agunloye seems to be fond of using the market as a metaphor in this way. She does the same thing in *More than Dancing* where Kambasa, a past (late) heroine appears to Nona in a trance and offers to help mobilise the women to participate in politics. Mama Nigeria turns her offer down: "They have a responsibility to their generation. If they fail, posterity will judge them. Come on out, your market is over…Close your stalls and go home" (p. 84).

In short, Salami-Agunloye's metaphorical use of market in the two plays portrays her as a typical African playwright with a deep understanding of the African worldview. It is also in tandem with postcolonial theory's expectation that African literature should explore phenomena of typical African cosmology and ontology in order to restore pride in practices and traditions that were systematically degraded under colonialism. By so doing, the playwright rejects the positions of "Otherness" that the coloniser seems to have confined the colonised countries. At the same time, she rejects the "Master"/"Servant" relationship with which they deal(t) with Africans. In essence therefore, the dramatisation of the politics of space through the medium of traditional politics in this play, using the instrumentality of pre-colonial historical source material, raises the validity of African culture and asserts the literature of the Africans against that of the coloniser.

3.3.4 Politics of Exclusion, Obnoxious Tradition and War in Salami-Agunloye's *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin is a story of political exclusion and war as experienced in a historical period in Benin, at a period when the Europeans had already registed their presence on the African soil, including Benin Kingdom. To exclude denotes to deny someone access to a

place, group, or privilege. It could also mean to remove someone from consideration or to prevent someone from participation in an event or exercise. Provided it is not a punitive measure meted on an individual in the public interest, the politics of exclusion is usually generated by the egocentric phenomenon of "Self" exercising dominion and control over the "Other". This binary opposition is an imperialistic and colonial concept that has been identified by postcolonial study as discriminatory and skewed against the "Other" who is usually considered by "Self" as an inferior being who should be dominated or gotten rid of. Mockaltis (2017, para. 5) has noted that the fear of loss of status by the dominant group usually accounts for exclusionary politics: "exclusionary politics derives from visceral fear by members of the dominant group that they are losing their privileged position". Yet, it is undoubtful that equal and inclusive participation of a diverse citizenry in public and private life is a fundamental aspect of a peaceful and just society.

However, the most bizarre kind of exclusion is exclusion from living, the same as exclusion from existence, just as it applies in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*. Article 1 (3) of the United Nations (UN) charter states that one of the principal aims of the UN is that of "promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion" (Langley, 1999, p. xii). It may be apt to say that while the term human rights could be relatively new, (dating back to early 20th century), the aspect of its contemporary meaning are very old. For instance, all of the world major religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism speak of the inherent dignity of the individual or the sacred nature of the human personality, which implies that the concept of sacredness of human life held sway from the beginning of human existence. For instance, God in the Bible forbids the killing of any human being by another. King James Version of the *Holy Bible*, in Exodus, Chapter 20, verse 13, commands that "Thou shalt not kill". Human life is sacred to God and should be sacred to man.

Traditions are usually designed by man to make living and interpersonal relationship easy for every community. Africa had started getting rid of obnoxious traditions, one way or the other,

wherever it was discovered, even before the beginning of colonialism. Traditions that were unproductive and detrimental to life and societal development had been confronted and gotten rid of at different times in different communities of Africa. A typical example was the tradition that required the first son of an Alaafin of Oyo to also die the day his father (an Alaafin) died. However, the tradition was considered injurious to the development of the Oyo Empire and, in spite of the opposition by Kúrunmí, then Àáre Ònà Kàkànfò, to uphold the tradition during Alaafin Adelu's reign the tradition was cancelled. Till today, it is not observed again. Traditions that breed acrimony, tension and wars need to be consigned to the dustbin of history.

War had been a big headache in Africa since the arrival of the Europeans. Prior to that time Africans lived in their various communities peacefully. The coming of the Europeans, with the introduction of guns and practice of slave trade marked the escalation of war in African communities. Scholars such as Schmidt (2016, para. 4) have argued that "it is clear that much of Africa's current predicaments of poverty, corruption, and violent conflicts are not solely the result of African decisions, … many of today's challenges are the outcome of colonial political and economic practices".

How then does Salami-Agunloye treat the theme of political exclusion, obnoxious tradition and war in *Idia the Warrior Queen of Benin*? Before we engage in the analysis, we will like to first give a brief storyline of the play.

Synopsis of *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

It is the tradition in Benin that the Queen Mother dies once her son is installed Oba in the Kingdom. However, with the installation of Esigie as Oba, Idia, the Queen Mother refuses to die, questioning the status quo. She demands for credible reasons why she must die, apart from the reason that tradition demands it. While majority of the members of the Council of Chiefs view her decision as an aberration and insist that she complies with tradition, Oba Esigie, backed by Oliha and Ologbose view it differently. They see no reason why the queen mother should die simply because tradition demands it. Therefore, as part of his political reforms, Oba Esigie decides to

create the palace of the Iyoba, the Queen Mother of Benin Kingdom, a move vigorously opposed by majority of the chiefs who see Esigie as planning to protect his mother. They also consider the protest of the women against the demand on the Queen Mother as an affront on the men and the seat of power, since women are not regarded as part of the decision-making arm of Benin Kingdom. However, the story changes when Idia successfully leads the people of Benin to a war against the invading army of Atta Igala, who rises against Benin, following an invitation by aggrieved Oliha, because of Oba Esigie's intrigues which cause him (Oliha) to destroy his own family by killing all his wives. Consequently, those who had shouted "crucify him" before suddenly begin to sing Idia's "hossanah" (praise).

Critical Analysis of Themes of *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

The politics of space in this play is encapsulated in the conservative decision and determination by a larger number of the Council of Chiefs to enforce existing tradition in Benin Kingdom, which requires the Queen Mother to die as soon as her son is enthroned as Oba in the kingdom. Although this is also a historical play which employs a small part of Benin history to tell the story of a Benin heroine, the intention of the playwright is not to write history as she makes this very clear in her prefatory note. The playwright attempts to address her societal problem of sustained practice of men excluding women from political participation and representation. It is also to dramatise the necessity to do away with any obnoxious traditions (laws) because they can retard development or jeopardise the survival of any nation.

The hidden agenda of the chiefs to have a firm grip on power and deprive Oba Esigie of access to invaluable counsels (advises), encouragement and support a queen mother could offer her son inform their unbending decision to demand the death of Idia. This is contrary to their claim that they are in defence of the tradition of the kingdom. These disgruntled chiefs constitute themselves as the dominant class in the kingdom. This is exemplified in their claim through the Ezomo, "we installed him king, we are the kingmakers, we can dethrone him" (p. 18). However, the resistance put up by Idia, Oba Esigie, the minority chiefs (Oliha and Ologbose) and the women in the town

turns out to be too strong for the so-called "advocate of tradition" to contain. The purpose of the opposition mounted by this group is also to protect their own space and refuse any kind of intrusion by the dominant class. Although postcolonial theory subscribes to the assertion of the rich culture of the colonised in order to restore pride in the practices and tradition of Africans, the insistence of these chiefs on the death of Idia is not borne out of this theoretical preference. That is why the playwright makes them to fail in their bid to actualise their intention.

The clandestine attempt to edge the women folk out in the political structure of Benin Kingdom and thus render them irrelevant accounts for why the "pro-death-for-Idia" chiefs want Idia dead. It should be noted that Idia is the most senior and most important political figure amongst the women in Benin Kingdom in the play, being the Queen Mother. The success of the grand conspiracy to eliminate her is sure to have great implications for women's political participation in Benin Kingdom, and the chiefs are aware of this. This implies that stopping Idia translates to effectively stopping other Benin women from participating in the politics of Benin Kingdom. This exclusionist temperament is demonstrated when the women of Benin go to the palace to protest against the move to make Idia die. As the women are allowed into the palace by Oba Esigie, Iyase is displeased. He considers it an aberration for women to enter the palace and above all, to be a part of the decision making process. As far as this dominant group is concerned, political space belongs only to men, so also policy formulation and decision making:

> Now women, when did you become part of the decision-making arm of the Benin Kingdom?....This is unimaginable….Women challenging the law of the land. What do you know about our tradition? .... This is a slap on the face of royalty (p. 25).

The actual reason why the "pro-death for Idia" group strives to consolidate their hold on power may also have to do with protecting their commercial interests. They had long been trading with the Portuguese and have made fortunes in the process. Since they have a clear awareness of the strength and courage of Idia, the possibility of her being a threat to their political and economic influence cannot be ruled out. They believe that she could wield a strong influence on her son to

take decisions that may jeopardise their personal interests. Ezomo and Ihama's lines in a separate meeting of the chiefs in Iyase's house suggest something close to this:

> Ezomo: Do you know what we are saying, by asking for Idia to be spared? Queen Idia is a powerful queen politically and…. She has a strong influence on her son. We would end up being ruled by a woman if she lives (p. 18).
>
> Ihama: God forbid. Queen Idia must die. Ezomo, remember, she is from Ugeighudu, the strong-hearted, powerful and warlike people (p. 18).

The reasons adduced above by the two chiefs for why Idia must die are paradoxical, for those should have been the reasons why she must live, because any society that desires to develop needs people with the above-stated qualities of Idia. However, postcolonial theory has explanation for people of Ezomo and Ihama's disposition and attitude in post-colonial societies. Such people hold on to power and unwilling to allow good-intentioned citizens to contribute their own quota towards the development of the nation simply because they are beneficiaries or inheritors of colonialism themselves. Though they are inept, yet because of their greed, pride and exloitative characteristics akin to the colonialists, they will block national development just to satisfy their own selfish interests. Undoubtedly, the reasons adduced for the need for Queen Idia to die are borne out of myopia and sentiment.

It is disheartening to note that in spite of the efforts by Oba Esigie and Oliha to convince the "pro-death-for-Idia" group, they fail to see reasons; every explanation given to convince them on why the obnoxious tradition deserves to be reviewed falls on deaf ears. In fact, the argument of these chiefs sounds very conservative, awkward and unprogressive for a set of people that the society saddles with the responsibility of running the affairs of the state. While the argument is still heated, Oba Esigie says: "I stand to be judged by posterity for turning around an obnoxious law…. A law that demands the death of a loyal and innocent citizen. Do we kill a person simply because tradition demands it?" (p. 11). In response, Ezomo, one of the supporters of the obnoxious law replies, "relevant or irrelevant, Your Majesty, it is our tradition, therefore, it must be preserved. No

changes. No modification. No upgrading" (p. 11). This statement that reflects nothing, but a rigid position exposes the hatred of this group for Idia and, by extension, women participation in the politics of Benin. The question they fail to answer is, of what use is a tradition or law that takes the lives of its own innocent people?

The pro-tradition group has no answer to the poser thrown at them by Esigie: "of what use is the death of my mother to the progress of Benin?" (pp. 12-13). Rather than answer this question, Iyase says, "Your majesty we may not be able to give you a reply right away, but we do know that sparing the life of your mother and making her the Iyoba of Benin may spell doom for our nation" (p. 13). Yet, they could not explain how. No wonder, Oba Esigie tutors them on the origin of the obnoxious tradition, how it emanated from political victimisation and fear, by men:

> That is where you go wrong, Chief Ozomo. In the ancient past, it was not so, Queen Mothers were not killed. Men felt that Queen Mothers constituted a threat to the throne and so decided, using tradition of course as an excuse, to kill them as soon as their sons ascended the throne (p. 22).

The desperation to stop the Queen Mother informed the horrid institution of the obnoxious tradition by men, who happened to be the writers of history. By this revelation, Salami-Agunloye tells the story of historical Idia from the perspective of the subaltern, a typical practice of postcolonial theory, in order to demystify the obnoxious tradition and expose imperialistic propensity of its proponents.

It is needful to observe that *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* is a revolutionary play that questions the status quo. Faced with the threat of elimination or exclusion from the politics of space, Idia questions the status quo by insisting that she will not die, a position that contradicts an existing tradition known to all and sundry in Benin Kingdom. Obviously, she is aware of many Queen Mothers in the Kingdom who had been made to die simply because their sons became king. She must have perceived this as the antics of the dominant hegemony within the political space to emasculate the womenfolk from any form of political relevance. Her resistance becomes an attempt

to carve a space for the women and bring them to political reckoning. This begins to pay off when her son reviews the traditional laws of the land and appoints her Iyoba of Benin.

She consolidates on this gain when the opportunity to prove her worth comes with the threat to the security of Benin Kingdom, occasioned by the declaration of war on the kingdom by Atta of Igala. By promptly responding to the challenge and, against all odds, leading the Benin warriors to victory at a time when men are jittery, she effectively consolidates her position in the politics of space. The war becomes an avenue for her to make a political statement, like the biblical saying, "the stone that was rejected has become the corner stone of the house". By her victory, she does not only gain space for herself in the politics of Benin, she does so more for the women of Benin in general. The fact that the leadership she provides at the nick of time prevents Benin from being humiliated by their enemies, and from the corollary servitude that could follow, turns Idia into an instant heroine and someone most desired in the society. This implies that the exclusionist politics of Benin has suffered a severe setback, the obnoxious tradition having first been taken out of the way. In postcolonial interpretation, it is a victory for the subaltern, whom the colonial discourse theorists have concluded could not speak. Salami-Agunloye gives them a voice in the politics of Benin and by extension that of Nigeria, her society.

The interaction between Idia and the two Portuguese – Marcus and Affonso - in the play is an indication that as Iyoba, Idia has considerable political influence and wields power in Uselu, where she has her palace. Apart from the women of Benin who have risen in her support, the white men (Portuguese traders) in Benin have also recognised her authority as the leading woman figure in the land and submit to her. The stage direction indicates: "enter Portuguese traders: Marcus and Affonso. They are obsequious in their manner towards Idia, but patronising" (p. 67). This is a state of submission and obedience before Queen Idia. It is postcolonial theory's strategy of rewriting the history of the colonised to show that contrary to the colonial literature's projection of the colonised as inferior beings to the Europeans there were instances that proved that notion wrong. The comportment of the two Europeans before Idia, throughout their conversation projects this picture.

When Queen Idia queries them about the rational in asking the Benin people to worship the Whiteman's God, whereas they would not reciprocate in the same way with Osalobua, the God of the Benin people, the stage direction states: "Affonso & Marcus are getting jittery. Another exchange of looks, and they shuffle nervously" (p. 68). This is an expression of inferiority and submission by the Whitemen to the authority of the blackwoman.

However, the co-habitation by the white traders and the Africans, as shown in the play, produces some forms of hybridity. Nearly all the principal characters in the play are affected by hybridity, particularly Oba Esigie and the chiefs. The extent to which Idia is hybridised is not clear in the play, but to the extent that she employs the guns produced by the colonialists in the prosecution of the war suggests she is affected or influenced one way or the other by the colonial culture. Bhabha (1994) has argued that the colonisers and the colonised are mutually dependent in constructing a shared culture (as cited in Yazdiha, 2010, p. 1). The evidences of hybridity in the play include the wearing of western clothes by the king of Benin, who is the political head of the kingdom and so should epitomise the culture of the people. Apart from that, he has even indirectly converted to the Whiteman's religion as he now preaches his principles (doctrines) and speaks positively about his ways. Notwithstanding, the clear evidence of Salami-Agunloye's aversion for the colonialist's canonical texts is demonstrated in the loss of the inheritors of colonialism, as emblematised by the Chiefs, in the power play between them and Queen Idia who symbolises the African peculiar traditional identity in the play.

3.4 Structure and Style as Reflections of Politics of Space in the Selected Play-texts of Salami-Agunloye

The imaginative and creative way artists present their works make them special and different from authors of works emanating from other fields of study. Style is the peculiar way in which a playwright writes or presents his plays, it is the approach to writing that is peculiar to the artist as can be identified in a number of his works. This is what Hodge (1971, pp. 278-279) means when he notes that "style is what makes form individual and specific". While one may not be able

to draw a final conclusion on the writing style of a playwright based on only one of his/her plays, a study of about three or four works (plays) of a playwright published at different intervals may be helpful to the critic in the assessment of the consistency or otherwise of the approach adopted by a playwright to writing.

Since we are examining not less than four plays each written by Salami-Agunloye and Idegu, it affords us the opportunity to examine the approach of each of the playwrights to writing and to determine the consistency or otherwise of their styles. Style may encompass the artist's use of language, narrative and dramatic techniques, plot development, characterisation and symbolism or even how a playwright makes use of music. The structure of a play is the framework of the play; it is how the playwright organises his story, more or less the outline of the story. Literary elements like theme, character, setting and plot rely heavily on structure for their framework. Already we have examined themes in all the selected plays for this study. This section is to examine the structure and style adopted in the play-texts and how these are utilised by the playwrights to advance or explicate the politics of space which is the concern of this study.

In this section we shall treat the structure and style of the four plays of Salami-Agunloye together. Thereafter, we will proceed to examine the four of Idegu's that are selected for this study. This is to avoid repetition and duplication of ideas.

3.4.1 Plot as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing, Sweet Revenge, Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

Plot can be described as the ordering of incidents in a play. It is not just what happens in a play but the way the playwright chooses to arrange them. Since drama is not life itself but an imitation of life, the necessity to make the story dramatic often informs the ordering of incidents in a play. It is, however, necessary for a plot to be well-developed and to make a whole – having a beginning, middle and an end. Important to the development of plot are exposition, point of attack, action, complication, conflict, rising action, crisis and falling action. Two major types (there are less common arrangements) of plot are causal plot and episodic plot. In the same manner a plot

could be simple (having just a single line of development) or complex (having multiple lines of development) known as subordinate plots.

More than Dancing has a causal plot (cause and effect type of plot) where an action by the protagonist's camp generates a reaction from the antagonist's. The play has a good unity and completeness - a beginning, middle and an end. The plot is a simple plot, with an early point of attack. Very early in the play, a principal character initiates actions to achieve a goal – to reverse the trend of men's domination in the politics of space. This is exemplified in the "rebellious" action of Bisi, leader of the women wing of United People's Liberation Party (UPLP) who stops the women dancing group from dancing to entertain guest at the national convention of the party: "Stop the drumming! Stop dancing!! Stop immediately. Stop I say!!!. Get out of this place. Return to your homes (pp. 1-2). Madam Bisi's story contains some expositions, one of which is that in the society or world of the play only men have dominated the political scene until now. While women are always used as dancers to promote the ambition of men, men occupy nearly all the political positions – elective and appointed.

The next incident in the play takes place in the house of Madam Bisi where they appraise the event of the previous day. There, we have another exposition that the action of the women does not go down well with their men counterpart. At the same place, the women, ignoring the reaction of the men, decide to field a woman presidential candidate in the forthcoming party primaries, and Nona Odaro is chosen as the women candidate.

Rather than initiate the complication, in form of resistance from the men to the women's move, the playwright presents us with the new presidential candidate in her house in movement three. In the course of deep thinking and some worry about the journey ahead, especially the kind of opposition she expects from the men she falls asleep and Mama Nigeria (a symbol in the play) and several Nigerian past heroines (these include Queen Idia, Fumilayo Kuti, Emotan, Queen Amina, Kambassa, Madam Tinubu, and Gambo), appear to her in her dream, dancing and giving her words of encouragement to strengthen her. We are of the opinion that this movement comes too

early. Besides, it somewhat has duplications in movements eight and eleven. The three should have been merged into one, restructured and repositioned as movement eight. A complication (opposition coming from the men against the women's selection of Nona Odaro as women nominee for the primaries) should have come as movement three, while all other movements should have been dressed backwards accordingly. Nona Odaro's family interaction should have been made movement four, instead of five. Six will be moved to five, seven to six, and so on and so forth. This restructuring will not affect the plot negatively; rather, it will enhance it.

In movement four, the men gather at the UPLP office to discuss the strategy to adopt to counter the women's move. Among the strategies are, dialogue with Madam Bisi and where that fails, intimidate the women, destabilise Nona at home or induce the women with money to drop their idea or even assassinate the character of some women leaders and use that as a divisive strategy to break their rank. Movement five feature Nona Odaro at home with her husband, Uyi and Teri, in a play-within-play, rehearsing Nona's tenure as a President. Movement six is another women's meeting, this time in an open space to raise fund for the political ambition of the women. In movement seven, three representatives of the men of UPLP come to the Odaro family home to persuade her husband not to support the ambition of his wife. He is also offered the slot of a running mate to Alhaji Bawa whom the men propose as presidential candidate and at the same time offered a bribe of twenty million naira (₦20, 000,000.00). Again, we feel the Odaro family house is politically inappropriate for this kind of meeting.

In movement eight, the heroines appear again to Nona in a dream, to demonstrate how they triumphed in their own time, as a way of encouraging Nona. Movement nine is a further attempt to break the rank of the women by offering a few of the women some money so they can persuade others to forget the idea of a woman presidential candidate, but the women turn it down. In movement ten Uyi, Nona's husband, shows antagonism to her ambition on flimsy excuse that she does not remember to feed his dog when due. Movement eleven is the third time the heroine will appear to Nona, this time offering to come physically to support her, but Mama Nigeria turns their

offers down. Movement twelve is a physical confrontation by the men against the women at the party secretariat. It is a failed attempt to coerce the women to drop their idea of still fielding a woman Presidential candidate. In movement thirteen, the women have reached the point of no return, nocturnally, they paste posters (in the night) and agree not to discuss anything politics with their husband, because they have a secret plan. Movement fourteen, at the party secretariat, the men begin to complain about the new attitude of their wives who keep mute at home, particularly when it comes to political matters. In the midst of this, the Chairman of the party is reported to have declared Nona the party's Presidential candidate for the forthcoming national general election. Movement fourteen and fifteen happen simultaneously as the men begin to switch camp to join the women in their celebration and in movement fifteen Nona wins the election.

The plot, as arranged by Salami-Agunloye, has shown that it is a causal plot as actions trigger reactions progressively on the site of politics. It shows a struggle to wrest power and attempt to resist the move, with actions and counter actions emerging at various levels. It reflects how Nigerian politicians think, especially the men in their attempt to marginalise the women in the political space. It vividly brings out the playwright's vision that very soon, Nigeria will produce a woman president. The play has the structure of a character story. Card (2010, para. 18) gives the description of such story:

> The structure of a character story is as simple as any of the others. The story begins at the moment when the main character becomes so unhappy, impatient or angry in her present role that she begins the process of change; it ends when the character either settles into a new role (happily or not) or gives up the struggle and remains in the old role (happily or not).

The plot of *Sweet Revenge* is different from that of *More than Dancing* in terms of real occurrence of incidents but they are similar in some other aspects. For instance, like *More than Dancing*, *Sweet Revenge* too has a causal plot; it is also a simple plot with a single line of development, but the point of attack is not as early as that of *More than Dancing*.

Movement 1 of *Sweet revenge* is an exposition scene where Sota reacts to an e-mail he has just received. It is actually an invitation from the people of his constituency, asking him to return to Nigeria to contest for the seat of a Senator so that he can represent them at the National Assembly. This is where he tells us about himself that he has been in the United Kingdom for the past eight years, instead of four years that he promised when he left Nigeria to study for his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in International Relations and many other expositions. Movement two is a follow-up to movement one as Sota, Cheryl, his wife, and Regie discuss Sota's going back to Nigeria, and what he will do as a politician, but it is also an exposition scene, where we get to know that Cheryl has been pregnant for some months.

In movement three, Sota is already in Nigeria, with Aisosa, the wife he left in Nigeria with four children, eight years ago. We begin to see the hostile relationship between him and his wife. In spite of that, as we get to movement four, Sota is already a Senator and will be moving to Abuja, but without Aisosa. In movement five, Aisosa refuses Sota's sex advances while in movement six, Sota continues his repulsion against Aisosa just to prove he does not love her anymore and drives her out (with her four children) of the house she built with money she inherited from her parents, simply because he owns the land. In movement seven, Aisosa has relocated to Abuja on the advice of Ede, her friend. She now lives with them and has just been given a job at the National Medical Research Centre where she had once offered voluntary service. The emolument is unbelievable – three hundred thousand naira monthly and the appointment backdated to eight years ago, the time of the voluntary service – and she is also to collect payment arrears for the eight years. Here also, Aisosa gets to know that Sota is married to a white woman who lives with him in Abuja. In movement eight, Cheryl gets to know that Sota was married to one Aisosa and she plans to see her.

By the time we get to movement nine, the political terrain begins to hot up. The women who were sent to Abuja to Sota's house were maltreated so report of the incident, being given by Madam Power Powe is presented in a flashback and the women feel betrayed; some even weep. In movement ten, Cheryl visits Aisosa and resolves to divorce Sota and also leave for England. Cheryl

confronts Sota in movement eleven about Aisosa and tells Sota she is leaving. In movement twelve, Aisosa receives a letter from the United States that she has won an award for leading an exemplary life in the face of adversity. The award attracts three hundred thousand dollars ($300,000). In movement thirteen, Nosa is recalled from the Senate while in movement fourteen, the women come to woo Aisosa to contest for the now vacant Senatorial seat. Though she vehemently rejects the offer, she is given one week to think about it.

In movement fifteen, we see Sota in his house in Benin, lamenting over the impending forfeiture of his house to the bank due to unpaid debt. He is already broke and needs help, but none seems coming, except two hundred thousand naira gift given him by Regie. He is also unprepared to go to Abuja with Regie to go and beg Aisosa for reconciliation. Aisosa has become a Senate President the second time in movement sixteen and the President of the country just celebrated her. So also Regie, Sota's friend and colleague at the Movement for Democracy in London is appointed Minister of Petroleum Resources. In the final movement, Sota comes back arrogantly to apologise to Aisosa, and to plead to be readmitted as husband, but Aisosa refuses.

The plot of this play, from what we have seen is political, though it has a lot of domestic ingredients. It starts on a political note and ends with a political lesson, that in the field of politics, the inheritor of colonialism, like Sota, may not always have the sincere intention to serve the people but themselves. He was trained by the coloniser but returns home to also "colonise" – "colonise" his wife, Aisosa, those who voted for him to become a Senator and the nation, by stealing her money. Structurally, the play is also a character play. The sorry state of Aisosa at the beginning of the play is seen to have changed unbelievably for good at the end.

Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin, is also a causal play with reaction taking place as a result of a previous action. It has an early point of attack and a simple plot. In scene one, with about twenty wise sayings and proverbs, Idia profusely rejects the traditional demand on her to die because her son, Esigie just becomes the Oba of Benin. She questions the tradition and insists that she will not die: "I stand to question our tradition. I demand for my life. Why must I, a woman

stand condemned to die simply because I am the mother of the reigning king? Is being the mother of a king a crime?" (p. 4). In scene two, the Oba continues with the review of some traditional laws of Benin kingdom, but the one that requires the queen Mother to die still remains contentious. Rather than allow his mother to die, the Oba proposes the creation of the palace of Iyoba, the Queen Mother of Benin Kingdom, but many of the Chiefs kick against it.

In scene three, the chiefs meet at Iyase's palace to discuss their next response to the Oba's insistence of sparing the life of his mother and to further press on with their politics of excluding the Queen Mother from the political space of Benin, but there is no consensus as the chiefs are divided four for and two against Idia's death. Scene four is another meeting with Oba in his palace over the same issue, but parties still maintain their previous positions. In this same scene women of Benin come to protest the tradition that requires the Oba to die which they consider obnoxious. When the chiefs finally agree that Idia's life could be spared and the Iyoba's palace created, they still continue with their politics of exclusion by insisting that Iyoba's palace be located outside Benin. Esogbon's statement reveals this: Your majesty, we support your decree that your mother's life be spared … on the condition that your mother becomes the Iyoba with her palace at Uselu. She is never to set foot in Benin" (p. 28). Scenes five and six are to set the stage for later incident and action. Scene five is a romantic scene between Chief Oliha and his wife, Imaguero, at Chief Oliha's house while scene six records the disagreement between Chief Oliha and the Oba. Chief Oliha rejects the Oba's request that he leads Benin warriors to go and attack a recalcitrant Attah Igala, who has stopped paying tribute to Benin. Oliha's refusal is rightly hinged on the excuse that he is not the Commander of the Army but the head of the Kingmakers. The king and some of his Chiefs ridiculously ascribe Oliha's refusal to his closeness to Imaguero, his wife, who Oliha claims to be the most beautiful woman in Benin and very faithful. This sets the stage for a fresh conflict in the play between Oliha and the king.

Oba Esigie, in scene seven sends his servant, Uke, to go on his behalf and seduce (woo) Imaguero with coral beads. The purpose is to stir Oliha's anger against Imaguero so that Princess

Aminghen (Oba Esihie's daughter) will actually become the favourite. Uke lies to Imaguero that Oliha confessed publicly at a royal court session that Princess Aminghen was his favourite wife. This sets the stage for a fresh crisis. In scene eight Oliha arrives home finds that Imaguero has gone to her father's house and becomes angry. Scene nine is another court session and Oliha does not stay till the end because Oba Esigie mocks him that his wife, Imaguero, whom he claims is faithful "has since been proven to be the most unfaithful wife in the kingdom, seduced only by a mere gift of coral" (p. 44). The conversations that follow gets Oliha angry and he rush back home. In scene ten, Imaguero dies accidentally in her struggle to escape from angry Oliha.

On discovering that the allegation against Imaguero is false and orchestrated by Oba Esigie and Princess Aminghen his daughter, he kills Princess Aminghen too and the other four wives. The matter is reported to Queen Idia in scene eleven that her granddaughter has been murdered and she reacts: "This is despicable. This is unheard of. Oliha has committed an offence against the land and must be punished. … No one kills the child of a tiger and walks away without being attacked" (p. 58). In scene twelve, Idia sends two girls to Oliha's harem as spies, to know Oliha's next move. They are to pretend to be comforters. They do not succeed with Oliha as he chases them out in scene thirteen, but they know that he poises for war with the Oba, for he does not only chase the two girls out with a cutlass, he also keeps shouting war, war, war.

In scene fourteen, the chiefs come in to report to Idia that Oliha poises for war and to let her know that the kingdom is not prepared to go to war as the army is not battle ready, but Queen Idia will have none of that. She decides to fight the battle herself. Queen Idia, in scene fifteen, summons the Portuguese traders to express her disdain for their interference in the internal affairs of the kingdom with their preaching that the natives should accept the Portuguese God and dump *Osalobua*, the god of their forefathers. She also alleges that they have prevented Oba Esigie from going to war through their pressure. She warns them to leave the kingdom. The chiefs, in chapter sixteen, come to convince Queen Idia that Benin should not go to war with Oliha and his allies who are now known to be the Igala, led by their Attah (their king).

In scene seventeen, Queen Idia goes to seek the consent of Oba Esigie to lead the war againt Oliha and his allies, and it is given. The women of Benin kingdom come to show their solidarity to Queen Idia, in scene eighteen, and to donate their charms as support for her for the battle ahead. Idia rejects, though appreciates them. She believes that *Osalobua* will win the battle for her. Scenes nineteen and twenty are the war scenes in which Queen Idia and her warriors win. In scene twenty-one, everybody celebrates Queen Idia and the victory of the Binis. It also provides an opportunity for those who insisted that she must die to come and apologise.

From the arrangement of the plot, we can see that it is well-developed. Structurally, it is a One-Act play, divided into twenty-one scenes. It is also a character play in which the protagonist moves from one whose life is under threat of premature death, and one who is not desired by some polilical powers in her society to one who is celebrated by all at the end of the play.

Emotan: A Benin Heroine is also a causal play, with each scene developing out of the previous one. It has a simple plot, with an early point of attack. The play is divided into the traditional Acts and Scenes. It has five Acts in all. Act One is divided into three scenes, Act Two is divided into five scenes, Act Three is divided into three scenes; the same thing goes for Act Four, and Act Five is divided into four scenes. Once the chiefs instigate Oba Orobiru (in act one scene one) to send Ògún, his younger brother who should reign after him into exile, and the plot is executed in scene two, the action triggers a counter-action (a reaction) that generates conflicts and tension until the end of the play. The taking over of the throne by Irughe, Ògún's younger brother, in scene three after the death of Orobiru further complicates the conflict. In this scene, Ihama hints Oba Uwaifiokun and the Chiefs that he learns that Ògún who was exiled is alive and planning to take the throne. As a show of solidarity, the women of Benin, bring Ewere leaves (a symbol of peace) to the palace, but while others present their own, Emotan does not present hers.

In Act Two scene one, Emotan demonstrates love and kindness as she encourages some women who are busy chatting at Ekinadose's house to get engaged in buying and selling in the market as that will reduce financial burden on their husbands. At the close of the market in scene

two, some men attempt to kidnap Emotan on the orders of Oba Uwaifiokun so they could take her to the palace to become one of the Oba's wives. This is to prevent Emotan from continuing with her plans to re-take the crown for exiled Ògún, but they do not succeed. In scene three, Oba Uwaifiokun is troubled by his conscience for betraying Ògún and usurping his throne and more troubled by the fact that Ògún, assisted by Emotan, is making frantic efforts to re-take the throne. His wife's counsels that he should pacify Emotan and share the throne with Ògún do not go down well with him. In scene four, the kindness of Emotan is further established, as a boy caught for stealing cocoyam and garri confesses that he actually comes to the market to see Emotan who usually helps him with food but has to steal to feed because he does not see her. Those who intend to beat him begin to disperse. Also, in this same scene, market women discuss the news that Ògún is still alive and wants his throne back. While some appear to support, others are indifferent. In scene five, the Oba is still worried about the role of Emotan and wants her stopped; Ezomo suggests a trap should be set for her. Once she falls into it, she should be dealt with.

As we get to Act Three, scene one, some market women express fear over the safety of Emotan's life and tend to persuade her to hands-off the pursuit of the throne for Ògún. In a long speech, she exposes many things that the women do not know about the matter. The greed of the chiefs in wanting a weak king instead of Ògún, the inordinate ambition and the intrigues around the seat of power, the lie of Irughe that Ògún was dead and how, by that, he became king, and how they connived to get Ògún out of the way because he was seen as a threat to the growth of their political power. For all these, Emotan persuades them to fight for justice, not for her. She gets the support of the women to match naked to the palace in protest. In scene two, we see Ògún in the forest, wandering about and Emotan brings him food. She informs him of a secret army that she has raised to kill Oba Uwifiokun during the next celebration of Igue festival, in addition to the support being offered by the market women. In scene three, the evidence that the hearts of the market women have been poisoned against Emotan is shown as some of them say their husbands said they

should have nothing to do with her because she is a witch. Others say she is Ògún's lover and only wants them to help her bring her lover back.

In Act Four scene one, Emotan meets with Okutukutu, a diviner in the night along a bush path. There she agrees with the requirement of the oracle that she be offered as sacrifice for Ògún to be restored to his throne, because she sees it as dying for the throne of Benin to be rid of injustice. In scene two, the river goddess, Ovia, appear to Ògún to assure him that he will regain the throne as he will kill his brother, Oba Uwaifiokun, with his own sword. He asks him to proceed to Benin. He is nearly handed over to his enemies from the palace as he enters Benin but escapes with the help of Edo. In scene three, the secret army raised by Emotan meet at her house and Ògún comes to join them for final strategising (spiritually being fortified by a medicine man) in preparation for their mission during the Igue festival that will hold the following day.

In Act five, scene one, Emotan settles the quarrel of some market women who fight each other and appeals to everyone for friendliness amongst all the market women. She also uses the opportunity to address them again and to solicit their support for a fight for a great Benin. She urges them not to fall for the divide-and-rule strategy of the chiefs. Rather, they should go home and educate their husbands about the truth; they are to do it gently and humbly so that they can all join hands to fight for justice. In scene two, in the midst of the crowd in celebration, Ògún strikes the Oba and cuts his head and everybody scatters. In scene three, Emotan hears the noise of jubilation and knows that Ògún has succeeded; she is very happy. However, she has disappeared by the time the market women come to celebrate with her. In the last scene, Ògún is installed as Oba Ewuare, but could not reward Emotan because she is dead. He, however, names the ground on which she shall be buried Emotan Ewuare and changes the name of Benin to Edo, being the name of the man who helped him to escape being handed over to his enemies from Oba Uwaifiokun's palace shortly before he regains the throne.

The way the plot is developed vividly emphasises the fight over power which correlates to the politics of space. Again, this is a character story and has been handled to achieve attainment of

Ògún's dream through courage and resilience of Ògún, Emotan and their allies. Though Emotan dies, she achieves her dream of enthroning Ògún and obtaining justice to restore the purity, integrity and truth to Benin monarchy.

3.4.2 Characterisation as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing, Sweet Revenge, Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

While character is the primary material through which plots are created, characterisation is that which delineates one character from the others. There are levels of characterisation. They could be physical or biological (age, gender, and general appearance), another level is societal (economic status, profession, trade, religion, family relationship), the third is psychological (motivations, likes and dislikes, habitual responses, desires), and fourth is the moral level. This refers to what a character is willing to do in order to achieve his aim. It is also what a character is willing to do when faced with the situation of making a difficult choice, as against what he professes or asks others to do in similar situations. This moral level is what differentiates a character more distinctly than the three other levels. Development of character (characterisation) by the playwright is important to the success of the play in terms of audience appreciation as this has direct impact, not only on themes of the play but also on how the message is conveyed. Well-developed characters make a play more convincing to the audience and thus make the dramatisation real. There are several ways through which a character is revealed to the reader or audience. These include stage directions, prefatory notes, or other explanatory materials other than the dialogue of the play, what other characters say about him, what he says about other characters and what he does as against what he says. As we examine how Salami-Agunloye uses characterisation to advance the politics of space in the four selected plays, our searchlight will focus on these channels of revelation of characters and how through interactions of characters in relation to arrangement of incidents she reflects the politics of space. The techniques employed by the playwright, majorly, are deductive and we also get to know the characters by the four channels mentioned above. It is only in *Idia, the*

Warrior Queen of Benin and *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* that we have some revelations about the protagonists of the plays in the prefatory notes.

In *More than Dancing,* Salami-Agunloye, through the use of existential and historical characters dramatises the politics of space. There are many characters in this play; therefore, we shall only consider the principal ones for want of space. The principal characters are Bisi, Nona Odaro, Hon. Hakeem, and the Men of UPLP (we will take the men of UPLP as one because they act alike and together).

Madam Bisi is the leader of the women's wing of UPLP. She is a brave and brilliant political leader; she is enlightened, fearless, intelligent and resilient. Above all, she is highly politically conscious. Her action shows her as one of the masterminds of the plot to enthrone a woman Presidential candidate and ultimately a woman President. She demonstrates good political leadership when she boldly stops the women that are dancing to entertain people at the convention of her party, the UPLP. She orders the women away, wakes them from political complacency through her oratorical address and sensitises them to the need to fight for political representation. She is the major motivator for the women group. She is a woman of strong character who would tolerate no nonsense from the men. She refuses to be intimidated by the male politicians who threaten her to desist from further providing the leadership that could emancipate the women in politics. No wonder, other women hail her as Mama UPLP and give her their loyalty. She has the power of ideas. For instance, she convinces the women to demand for inclusive politics.

Madam Bisi proves to be a selfless leader, who having goaded the women into political agitation and resolve to present a Presidential nominee for the primary election of the party, immediately disqualifies herself from being a candidate (p. 50). Though persuaded by others to vie, she declines to be a candidate; rather she chooses to be a political strategist. She is a charismatic leader who is versed in mobilisation strategies and ability to ensure cohesion in a revolutionary group or movement like that of the women members of the UPLP. She follows up her desire for a woman presidential candidate by inviting the women to her house for a meeting to, as she puts it,

"appraise yesterday's incidence" (p. 7). She coordinated proceedings of the meeting well and in the course of the meeting tells the women, "for any group of people to move ahead, they must be prepared to pay a price" (p.11). When it appears that disagreement is about to spring up concerning who to choose between Aisha and Nona Odaro, she douses the tension to ensure the meeting does not derail: "… let's not allow anything that may bring strive come in. We all know that Aisha is a foundation member of this party; I think it is wise for us to consider her … We will ask Nona to work closely with her…" (p. 14). She guides the meeting to a logical conclusion until a candidate is chosen to be fielded at the forthcoming party primaries.

Bisi's leadership quality continues to move the women forward in the determination to produce a woman Presidential candidate. She provides words of encouragement to the women like Ejura who want to be discouraged at a point, and that emboldens them: "Men will not fight our battles for us. After all we are good campaigners and support-mobilisers, yet we always shy from elective posts. … How can we influence national policy if we are not in the scheme of things?" (pp. 48-49). She mobilises the women for fund raising for their political activities and they all contribute generously. Madam Bisi demonstrates great wisdom in ensuring that the political ambition of the women to snatch the political space from being dominated by men remains on course until the end. Madu's (one of the male politicians) statement attests to this: "You see, I warned us about nominating a wise woman like Madam Bisi as woman leader. That woman is too intelligent for us. Now see what we are faced with; she is turning the table against us" (p. 31). She proves Madu right when later at the meeting with the partymen at the party secretariat the men scheme to convince them with persuasion and juicy offers of different sorts – Vice Presidential slot, money, and ministerial appointments – she remains calm and calculative. Though insulted by Madu, (one of the men) she refuses to get annoyed.

Even when other women are agitated and are losing their temper, Bisi knows what she wants to do, she has a game plan. She calms the women and whispers to them to play along. All the proposals the men bring she says they are okay by the women, apparently fooling them. When the

men offer them money to utilise in mobilising support for Alhaji Bawa, their Presidential candidate, she turns it down, saying it is unnecessary as they have money to do the mobilisation; the men ask for the list of the women nominee for ministerial appointments, she says they will provide it later. In all this she has a game plan. By the time the women leave the meeting, the men conclude that they have turned the table in their favour, meaning that the women have agreed to dumb their ambition; so they are happy about this. Surprisingly, however, before daybreak the following morning, the women have filled everywhere in town with Nona Odaro's posters as their presidential nominee at the forthcoming primaries. All this proves Bisi to be a strategist as she provides the right leadership for the women.

The men are stunned by the women's smart move. To compound the anxiety and confusion of the men who think they can extract information from their wives about the plans of the women, all the women, by agreement, keep sealed lips about any discussion of political matters in their homes. This further destabilises the men as they don't know what next to expect. From there, things assume a fast tempo as news filter in that Nona Odaro is already being announced at the stadium as the UPLP Presidential aspirant for the forthcoming national election. She then goes ahead to win as President. Bisi's role in all this is unquantifiable, as the playwright makes adequate use of her along with others, through adequate character development to achieve his dramatisation of politics of space.

Like Madam Bisi, Nona Odaro is also a visionary, bold and resilient character. She shares the view that "democracy will only be democracy when men and women as equal partners deliberate upon national policies and legislations" (p. 5). She is an intellectual in politics, who is aware that women are not inferior to men politically. Once chosen by the women as their presidential candidate, she goes ahead to pursue her political goal with deft, demonstrating a high intellectual capacity that is unmatched by many men. Dismissing the ideological ambivalence of some of the women who are torn between political liberation of women and patriarchal subjugation, she comes up with a more logical idea, offering a superior argument to counter such a

defeatist tendency and insisting that women too must struggle for political space, particularly the highest in the land – Presidency (p. 7):

Nona is an intellectual, a professor but simple-hearted woman. Bisi could vouch for her that she will cooperate in the efforts of the women to change their political fortune by upturning the table of politics of exclusion. When she and Aisha are being considered for the women's candidature, she remains calm. In fact, Bisi, who also feels Aisha should be picked, makes this comment about Nona Odaro: "we will ask Nona to work closely with her. Nona is a simple-hearted person, she won't mind" (p. 14). In the course of picking a woman Presidential candidate, Garos, one of the women, lends us some insght into the character of Nona Odaro: "Nona is a very level-headed person. She is respectful, a woman of integrity but firm … She is lively, active and friendly. In fact, she is a people-centred person" (p. 13).

Although Nona appears somewhat fearful that she needs the Nigerian past heroines to appear to her three times to encourage her, but once encouraged, she never looks back again. Mama Nigeria's observation about Nona also confirms this: "Go ahead, I see in you the zeal, the temperance, the humility and courage of a leader" (p. 85). As a matter of fact, she is able to sustain the confidence of the women because of her attributes that are pointed out by Mama Nigeria. She is diligent, she prepares very well for the race, she gives time to prepare election manifesto, does simulation in anticipation of her Presidency. Despite the antagonism that later comes from her husband, due to pressure brought upon him by the men politicians, she manages the situation and keeps faith with other women until they win.

Hakeem is one of the male characters used by the playwright to consummate her dramatisation of the politics of space in this play. Although a male politician, Hakeem does not share the political ideology of patriarchy. He buys the women's idea of men and women complementarity, equal political representation, and the necessity to give the women more visible role in the political space. The role he plays in the struggle between the women of UPLP and their men counterparts for political space is very strategic. Though a man, he not only stands on the side

of the women in their struggle for political reckoning, he also fights on their side to achieve it. His character provides the necessary link between the male and female characters in the play. He becomes someone like a mouthpiece of the women before the men, a kind of advocate that favours the exertion of women's agency in the politics of space. Right from the beginning of the play where the men of UPLP raise antagonism against the women's political ambition, he stands firmly to educate the men on the need to accede to the demand of the women.

Each time the men map out strategies of how to counter the moves by the women in their struggle for political "emancipation", Hakeem is always on hand to oppose the strategies, either by advising the men against such moves or by educating them about the impropriety of their intended actions. This implies that his activities in the play slow down the political progress the men could have made in their bid to stop the women from attaining their objective. For instance, when the men oppose the women's demand for a woman Presidential candidate, insisting that the time is not ripe for such demand, Hakeem advises his colleague: "… Gentlemen, the time for us to address the issues raised by our women has come if we must make progress as a party" (p. 6).

After the women have picked their Presidential nominee and the men hold a meeting to thwart their efforts and Madu says, "well, if they are tired of dancing then let's look for something else for them to do. The whole essence is to distract their attention from power" (p. 31), Hakeem responds by saying, "If they are tired of dancing, they will soon be tired of your other tricks. The sooner you start to open up the corridors of power to women, the better for all of us" (p. 9). It gets to a point when the men are so worried about Hakeem's role in the whole matter that they begin to suspect him and suggest that the women have promised him something. He simply makes them realise that his position as Chairman of Senate Committee on Women Affairs has given him a better understanding of the plight of women in the space of politics.

When the men consider the idea of unleashing violence on the women and Madu calls the secretary at the party secretariat to send for Scorpion, it is Hakeem who stops the move: Hold it. Please, let's use another tactic. Do you realise that these women are our wives and sisters? They are

not our enemies, … (p. 69). Hakeem also distinguishes himself as an honest politician, with integrity, who will not be involved in the corruption that daily continues to threaten the development of his country. When the men fail in their bid to influence the women through bribery, the money that is earmarked for the purpose but rejected by the women becomes a subject of discussion of what to do with it. Madu says, "Everyone will share this two million naira. Then we will spread the news that we gave it to Madam Ebele and the group. That will cause confusion in their camp" (p. 74). Hakeem kicks against the dirty move: "Count me out. I will not be involved in that scandalous game … Isn't this debasing?" (p. 74).

They become so worried about Hakeem's destabilising role in their political antics that it gets to a time they hedge him out of their meetings so that he will not continue to be a "clog". However, it is already late for the men at that time, for that turns out to be the last meeting they are opportuned to hold before the women finally succeed in their schema. The only meeting held after that is where they receive the news that the women have outwitted them as all their strategies have come crashing like a pack of cards as Sonsare, one of them, comes with a shocking news of Nona's announcement as the party's Presidential candidate.

The men of UPLP, on their part, constitute a block of political antagonists to the ambition of the women to present a woman Presidential candidate. Every move made by the women toward attaining their goal is obstructed until the last point when they discover the futility of their efforts. As soon as Madam Bisi stops the women from dancing at the party convention and begins to advocate for equality with their men counterparts in the politics of space, the men flare up and see Madam Bisi's objection as an affront that must be stopped forthwith. Madu's reaction reflects this: "Madam Bisi, just who do you think you are that you disperse the dance troupes that our party has funded? What do you think you are doing? Mr. Chairman sir, Madam Bisi should be called to order". From there on, they employ all sorts of strategies to stop the women.

Strategies employed by the men include fear, as Sani says to the women, "but remember politics costs money" (p.3); intrigues, such as in Sani's hypocritical counsel; "Haba, Madam Bisi,

be careful; don't push the women too hard. Political positions will wear them out" (p. 5); distraction, as expressed in Madu's statement: "well, if they are tired of dancing then let's look for something else for them to do. The whole essence is to distract their attention from power" (p. 31); divide-and-rule, as in the attempt to play Ambassador Uyi against Nona Odaro, his wife, and by that destabilse her (pp. 53-57), and an attempt to create division by bribing the market women to team up with the men (pp. 71-73); threat, as in when Madu attempts to introduce thuggery into the political struggle when he calls the secretary at the party secretariat to send for Scorpion (p. 69); and inducement with offer of "juicy" political appointments as expressed through Madu's hypocritical promises to the women: "We also plan that every woman present here will get an appointment. This time, out of the 45 ministerial appointments, women will get 15 - 6 ministers and 9 ministers of state. All of you here will be included" (p. 95). In spite of all they do, however, the men still fail in their attempt to prevent the women from attaining their political ambition. This shows that the playwright rejects the politics of the inheritors of colonialism which the men represent. The kind of politics of exclusion being done by the likes of Madu, Femi, Terna, Sanni, Balat, and other men of UPLP is unacceptable to her.

In *Sweet Revenge,* four characters are critical to Salami-Agunloye's dramatisation of politics of space. Although no character can be wished away in any piece of drama as they all have one role or the other to play in the dramaturgy of the play, however, their roles are more critical than the other. That is the reason for our consideration of four frontline characters in this play. They are Sota, Aisosa, Nosa and Ede (taken together as one), Cheryl, and the women group, led by Madam Power Power. The technique used by the playwright to reveal these characters to us is more of deductive. She wants us to know them through what they say, do and what others say about them. She rarelly uses descriptive technique as she provides very little about their characters in the stage directions. The same goes for backgrounding.

In her treatment of the politics of space, the playwright presents Sota as an unpatriotic and undependable politician who is only interested in power for the sake of pecuniary gains. To begin with,

Sota as a Senator is the complete contrast of Sota that lived abroad and participated as a member of the Movement for Democracy with passion for his country and the welfare of her people. His political activities abroad are what endeared him to his constituency in Nigeria. These prompted them to invite him to return to Nigeria to vie for the position of a Senator when they saw that there was a vacant seat to be contested for. Responding to Cheryl's statement that she could see the reasons why Sota decides to go back home, following some explanations offered by Regie in respect of the subject, Sota says, "Cheryl, you are damn right. That is why I must return home to answer the call of my people to recreate and build up this new Nigeria …" (p. 10). This statement creates an impression that he is willing to offer his service sincerely and sacrificially to help his country. This however, turns out to be the contrary when he gets home.

Apart from his nagging against his wife at home, the first sign that he may not be a good political material (candidate) starts from his decision not to take his wife to Abuja as he goes to assume his position at the Senate as a Senator, having just won the senatorial election. His reason for this is, "I know what is good for me … She does not befit my new status". Yet this is the same woman who mobilised the women to vote en-masse for him (p.19).

While he is yet to win the election into the Senate, he is well-behaved, cooperates with members of his political party and warms himself to the electorates. Surprisingly, however, the moment he wins he changes his attitude and social relation with his benefactors such as his wife, Madam Power Power and her group who mobilise the electorates that give him mass votes. Instead of welcoming the women who pay him a visit at Abuja, he is hostile to them: "I don't care who you are, you have no right disturbing the peace of my home. I don't even know you" (p.45). He even calls the police to arrest the women for trespass and they are detained in the police cell for three days. He becomes hostile to those who worked for his success at the polls and does not want to see them, not even his wife. He not only abuses power in this way he also abuses the trust the nation reposes in him. As a husband and a political figure, he is cruel, selfish and unaccountable. In fact, Cheryl describes him as "wicked and heartless". His hostility to those who voted him actually becomes his achille's heel,

because, in return the women organise his recall from the National Assembly and that brings him down completely from the political ladder. He loses his political position, thus losing out of the political space for another person to step in. Interestingly, the person whom the women feel is most fitting to occupy the seat is Sota's estranged wife. The playwright develops Sota's character this way so that he could create sufficient reasons for his political misfortune and downfall.

The playwright also presents Sota as a liar and a fraud in politics. To create a good reason for marrying Cheryl when he is in the United Kingdom, he had to lie to his friends. Regie, his friend, reveals this towards the end of the play: "I remember you told me while you were in London that Aisosa had abandoned you to live with another man. What was the use of lying? You were never really with us Sota" (p. 73). The same tendency to lie makes him pretend to be a responsible person who could be trusted by his constituency for a big political office as that of a Senator. In addition, he is not only a liar, he is also seen through his actions, speeches and the comments of characters around him that he is a very proud person who does not value relationships and sees only himself, not others (selfish and self-centred).

It is pride that makes him treat his wife with ignominy, the same way he treats Madam Power and her team, forgetting that they are the people that actually gave him the mandate that makes him who he is - a Senator. His pride manifests in different forms. After he has fallen, his friend, Nosa, counsels him to seek support because he needs it. Sota's reply to this is: "I don't blame you Nosa, I blame Aisosa, Madam Power Power and their cohorts. The wall has fallen down flat so the goat can climb on it anyhow" (p. 76). Even when he comes back to beg his wife Aisosa, he still has not purged himself totally of the pride as Aisosa notes: "Sota, you will never change. It's either you are suffering from partial amnesia or you are still your old arrogant and unrepentant self" (p. 81).

Sota is also shown to be a fraudulent politician who fraudulently transfers ten million pounds sterling (£10, 000, 000. 00) government money to his second wife, Cheryl's personal account in London. This is a realistic character that correlates well with many politicians in Nigeria today who betray the trust reposed in them by those who vote them into power. They throw probity and

accountability to the wind, become fraudulent and divert public funds meant for developmental projects for personal use. He lacks political sagacity, hence his hostile disposition to the people of his constituency which eventually leads to the loss of his seat at the Senate through recall. In postcolonial interpretation, Sota represents the inheritors of colonialism, who having benefitted from the colonial system, through training by the coloniser; they have imbibed the way of the coloniser with their tendency to dominate others and to exploit the political system. The playwright rejects the type of politics being practiced by the likes of Sota as improper and unhealthy for the progress and development of African post-colonial states.

Aisosa is the direct opposite of Sota, her husband. She is loving, compassionate, enduring, resilient, patriotic, honest and reliable. The playwright presents all these about her to us through what she says, what others say about her, and what she does. All these are weaved through the plot of the play. In her dramatisation of politics of space, Salami-Agunloye presents Aisosa as a foil of Sota, her husband. While Sota is everything that is evil, Aisosa is everything that is good. For eight years, her husband travelled abroad leaving four children for her to cater for. Despite that her husband was not in constant touch with her, and sending a meagre ten thousand naira (₦10, 000. 00) monthly stipend to her, instead of the forty thousand naira (₦40, 000. 00) he promised before he travelled, she continued to take care of their four children. Rather than return after four years as he promised, Sota stayed in the United Kingdom for eight years. For the eight years, he kept his contact secret, yet Aisosa remains committed to the marriage. She had even built a house in the name of her husband with the money she inherited from her parents who died a year after Sota travelled to London. All these are revealed to us in the play as expositions. On the contrary, Sota marries another wife in London, in person of Cheryl. Aisosa proves herself to be a loving and faithful wife. In spite of the cruel treatment meted to her by her husband, she does everything to ensure the success of her husband at the polls as she mobilises the women to vote for him massively. This implies that they are not expected to be political antagonists at the beginning until the political pendulum swings away from Sota to Aisosa

Until driven away by her husband, Aisosa has only been at the periphery of politics. Once driven out of the house Nosa and Ede, her family friends, encourage her to come along with them to Abuja and she does. This marks the beginning of a change of fortune which eventually inches her close to political reckoning. Incredibly, things begin to fall in place for her. First, she gets an appointment as a Medical Doctor with a pay package that sums up to about three hundred thousand naira (₦300, 000) monthly. Her selflessness and self sacrifice earn her the job as she had offered some voluntary services at the Benin branch of the National Medical Research Centre in the past and the National Director of the Hospital turns out to be the Chairman of the interview panel. The most beautiful thing about it is that the appointment is backdated to eight years ago when she started offering the voluntary services (p. 32). That brings her back to financial independence and upward movement in life.

The recall of Sota from the Senate brings Aisosa to the centre of political space. She was not too keen on politics, only ready to help her husband attain power. This disposition is common to many African women, except a few of them who are politically conscious, who realise that they can serve their nation as much as their men counterparts can do. By the time the women who mastermind the recall of Sota from the Senate come to ask her to contest for the seat vacated by Sota, she turns down the offer on the excuse of its impropriety. As she puts it, "… what will society say if I do that?" (p. 67), but the playwright's intention is to prove some points in the politics of space. One of them is that the power of recall can be exercised by the electorates and another is that women too are capable of being good politicians, even better ones than the men.

Since the playwright has proved the first point and Sota has been recalled, she goes ahead to actualise the second one by making the women politicians mount pressure on Aisosa and this she further heightened through Ede's pressure on Aisosa to accept the offer. Madam Show's statement reveals how fitting she will be to represent them at the Senate: "You see, we have no other person who is competent enough to represent us at the Senate. You are the most appropriate person. when you talk on the floor of the Senate men are bound to stop and listen" (p. 67). The women's opinion expressed through Madam Show points to the rapid upward movement (achievements) of Aisosa as projecting her

to the world and as an attraction to the political class to which the women belong. It also means that Aisosa has moved from the woman who, according to Sota, was "old", "ugly", and "faded" to a toast of everyone, particularly the political class. Aisosa's integrity and credibility are further attested to soon after the women leave as Ede mounts further pressure: "They need credible people like you. Please don't fail them". Aisosa does not see attainment of political office as an opportunity to take advantage of the system, like Sota does. Rather, she sees it as an opportunity to serve her nation. This accounts for why she says to Ede, "Do you know what you are asking me to do? To put aside my career and step into politics? That is a huge sacrifice" (p.70); and that in turn prompts Ede's statement: "Yes, our people deserve that sacrifice" (p. 70).

Unlike Sota, when Aisosa is eventually elected, she proves to be an honest, credible, dedicated and responsible politician who recognises that she is at the Senate because some people gave her the mandate. She is warm and accommodating, instead of the hostile and unfriendly attitude Sota puts up as a Senator. She has even started showing this trait before she gets to the Senate. Before the women politicians leave her house, she gives them gifts. According to the stage direction, "*Aisosa returns with two new lace wrappers and nylon bags which she hands to the two women*" (p. 69).

The qualities of a good material for political office have always been seen in Aisosa long before she is drawn into politics, particularly the traits of integrity, honesty and patriotism. For example, when Cheryl suggests that she will transfer the ten million pounds (₤10, 000, 000. 00) government money Sota paid into her account into Aisosa's. Aisosa refuses despite being prodded by Ede, her friend to accept the offer. She considers such action as fraudulent: "do you realise that is government money? We will become like him if we accept obviously ill-acquired money" (p. 54). She goes on to suggest that Cheryl should return the money to the Nigerian government. Her honesty paid off as she wins a three hundred thousand dollars ($300, 000. 00) award from the United States of America for leading an exemplary life in the face of adversity (p. 60), she becomes famous and attracts a reception from the President of Nigeria for his achievements.

Even after she becomes a Senator, she does not stop working hard on her profession. It is at that time that her drug on HIV mother-to-child transmission that has been on clinical trials for the past few years scales through all the tests at the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta, and the drug is to be known as Aisosasprin (pp.77-78). On the political turf, therefore, she becomes a credible material for leadership and she lives up to expectations. She is elected to be the Senate President by her colleagues at the upper chamber twice. As far as the playwright is concerned, this character type represents the typical spirit of African humanity with the right interpersonal, moral and admistrative qualities that are required for good governance and the associated necessary national development.

Ede and Nosa are used by the playwright in her dramatisation of politics of space for strategic reasons. When Aisosa is rejected by her husband, she needs respite from someone, she needs a helper and someone who can lift her or encourage her. This is the role the playwright uses the couple to achieve in this play. Since Sota and Aisosa are at the centre of the political paradigm she is presenting, there must be some shoulders on which Aisosa could lean, so that Salami-Agunloye could still continue to have access to that character (Aisosa), otherwise that may be end of the character. In the heat of her trauma, Aisosa is initially timid and not too confident, having no job and financially down, it is the couple (Nosa and Ede) the playwright uses to buoy her confidence, restore her hope and instil courage into her.

The couple are optimists who believe strongly that Aisosa can still make it in life and become great. They encourage her to move to Abuja with them when her husband drives her out of the house and also refuses to take her along to Abuja, his new home as a Senator. Although Sota has despised Aisosa with all sorts of denigrating words which makes her to lose her sense of worth, nonetheless, Nosa and Ede help her to rediscover herself. They encourage her to get a job, being a Medical Doctor by training. When Aisosa is getting discouraged due to incessant rejection at interviews, they continue to encourage him. Ede says to her, “never mind, as it is said, ‘when the going gets tough the tough gets going, and tough time never lasts the tough people do. This tough time will be over soon … and we will laugh” (p. 31). At another time, after Aisosa gets the first job, Ede reinforces her confidence: “Its

time to move ahead and show the world that you are not a failure. Put your past behind you but let it drive you to succeed" (p. 35). At some point when Aisosa broods over the negative comments about her by Sota who despises her, Ede persuades her, "You know what Sosa? You are a very pretty medical doctor, a consultant gynaecologist, a researcher, a mother of four beautiful children. What also can a woman ask for?" (pp. 34-35).

The couple continue to urge Aisosa on. Even when she wins an award from America and wonders how it all happens, Nosa still makes her to realise her worth: "you deserve it Aisosa dear. Above all you deserve the award for the best mother and the best wife" (p. 61). Beyond that, the couple are realists, blunt and sincere friends of Sota and Aisosa. They do not shy away from making Sota realise his misdeeds against his wife and also caution him to retrace his steps, though he is adamant. They are foresighted, particularly Nosa who warns Sota of the imminent consequences of his action: "Aisosa does not deserve this treatment. You disappeared …for eight years and when you returned you were (sic) presented with a house she built in your name. ... If you dare carry out your plan you will be disgraced" (p. 19). And it actually comes to pass as Sota falls from grace to grass, while it is the opposite with Aisosa. The couple is compassionate and caring as they empathise with Aisosa and do everything within their means to take care of her and her four children who are left unattended by Sota. Aisosa is actually sustained by the words of encouragement and the support extended to her until she finds her bearing again and rises to greatness. This role that the playwright makes Ede and Nosa play in the life of Aisosa preserves her for her role later in the politics of space and the groundbreaking achievements that she records.

In *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*, Salami-Agunloye makes use of existential, historical and mythical charaters in her dramatisation of politics of space. The characters are revealed to us through what other characters say about them, what they say either about themselves or about others and what they do in comparison to what they say. The stage instructions too provide some ample insight into the inner recesses of the characters. It is important to note that the plot of this play is driven by some important characters, such as Emotan, Ògún, Orobiru, Irughe and the

Chiefs, and these are the characters we shall examine to see how the playwright uses them to dramatise her politics of space.

The protagonist of this play is Emotan. As a character, her role is pivotal to the sustenance of the conflict of the play. She is a strong character; charismatic; hates injustice; accommodating; loving; resilient; courageous; bold; daring; upright; an orator, a motivator; patriotic; selfless; sacrificial; and visionary. All of these are seen in different parts of the play as enunciated by different human and mystical agents. The character of Emotan is developed by the playwright to oppose and resist political injustice and the politics of exclusion in the play. All the qualities that have been mentioned above about Emotan are what combined to help her attain political justice and restoration of dignity to the throne of Benin.

The conflict of the play is ignited the moment Orobiru allows himself to be manipulated by the chief to exile Ògún, his younger brother, who is to be installed as Oba after him. As if that is not enough, shortly after Ògún is exiled Orobiru dies and with the connivance of the chiefs, Irughe, Ògún's younger brother usurped the throne, instead of allowing Ògún to be crowned as king. With this development, complications set into the conflict. The succession crisis generated by this development is the political problem to be resolved and the struggle to resolve this is spearheaded by Emotan. She is bent on seeking for justice and the only way she believes this can be done is to ensure that Irughe vacates the throne, dead or alive and Ògún allowed to ascend the throne that is equally believed to rightfully belong to him. This she hopes to achieve by actively working with Ògún, who is in exile, and with other allies who she hopes to draw closer in the course of the struggle.

Emotan begins to demonstrate her aversion for injustice and puts up resistance against same when she refuses to donate her Ewere leaf to the Oba, whereas all other women who go to Oba Uwaifiokun's palace to rejoice with him on his first celebration of Ewere festival do. This seemingly "rebellious" attitude is noticed by Oba Uwaifiokun who draws the attention of his chiefs to it: "… My chiefs, did you notice that Emotan refused to present her ewere leaves?" (p. 30). One

of his chiefs responds to his observation: “Your majesty, that is sabotage. She must be kept under close observation. If she persists, your Ogiamwe can take care of her” (p. 30). In response, Oba Uwaifiokun says: Thank you for your consoling words, my chief. I was told, she is a close friend of Ògún and that she is leaving no stone unturned in her bid to help Ògún gain back his throne” (p. 31).

In pursuit of her goal, Emotan demonstrates courage as she will not be cowed by any threat or intimidation. In different strategies mapped by the Oba to either silence her or cage her, she puts up strong resistance without any fear of what the political hegemony can do to her. They try to pacify Emotan to be the Oba’s wife but she rejects: “Oba of where? Oba Uwifiokun is a usurper. Tell him I have never taken delight in being a queen and I never will. I am content with my present status. … Traitors, the schemer. I will rather die. You can take my corpse to him when I am dead.” (p. 39). As they try to use force on her she dives for a knife and attempts to kill herself. Emotan’s oratorical ability helps her in her struggle to restore the throne to Ògún as this becomes a tool to motivate the market women and move them to action against Oba Uwaifiokun. Even when the palace lies to the men of Benin to instruct their wives not to have anything to do with Emotan because she is a witch and some of the women have started carrying out this instruction, Emotan’s oratorical ability later upturns the falsehood and the women eventually lend their support to Emotan’s course.

When it comes to strategic planning, Emotan is very secretive, discreet, efficient and intelligent. The way she gets in touch with Ògún in the bush, gives him food, passes information to him and plans with him is not known to anybody. Despite the security network organised to monitor her movement, she is never caught until she succeeds in her plans. Emotan is charismatic, strong-willed but loved by everyone, particularly children and women, because she is kind, selfless and compassionate, and these also help her to enlist support and mobilise people easily. It is this quality that eventually helps her to mobilise some people as a secret army that join hands with Ògún to launch the final attack on Uwaifiokun’s political empire on the day he celebrates the Igwe

festival. The secret plan is hatched with great precision and Ògún finally kills the Oba and takes the crown. By making Ògún to kill the Oba, the playwright is not preaching violence but simply telling the story as it happened in history. African succession crisis does not support violence, but Emotan represents a resistance against the reactionary and imperialist agents in postcolonial theory. She represents an opposition against neo-colonialism and imperialism.

Above all, Emotan is selfless, patriotic and sacrificial in her service and commitment to her society. When Okutukutu informs her that the only thing the oracle requires for Ògún to regain his throne is for Emotan to lay down her life for the cause, though painful, she agrees to do it for the sake of Benin: "I will lay down my life for the throne of Benin. I will, I will. Difficult though it may be, … I am ready to pay the price. Benin will know peace. Benin will know prosperity and fame" (p. 72). In postcolonial theory interpretation, therefore, the likes of Emotan are people that Africa needs to emancipate itself from the clutches of the coloniser and the imperialist forces who are bent on eating deep into the fabrics of the post-colonial states.

As for Orobiru, from the outset of the play we see him as a weak character who can be manipulated at will. Although he seems to have good intentions but he does not have a mind of his own. This is the very character trait the chiefs/kingmakers notice in him in the first place that makes them to prefer him as king, instead of his brother, Ògún. This can be deduced from the statement of Chief Iyase in a discussion among his peers: "Orobiru is not that firm. He is a weakling. He cannot withstand our united force" (p. 14). Orobiru is expected to know the character of his brother very well (more than the chiefs) and so should not have succumbed to the mischievous manipulation that is borne out of politics of exclusion by the chiefs. Afterall, he too says, "I appreciate your concern. I find it difficult to believe that Ògún will sneak behind my back to plan anything against me. It is hard to believe your stories" (p. 18). In spite of his understanding as expressed in his statement, he still goes ahead to yield to pressure from the chiefs. This is a pointer to the fact of his weak character.

However, it is important to note that the playwright uses Orobiru's character to set off the conflict of the play; to create the politics of exclusion and injustice that he intends to dramatise. The brief appearance of Orobiru in the plays also points to this, once he has exiled Ògún in Act One scene two, he no longer features in the play because he dies and Irughe becomes the next king (Oba Uwaifiokun). This short tenure does not allow us to see more of his character than has been discussed here. However, with the little we see of him, within the prisms of postcolonialism, he represents the "Self" who dominates the "Other". He also emblematises the coloniser, whose preoccupation is to displace the colonised, uproot the coloniser from his legitimate native land, in order to exploit him. The playwright rejects this type of leaders as unfit to govern in the ideal politics of space in post-colonial Africa.

Ògún is another strong character who, like Emotan, is courageous, a brave warrior, fierce, tough, a pessimist, temperate and upright. When Oba Orobiru asks him to proceed on exile into the forest, though he seeks to know why such a decision is taken against him, he still restrains himself. Chief Iyase speaks of Ògún's charismatic and fearless character, even in the face of war, and his ability to provide leadership to the people and his propensity to always succeed in his endeavours: "The people love him. He leads the men to war. He is victorious at all battles. He never loses at war. His sword never misses an enemy. He manifests his strength at all battle fields" (p. 15). Ògún is portrayed as someone who always keeps hope alive. Though banished to the forest, he still believes that his banishment cannot be the end of his political ambition. He is an optimist who believes that every problem has a terminal date. While being forced out of the palace to go into exile he retorts, "Your majesty, not forever, just for a little while. I shall return, I shall return. Then Benin will know the truth, Benin will know peace and tranquillity, Benin will know justice" (p. 20).

In spite of his travails, he does not give up the hope of becoming the king of Benin one day. His patience is helpful to him as he waits patiently for many years in the bush till there is the green light that he can proceed to regain his crown. From that, we can also deduce that he is a good listener and a good learner. Each time Emotan goes to him, she gives him information and

"instructions" on what to do to fit in properly into her game plan of retrieving for him (Ògún) his crown. His strong character, particularly his fierceness probably accounts for why he finds it convenient to kill Irughe, his brother, by himself, cuts off his head, just to take the crown (power). In postcolonial theory interpretation, Ògún represents the victims of colonialism, who are displaced by the colonial political hegemony and in today's atmosphere the neo-colonial hegemonic forces in their insatiable greed to dispossess the colonised of his rightful property through domination, exploitation and imperialism.

The play reveals Irughe as a traitor, a betrayer; usurper, a liar, a coward and a dubious character. He supplants his elder brother, Ògún, by taking his political position (space). In her dramatisation of the politics of space, Salami-Agunloye uses this character to continue with her story of politics of exclusion and injustice. Irughe becomes the extension of the political hegemony that dominates and exploits the people. Although he initially demonstrates loyalty to Ògún when Orobiru banishes him to the forest, his loyalty soon fades away when he is trusted with the privilege of a message to the kingmakers after the death of Orobiru. This depicts him as a political opportunist who takes undue advantage of political developments to seize power. His action here is analogous to the military coups that ravage the post-colonial Africa and drags it back several years as it constitutes one of the reasons for its slow development. In postcolonial theory's interpretation, violent military coup itself is one of the products of colonialism that emanated from the imposition of a foreign system of government on the colonies by the coloniser.

Greed and inordinate ambition make Irughe lie to the kingmakers that Ògún is dead and so demands that they make him king in his place. The fact that he becomes afraid of Emotan who begins to scheme for the return of Ògún to come and take his throne is a demonstration of cowardice as he is hunted by guilty conscience. His action of usurping the throne is symptomatic of political treachery. This is a pointer to the fact that treachery and betrayal are common occurrences in the struggle for power in Nigeria today. He eventually pays the price of betrayal with his life.

Looking at the chiefs as a character block, they make decisions together and advise the king together as a body – the Council of Chiefs. Even though they sometimes have their differences, that happens at individual levels and not connected with the organic idea that moves the plot forward - the idea of unjust exclusion from political participation and the counter action of redressing same. The chiefs are the originators of the conflict of this play. They are selfish, greedy, corrupt, self-centred, dishonest, unjust, discriminatory, bias and pompous. From the very beginning, they advise Oba Orobiru to kill his younger brother, Ògún, or alternatively banish him to the forest. They put a wedge between two close siblings, because of their inordinate ambition, greed and selfishness. It can be deduced from the play that they are fraudulent; helping themselves to the resources of the kingdom because of the privileged political position, being at the corridors of power (p. 37). The self-centredness of the chiefs elicits the fear of Ògún in their hearts. They are bent on helping themselves to the resources of the state unhindered; therefore, they don't want Ògún that is upright, honest and firm to ascend the throne. For that reason, they must eliminate him, one way or the other. This is the conspiracy of the dominant hegemony to eliminate the opposition, especially when such opposition is perceived to be very strong.

This politics of exclusion or elimination is sometimes targeted at ensuring that a weakling is retained or elected into position (political space). Once they succeed in doing this, they will be able to get the attention of the leader or head of the political structure to further their own interest. This kind of situation perpetuates the culture of clientelism and neopatrimonialism as described by Joseph (2014, p. 56) and Weber (1978, pp. 133 - 136). This is probably the reason for the continued boldness they give to Oba Uwaifiokun such that even when he is pricked by his conscience for usurping the throne, they continue to embolden him. This is exemplified in Esogban's statement to the Oba: "Your Majesty, let not your heart be troubled…. Okoro Ògún is powerful, strong, mighty, resilient and bold, but he is not our choice" (p. 24). The stand of the chiefs, however, keeps the conflict of the play strong and sustains the dramatisation of politics of space in the play. It is not in doubt that the chiefs are unjust, discriminatory and bias. They know the right things to do when it

comes to administration but will not do them because they are blinded by their selfish interests. Postcolonial theory equates such people in the political space to inheritors of colonialism who are bent in their way of conspiracy to exclude perceived enemies and people who could make useful contribution to the development of the post-colonial states.

In *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin,* four characters form the fulcrum of people through whom Salami-Agunloye dramatises the politics of space. They are Queen Idia, Oba Esigie, Chief Oliha and the other Chiefs. These characters will be examined to show how the playwright uses them to achieve his aim.

Queen Idia is charismatic, bold, revolutionary, persistent and resilient. Her revolutionary quality makes her to question an existing obnoxious tradition. She does not see any sense in the tradition that requires a Queen Mother to die simply because her son becomes the Oba. As far as she is concerned, she will not die: "No, Iyesogie, I say not any more. The last of the Queen mother destined for death died with the death and burial of Oba Ozolua's mother, I Idia, will not die. … It is time to stop this wasteful tradition" (p. 4). She considers the excuse or reason advanced by tradition for the Queen mother to die as frivolous, she, therefore questions tradition: "I stand to question our tradition. I demand for my life. Why must I a woman, stand condemned to die simply because I am the mother of the reigning king?" (p. 4). Her radical reaction to the status quo sparks the conflict of this play.

With the support she receives from her son, the king and a few chiefs, she pulls her way through but faces another challenge, the challenge of an impending war against Benin, by Oliha (a Benin chief), and Attah Igala. Her response to the challenge of the war indicates Idia as a courageous Queen Mother. Though a woman, she rises up to the challenge even when the Army Commander, chief Ologbose and other chiefs shiver. This war has a significant political importance in the sense that it comes at a time when Benin warriors have become rusty and unprepared for any battle. The General of the Army himself gives a hint of the state of the army: "we are not ready for war, our soldiers have not been to war for a long time now, they are not battle ready" (p. 65). Apart

from that, if fought and won by Idia or under her leadership, it will enhance her political image and permanently obliterate the prejudicial traditional notion about the Queen Mother. The fear of the king being led or influenced by the Queen Mother is actually the reason or one of the reasons for demanding that she dies (p. 18). However, Idia knows that it is a war that must be fought and won. He, therefore, decides to personally lead in the war: "I will leave this battle to none other but myself. I will fight the battle myself and bring down Chief Oliha and his allies" (p. 66).

Queen Idia is not only the firm, politically conscious and strong Queen Mother, she is also aversed to religious intolerance and political hypocrisy, especially as demonstrated by the coloniser. This is demonstrated in her address to the two Europeans (Marcus and Alfonso) whom she accused of influencing the natives with a foreign religion and language and dissuading them from worshipping *Osanobua*, the God that is known to them (the natives): "… Don't you know that it is foolishness for a person to carry another person's load on his head while he drags his own on the ground? (p. 69). By this, in postcolonial theory's interpretation, Idia rejects the colonial discourse theory of civilising mission. She warns the Europeans in question here (Marcus and Alfonso) to go away with their idea of cultural supremacy, the idea of "Self" and "Other". With the war won under the leadership of Idia, she saves Benin from molestation by the Attah who could have captured many as slaves and plunder the land. However, the victory becomes a big political breakthrough for Idia, because never in the history of the kingdom has a Queen Mother performed such a feat. The achievement, therefore, enhances Idia's political image and she becomes a personage that everyone wants to identify with than asked to die. The eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory recognise characters like Idia as ideal for the society. They are people who will give no room for colonial and imperialistic practices of the coloniser.

Oba Esigie is portrayed in this play as a key player in the politics of space. As the son to Queen Idia who is the subject of the play's conflict, it is either he supports the status quo, being the king and custodian of tradition, or question it, like her mother. While many of his chiefs stand for tradition, he questions it. This portrays him as a principled person who will not blindly follow

obnoxious tradition. He has a progressive mind that will effect correction or change of a tradition that does not serve anybody well but only kills its own people. That is why in the politics of space, here, Oba Esigie is on the side of change. While the four chiefs – Iyase, Ezomo, Esogban, and Ihama – are rigid about the sanctity of tradition, Oba Esigie considers it otherwise. To him, any tradition that has overstayed its usefulness needs to be changed: "I stand to be judged by posterity for turning around an obnoxious law" (p. 11).

As the play progresses, the advocates of tradition continue to mount pressure, but Oba Esigie does not yield his ground and that sustains the conflict of the play until the chiefs reluctantly give up the idea. However, as one begins to exercise the fear that the resolution has come too early in the play, the playwright, through the character of Oba Esigie does a detour into another conflict that also drags the Queen Mother in as a principal player. That is the issue of the faithfulness of Oliha's wife. This issue, however, portrays Oba Esigie as a trivial and vindictive person, if not even jealous. On the ground that Oliha describes his wife as the most beautiful woman in Benin and very faithful, the Oba sets Imaguero up with coral beads and claims to Oliha that his wife has committed adultery because of coral beads. This leads to the killing of Imaguero and Princess Aminghen, daughter to Oba Esigie and granddaughter to Queen Idia, by Oliha. The murder of the duo sparks a fresh crisis as Oliha goes to solicit the support of Attah Igala to attack Benin and Queen Idia too insists on taking vengeance for the killing of her granddaughter.

It is, however, necessary to note that Oba Esigie is a hybrid Oba, and his wife a hybrid Queen, culturally. Both of them have taken to the ways of the Whiteman in some of their dressing; they accept the Whiteman's religion and that makes them syncretic too. All these are the concerns of the Queen Mother when she accuses the Portuguese of influencing the lifestyle of her son: "What do you mean by giving Queen Adesuwa your ballroom dresses to wear? You even renamed her Anna-Maria". So also, the chiefs speak about Oba Esigie when one of them suggests that he should be requested to persuade Queen Idia to stop going to war. In mockery, Ezomo retorts: Which Oba? The Portuguese Oba you mean? The Portuguese have held him captive with the magic

of their God. All he talks about now is the only one true God of the Portuguese" (p. 77). This hybridity and syncretic conditions partly account for the timidity of Oba Esigie in his approach to the politics of space thrown up by the decision of Attah Igala to take over the space of Benin through the instrumentality of war. His new-found Whiteman's religion seems to discourage him from waging war: "Whitemen, you've prevented my son, Oba Esigie, from preparing for this war, you've distracted his attention from his national assignments (p. 68). Since Oba Esigie will not prepare for the war, and the chiefs too footdrag, Queen idia is left with no choice than to "throws" herself into it.

Considering Chief Oliha's character, at the beginning of this play, he allies with Oba Esigie in his progressive approach to handling the issue of tradition. This portrays him as a progressive chief who does not support the wastage of life of innocent person and as someone who sees no reason retaining obnoxious tradition. However, his character becomes more understood when he reacts violently to the allegation of adultery levelled against his favourite wife, Imaguero. Taking action without thorough investigation portrays him as impatient, and rash. He is annoyed that someone has intruded his matrimonial space and defiled his wife, but that is not so. He refuses to heed the appeal of his servant, Aigbovholeghe, to be patient and handle the matter with care. In the process of his impatience and application of force Imaguero dies. He does not stop there, but proceeds to kill Princess Aminghen too. This multiple murder leads to a large-scale war between two kingdoms in which many lives are lost. He is, therefore, a principal actor in the dramatisation of the politics of space in this play.

The other Chiefs are equally important in the politics of space in the play. These four chiefs – Ezomo, Esogban, Ihama and Iyase – constitute a block of opposition in the dramatisation of the politics of space. While Oba Esigie proposes the review of obnoxious laws, especially the abrogation of the one that demands the death of the Queen Mother, the four chiefs are those who rise against the Oba's move. They continue to mount their resistance with various arguments in order to have their way. When the Oba tells them that the obnoxious law has become irrelevant,

Ezomo replies sharply, “Relevant or irrelevant, Your Majesty, it is our tradition, therefore it must be preserved. No changes. No modification. No upgrading”. (p. 11)

Until the conflict is resolved and Queen Idia’s status decided, the four chiefs do not stop opposing the Oba’s move. Even when they reluctantly agree to allow Queen Idia live, they want her palace to be situated, at Uselu, outside Benin (p. 28). In postcolonial interpretation, political exclusionism belongs to the coloniser, who came and dispossess Africans of their legitimate patrimony, most of the time excluded them from the political administration of their own territory and also inflicted violence on the natives. The playwright here rejects these types of character as can be deciphered from the resolution of the play in which the chiefs lose out of the political equation.

3.4.3 Symbolism as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Salami-Agunloye’s *More than Dancing, Sweet Revenge, Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

By symbolism, we refer to specific objects or personages that are used in the plays under consideration for special effects or to convey special messages. They are phenomena that are used to represent either a larger or a smaller one. They could be semiotics or human beings in action, but they are used to advance the theme of the plays.

One important symbolism in *More than Dancing* is the personality of Mama Nigeria. She is used as a metaphor for the Nigerian nation. She is the rallying point for the Nigerian past heroines and a figure of encouragement and motivation for Nona Odaro. She coordinates the activities of the past heroines so as to control them in their various gestures that they offer towards achieving victory for Nona. It is also an indication that the objective of Nigerian women to produce a woman president has the blessing of the female achievers of Nigeria, and that it will come to pass, some day.

The other play with a symbolic object is *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*. Worthy of note is the platform which Emotan always mount at the market each time she wants to address the market women. This happens twice in the play (pp. 55 and 90). The question is why must the playwright

make Emotan mount the platform or is it an accident? Definitely there is no accident in playwriting. Every bit and pieces that is found in a play is there deliberately, for that is how the play is constructed. The playwright makes her do that for political reason. Politicians are known to mount podium to address their followers and Emotan does this twice. It is a pointer to the politics of space in the play, a reference to political struggle between two contending forces and her statement below point to her as a political gladiator:

> I am not just fighting for Ògún, I am fighting for the good of Benin. … The Uzamas banished Ògún from Benin just to get him out of the way as he was a major threat to the growth of their political power. I will not give up" (pp. 55-56).

3.4.4 Dramatic Techniques as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing, Sweet Revenge, Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

Dramatic techniques are special techniques adopted by a playwright in the construction of his play in order to make his play innovative and appealing to his readers. In the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye that are under consideration in this study, we want to identify those techniques that make her play special and interesting as dramatic scripts.

In *More than Dancing*, three things are identified as dramatic techniques used by the playwright. They are historical recall strategy, play-within-play, and simultaneous scenes presentation. There are three times the playwright makes use of historical recall in the play. They are found in scenes three, eight and eleven. In these movements, she brings the Nigerian past heroines to the stage in Nona Odaro's dreams. In the third movement, they come in dancing to celebrate their achievements in their days. This is meant to encourage Nona; to show her that the mission of securing a woman presidency is possible and she should go ahead and labour for it. In movement eight, they enact some of their past exploits while in movement eleven, they come to offer their support to Nona in her bid to actualise her dream. In all of this, the ultimate goal is to encourage Nona.

In movements fourteen and fifteen, Salami-Agunloye employs simultaneous scene presentation. The last meeting of the men of UPLP is holding at the same time with the declaration of Nona as the

presidential candidate of the UPLP at the stadium. The effect of this is that the group of partymen fighting to present a male candidate have been schemed out of political calculation. While they still feel there is hope around, hope has actually gone without them. The two scenes will make interesting spectacles in production. In movement five, the playwright uses the technique of play-within-play for the simulation of how Nona will act when she becomes president. This is done by Nona, Uyi, her husband and Mr. Teri, her Personal Assistant.

In *Sweet Revenge,* she uses flashback and alienation technique. The interview that Aisosa attended is being shown on a screen as Aisosa tells Ede, her friend about it when she returns home. This is a Brechtian style which is in use by many dramatists today. Also, in movement nine, the horrible experience passed through by Madam Power Power and her team in the house of Senator Sota in Abuja is enacted in a flashback form for other women to see, instead of reporting it. It makes their experience more vivid and touching.

Probably because it is an historical play, in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin,* there are two major conflicts that could have given the play double plots but for the fact that one is resolved before the other one starts. However, the new plot still carefully links up with the protagonist of the earlier plot as the protagonist of the second. The issue of whether Idia should die or not generates the first conflict but it is resolved in scene four. That could have brought the storyline to an end. The playwright, however, initiates another plot immediately in scene six bridging scene four and scene six with a love scene between Oliha and his favourite wife, Imaguero.

Similarly, in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* also an historical play, Orobiru, the cause of the first conflict dies almost immediately after he brings about that conflict. That means he only lives in scenes one and two of Act One. By the time we get to scene three of the same Act, another king has been installed, but with additional conflict to the existing one. While the first conflict arises out of the exile of Ògún, the second is as a result of usurpation of Ògún's throne, for, he ought to have been installed as Oba, instead of Irughe.

3.4.5 Language as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Salami-Agunloye's *More than Dancing, Sweet Revenge, Emotan: A Benin Heroine,* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*

Ashcroft et al. (1998, p. 7) observe that "the main feature of imperial oppression is control over language". Since language is the medium through which ideas and messages are passed to one another, control over language becomes important to the coloniser on his arrival in the land of the colonised. Therefore, one major relic of colonialism in post-colonial states today is the English language. This is because one of the first things the coloniser did on arrival was to gradually but steadily displace the native languages through the introduction of an imperial education system which was delivered in the "standard" version of English. It is, therefore, the assumption of the coloniser that their linguistic medium is superior to any other.

With the emergence of postcolonial studies, postcolonial theory rejects this concept of "Otherness" that the English language ascribes to other languages which are seen as inferior. However, since the question of audience, particularly global audience, is also a factor in communication, the eclecticist model of postcolonial theory permits that the post-colonial writers write in English, but a different kind of English that satisfies the taste of the local audience yet capable of reaching out to a wider audience beyond its linguistic environ. This is one of the models of postcolonial theory within which Salami-Agunloye exercises her literary engagement.

In *More than Dancing*, the language of politics is spread all over the play. Although there is no open political campaign, the conflict is between two interested parties – the women and the men – however, the kind of political language that is employed when too interested parties struggle over one political post is freely used in the play. This is in a bid to outwit one another in the struggle or contest. Such language includes that of intrigue, intimidation, persuasion, divide-and-rule, and violence. For instance, we see different kinds of political intrigue in the play as the men attempt to outsmart the women.

A typical example of political language is found in Sani's statement to Madam Bisi, advising her as if he genuinely has the interest of the women at heart, whereas it is the other way

round: “Equal this, equal that; what is all this noise about equal partnership? Haba, Madam Bisi, be careful; don’t push the women too hard. Political position will wear them out” (p. 5). Sani’s statement here is political. His target is actually to discourage the women leadership so that men could have their way. The same applies at the meeting of three representatives of the men of UPLP with Uyi, Nona’s husband in his house. Their intention is actually to instigate him against the ambition of his wife, but they pretend otherwise (divide-and-rule). Here Sani says, “Ambassador Uyi, apart from all that we have discussed, we are also concerned about your image as a man” (p. 56). Then Terna follows it up with “You see, before long, people will refer to you as ‘that man, the husband of Prof. Nona, the daughter of Hounourable Chief Ode’. Your identity will be subsumed in hers” (p. 57). These are political statements that are targeted at political gains. The men attempt to divide Nona and Uyi, as observed above and they actually succeed for some time until the situation takes another turn later.

The language of intimidation in politics is also employed by the characters in the play to achieve their goals. This strategy is used to create fear in the heart of the opposition so that he will become timid and reconsider his advances and then the intimidator can then take advantage of that to move ahead with his plans. For instances, Sani says to Madam Bisi at a meeting of the women: “Madam Bisi, you have gotten the whole story mixed up. … Whoever is willing can rule, male or female. But remember politics costs money” (p. 3). The intention is to scare the women out of their political goal. The conversation between Hakeem and Sani at a meeting of men of UPLP is instructive:

Hakeem: … The women want their independence. We must agree, we’ve ‘colonised” them politically for too long. The excuses you make for their exclusion are baseless”.

Sani: I refuse to be moved by your articulate speeches, Hakeem. We are concerned bout our country. We are her custodians. We say categorically that this country is not ready for women leadership.

The statements above are opposites of each other. Therefore, it is symptomatic of colonialist's assumption of superiority of "Self" to the "Other". Hakeem's use of the word "colonise" is actually the playwright's linguistic application and reference to colonialist's subjugation of the coloniser; she equates this with the relationship between men and women in the political space.

The language employed by Salami-Agunloye in both *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* and *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* is rooted in the rich culture of Benin. It is a language that is heavily loaded with proverbs, tropes, innuendoes, and sarcasms. Apart from that, the language is laden with lexicons that deny the English language its hegemony in the sense that it has a lot of African idioms that make it a different kind of English. The opening line of *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* (also the longest in the play), which is made by Idia, is laden with nothing less than twenty proverbs. In Africa, proverbial speeches are associated with the elders and people that are knowledgeable in the customs and tradition of the land. People who are versed in the art of proverbial speeches are seen to possess the much-needed wisdom in social relation. Beyond that, in the realm of rhetoric, proverbs add colour (aesthetics) to language, enrich it, and enhance brevity of speech and lucidity of language. The use of proverbs in the play is not restricted to Idia alone, all the chiefs and the women are very adept in it. For instance, Chief Oliha tries to warn his colleagues not to drag the conflict generated by the demand on the Queen mother to die and he says: "our people say that if a man prolongs his stay at the place where he goes to ease himself, he will be confronted with a fly clothed in metal raiment" (p. 26). Another interesting use of proverb is seen when Chief Esogban accuses Ologbose, the war general, of hypocrisy for claiming ignorance of the enemies that are coming to attack Benin: "Does a man feign ignorance of a tree that grows at the centre of his farm? (p. 71).

In *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*, the use of proverbs and other figurative expressions is legion (pp. 68-69). They are employed to advance the political position of the character or his group. For instance, Adesuwa, one of the women in the camp of Emotan, expresses disgust on the connivance of the chiefs to exile Ògún so that he will not rule after Oba Orobiru, and their conspiracy

afterwards to fraudulently install Irughe as Oba Uwaifiokun after the death of Orobiru: “Imagine, the rain beats the pavement and the mud bench rejoices forgetting that it will soon be its turn” (p. 58). This is followed by more proverbs when thereafter Oba Uwaifiokun’s spy, Odoligie is discovered around the market where the women are conversing about the fate that befalls Ògún. Omosede says, “The owl says he will not beat a child, neither will he catch the child, but he will scare him by hooting and not allow him go on the errand his mother has sent him (p. 60); and Imose follows suit: “It is true sister Omosede. The snake Boa constructor says “I am very calm, but the day you touch my tail you will know that I am very fierce” (p. 60).

The language of politics in *Sweet Revenge* is located mostly at the beginning of the play and in the middle of it. The language of Sota, in the United Kingdom, exposes him as a typical politician. When Cheryl says that she now realises why Sota is excited about going to answer the call of his people to contest for a political position, Sota responds: “Cheryl, you are … right. That is why I must return home to answer the call of my people to recreate and build up this new Nigeria, so that Nigeria can stand tall among the super powers in the world” (p. 10). This is symptomatic of the rhetorics of the politicians. Madam Power Power’s statement to Sota at Abuja shows how political strategists work at the site of politics:

> How interesting. Dr Sota you seem to have forgotten so soon how you used to bang on my gate at very odd hours just for us to strategise. Many times you woke me up at 12midnight, 2am, to quell trouble brewing up in your camp. Neither my husband nor I complained. I didn’t know you had such a short memory.” (p. 46).

The statement reveals the many nocturnal meetings usually held by politicians, but it also indicates the unreliable attitude of politicians. In postcolonial theory’s interpretation, this statement reveals Sota as an inheritor of colonialism, who has learnt the way of the colonialist, who is domineering and exploitative. The language of Madam Powr Power here signifies a rejection of such character from the political space of Africa.

This chapter contains the biography of Irene Salami-Agunloye and a critical analysis of her selected plays within the scope of our study. Therefore, political themes and the politics of space are interrogated using the sub-themes of politics of exclusion/gender politics in *More than Dancing*, political betrayal and poor representation in *Sweet Revenge*, politics of exclusion and political injustice in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* and politics of exclusion, obnoxious tradition and war in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*. Subsequently, the recurring structure and style in the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye are examined as a reflection of politics of space under the icons of setting, characterisation, dramatic techniques, symbolism of events and language. The next chapter brings to the fore, the politics of space in selected plays of Emmy Unuja Idegu.

CHAPTER FOUR:

POLITICS OF SPACE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF EMMY UNUJA IDEGU

4.1 Introduction

This chapter engages in a critical analysis of Emmy Unuja Idegu's selected plays, which are *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, *Another Odolu Kingdom* and *Great Odolu Kingdom*. The aesthetics of politics of space are critically examined in the plays, with their socio-political relevance to the African societies, particularly Nigeria. However, before we proceed with these tasks, we present below the biography of Emmy Idegu.

4.2 A Biography of Emmy Unuja Idegu

Professor Emmy Ikanaba Unuja IDEGU was born on 3rd November, 1962, to Mr Issac Oboni Idegu and Mrs Eluzai Egbunu Idegu of Odolu, Kogi State. He attended LGEA/QIMT Primary School, Odolu via Idah, in the then Kwara State (1968-1973), Ochaja Secondary School, Ochaja, Benue State (1973-1978) and School of Basic Studies, Ugbokolo, Benue State (1979-1981). He graduated from the University of Jos, with a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts in 1984, and later attended the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he bagged both a Master of Arts degree (Drama) and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Drama in 1989 and 2004 respectively.

Professor Emmy Ikanaba Idegu did his one-year National Youth Service to his nation from 1984 to1985 in Kano State, Nigeria. He was appointed the Coordinator, Playwright and Director of the NYSC drama group at the camp. In 1985, he joined the Idah Secondary Commercial College, Idah, Kogi State, as a Tutor. He became a lecturer in the Theatre Arts Department of the College of Education, Katsina Ala in1988. By 1990, he had become the Assistant Registrar (Students' Affairs), in the same college. In 1991, he joined the College of Education, Ankpa, Kogi State, as a Senior Assistant Registrar (establishment). By February 1994, he had moved to Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, as a Lecturer, Department of English and Drama and by 2006 changed to the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts. In 2016, professor Emmy Idegu left the Ahmadu Bello

University to join The Department of Theatre, Film and Carnival Studies, University of Calabar, Calabar, south-south Nigeria, as a Professor of Theatre Arts. He is there till date.

Professor Emmy Unuja Idegu has so far published up to twenty-one plays and also has a number of articles in peer reviewed journals. His full-length plays are *The Legendary Inikpi* (1994), *Omodoko* (1998), *Tough Man* (2007), *Ata Igala the Great* (2008), *Six and Half a Dozen* (2010), *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* (2013), *The Humans are not to Blame* (2014). *Truth on Trial* (2014), *The Conspiracy* (2014), *Another Odolu Kingdom* (2015), *The God of Peace* (2017) *The Field Marshals' Exeunt* (2017), *The God of Forgiveness* (2017), *Great Odolu Kingdom* (2018) and *Kwarapchan* (2018). He also has six short plays in the collection of plays edited by Jenks Okwori, and published in the *Instances* (1997). They are *Amina*, *Chinyere*, *Hassana*, *Larai*, *Mairo* and *Nike*.

Professor Emmy Unuja Idegu is both a playwright and a theatre director. His *The Legendary Inikpi* (1994) has received accolade and wide acceptability by both Nigerian and foreign audiences. In addition, he is a nominee of the prestigious LNG Award for Literature (Playwriting, 2010) with his entry, *Ata Igala the Great* (2008). In 2017, he propounded the *Experiential Testimonial Creativity* (ETC) Theory recommended for the critiquing of creative works. While the experience explicated in this theory represents the embodiment of all of Idegu's works (perhaps all playwrights works), the second aspect of the theory produced two of his plays in particular - *Truth on Trial* (2014), and *The Conspiracy* (2014). Professor Idegu is also an ordained Reverend Minister of the Gospel. He is the Presiding Labourer of the Odolu Soul Hunt Ministry, in Odolu, Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area, Kogi State, Middle Belt Region of Nigeria.

Professor Emmy Unuja Idegu's motivations for writing are many. For Emmy Idegu, entertainment is generic. His father was a great entertainer and that is a great motivation for him. Idegu was exposed to entertainment, especially the story telling form right from his young age. His father told him and others stories. Apart from that, his father even had his own local guiter known as "umolo" in Igala language. His father used to gather them and told them stories, beating his Umolo.

Another motivation for Idegu as a playwright is his love for his culture, art and tradition. He loves to promote his culture art and tradition. Seeing other people write about their history and the history of their people challenges him and makes him to want to write about his own people too. Since a lot has happened in the life of his own society too, he always has the urge to write about them his people's festivals, tradition, art and culture. As far as he is concerned, he always likes to blow his own trumpet since no one will blow it for him. According to him, he is yet to know anybody of Igala extraction that has promoted Igala culture and history, through play writing than him yet.

In 2012, His play *The Legendry Inikpi* was performed in Israel to mark twenty years of renewed diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the State of Israel. It was translated to Hebrew for that performance. Emmy Idegu was proud of this as he believes that Hebrew language is heavenly language. He is very proud of the popularity of this play and he believes that the use of historical materials in his plays helps him to act a cultural ambassador. He expressed this in an interview:

> So by quoting that story into a play format I am doing some level of cultural and ambassadorial explanation to my people, so the story now goes beyond the confines, beyond the owners of the History, beyond Igala, you read it, you may never have been to Ida, many other people have read it. University of Jos performed it about a week ago, that's the second time they are doing it in a few years and a number of other universities have put it on stage.

Additional sources of motivation for Idegu as a writer was his membership of his village church choir. Being a member of the church choir, he was always involved in singing. The Christmas carol used to be a big event for him, as he found it very delightful. The fact that he studied theatre arts is a lasting motivation for him to always want to get involved in creative works that could be a source of entertainment for people.

Emmy Idegu cannot withstand occurrences of abnormalities around him or in his society. This is the biggest motivation for him to write. He feels the urge to contribute to national discourses whenever any arises in his society. As a trained theatre artist, abnomalities irritate him so, he responds to them with literary productions as much as he can. Though Emmy Idegu is not a politician but whether national or global discourses, he likes to add his voice and to suggest ways out through the instrumentality of playwriting. Through this medium he plays his own politics. This accounts for why many of his plays are political, addressing the politicalm developments of his society, sometimes in a linear, unbroken progression. In doing this, Emmy Idegu is known to be a blunt and passionate playwright when it comes to addressing the oddities of his society, a passion that has drawn the ire of unaccommodating personages, sometimes from unimaginable quarters, such as the academia

In terms of human relation, Emmy Idegu is a liberal-humnaist, but looking at him from the literary point of view, he is a critical realist. His works demand for change from existing socio-political situation of his society. He always advances ingenious socio-political ideas that could engender a new and pleasant vista of life in his society. His treatment of political issues justifies Christenson's (as cited in Udokang and Awofeso, 2012, p. 3) prescription of ideology as "a belief system that explains and justifies a preferred political order for society, whether existing or proposed and offers strategies/processes, institutional arrangement, programmes for its attainment".

Emmy Idegu is an optimist, who is never discouraged by the abnormalities and the display of brazen impunities of political elite of his society, which often create socio-economic and political dysfunctions for his society. Although he feels disturbed by the biting effects of the actions of the political elite, rather than lose hope, he believes strongly that societal problems can always be remedied and so deploys his literary output to achieve those remedies. These pessimistic features are seen in nearly all his literary works, particularly his plays.

Professor Idegu is also an ordained Reverend Minister of the Gospel. He is the Presiding Labourer of the Odolu Soul Hunt Ministry, in Odolu, Igalamela/Odolu Local Government Area, Kogi State, Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. Reverend Professor Idegu is happily married.

4. 3 Political Themes and the Politics of Space in Selected Plays of Emmy Unuja Idegu

In this sub-head, we explicate the nuances of political themes in some selected plays of Emmy Idegu. The purpose is not only to show that as a creative artist he has a penchant for dramatising the political issues of his society. He likes to do this so that he can contribute to ongoing political debates and proffer possible solutions. We will, therefore, examine how he has done so in the selected plays. In doing this, we shall examine the themes under the umbrella of politics of space but with sub-headings that reflect the precise themes that we are considering.

Politics of Space in Selected Plays of Emmy Unuja Idegu

Again, we define politics of space in this study as the competitive "divisive" activities that surround the search for political power, the attainment of political power, the use to which political power is put, the retention of power and the response to power. Idegu's plays that are examined in this sub-topic are *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, *Another Odolu Kingdom*, *Great Odolu Kingdom*, and *Ata Igala the Great.* The four plays speak directly to the political experience of Nigeria over the past years, illuminating the readers' mind on the mileages of her political trajectory. Beyond that, they shed light on the possible panacea to identified notable national problems emanating from the struggle for power in the nation. As we proceed with our analysis of the play-text, we will give a brief background of the theme, and the synopsis of each of the plays.

4.3.1 Politics of Succession and Ethnicity in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*

The issue of succession has constituted a lot of problems in the politics of post-colonial Africa. Many African countries, in the aftermath of colonialism, had in the past recorded severe loss of lives and property due to the struggle for power, particularly the struggle to become the helmsmen of Africa's post-colonial states. Apart from the incursion of the military into the politics of many of these countries, the politics of space has taken the ethnic dimension also and the

consequences became dangerous to the development of such nations. The damage that ethnicity has done to the socio-economic and political growth of these African countries cannot be quantified. However, the questions are what is ethnicity? how does it manifest? and how did it creep into the politics of post-colonial Africa?

Concepts such as ethnicity, race, gender, marginality, and identity are of importance to postcolonial theory. Osaghae, (1995) and Ake, (2000), as cited in Kalu (2016, p. 145) refer to ethnicity as a social formation that rests upon culturally specific practice and unique set of symbols and cosmology. As explicated by Aschroft et al. (2007, p. 76), the word "ethnic" comes from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning "nation", but since its earliest English use the word "ethnic" referred to culturally different "heathen" nations, and this sense has lingered as a connotation. This implies that colonisation accounted for the negative variation the word has experienced. In spite of the numerous semantic reconstructions anthropologists, sociologist, political scientists and linguistic scholars may have attempted, over the decades, to foist on the word ethnicity, Aschcroft et al. (2007), have noted that "the element of marginalisation evident in the earliest uses of 'ethnic' often seems to remain implied in contemporary time. Where it originally referred to heathen nations, it now suggests groups that are not the mainstream". Ethnic groups are social formations, which are distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries.

Relevant communal character of ethnicity, according to Nnoli (1980, p. 5), may be language, culture, or both, but language has always been the most crucial variable in Africa. Inherently, ethnicity in Africa is implicated in colonialism's culture of amalgamation of incompatible cultural and linguistic formations for convenient political administration and economic exploitation. Jimoh (2006, p. 124) holds the same view: "at the risk of overemphasising the impact of colonialism, it is necessary to trace the origin of ethnicity and integration in Nigeria to the country's colonial experience". Since ethnicity is usually deployed as an expression of a positive self-perception that offers certain advantages to its members, members of an ethnic group usually have a sense of bond that defines the group distinctly from others and tend to want to

protect the interests of their group. Such interests may be economic, political or social, but more often the first two. This in turn may, at times, generate friction or tension between it and other ethnic groups co-habiting the same geographic environment with it or with which it shares boundary.

How then does Emmy Idegu dramatise the politics of succession and ethnicity in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* as a reflection of the politics of space in contemporary Nigeria, as metaphorised in his Odolu Kingdom? Just before we engage in the analysis of the dramaturgy of the play, we want to give a brief account of the storyline of the play itself.

Synopsis of *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*

Uncertainty pervades Odolu Kingdom, following the ill health of the King. Rather than agree on where to carry him for medical attention, in-fighting deprives the elders of a timely decision. When one is finally made and the king taken outside the kingdom for treatment, Odolu kingdom seems to be drifting as the king's death soon worsens the situation, for the crisis of succession also sets in. As soon as the king dies, people from his clan insist on producing the successor, but the tribes of Leader and others of the Council of Elders are of the opinion that the acting king should be allowed to continue as king. The intense lobbying and campaign for support that follow result in the selection of the acting king as the substantive king, by a larger part of the six clans that make up the kingdom. However, the supporters of one of the contestants (Irahub), who believe their candidate is robbed of victory, turn violent. A few years after overcoming this unfortunate incident, the new King begins to make new moves to rule for another four years and this generates another tension. Irahub also, now the candidate of a stronger opposition also signifies his intention to contest for the exalted position. Despite the controversy and uncertainties generated by this latest development, the citizens still believe that the kingdom will emerge stronger at the end of it all.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*

Group interest is not new in politics as it is what defines alignment and power formations and the subsequent outcomes of political contests. The politics of space in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* is characterised by overt demonstration of emotions that are borne out of prejudice, sentiment, apprehension and hatred that portend grim political consequences for the kingdom and by interpretation, a developing post-colonial nation like Nigeria. The play starts on a worrisome note as atmosphere of anxiety, uncertainty, sorrow and division are clearly portrayed: "No songs, no dance. Music played is far closer to a dirge than celebration…The times are hard and gloomy… things are far from all right for the people" (Stage direction, p. 5). This is a clear reflection of the socio-political situation of Odolu Kingdom, occasioned by the controversial ill health of the reigning King. Rather than unite the political elite of Odolu Kingdom it actually becomes a cause of a deep-rooted conflict that nearly tears the Kingdom apart. To begin with, the controversy and infighting generated by the king's illness is not predicated on any patriotic but selfish reasons.

The dirty politics that played out amongst the members of the Council of Elders is informed by the selfish struggle for political space and not for the interest of the kingdom. The elders themselves are representatives of certain geo-political configurations of Odolu Kingdom. The descriptions given to the places represented by the characters as the play proceeds, especially the stage direction provided during the campaign for chosing a new king, approximate to Nigeria's present geo-political configuration: "It is the village square. … There are six Clans thus: Desert, Middleland, Mountain, Riverside, Forest and Erosion, easily identified by what they wear, reflective of the six zones of Odolu Kingdom" (p. 49). At present, Nigeria is known to be made up of six geo-political zones. The Desert clan is synonymous with the North West; Middleland approximates the North Central; Mountain clan can be liken to the North East; Riverside correlates with the South South; Forest clan is identical to the South West; and Erosion clan bear resemblance with the South East.

The target of the elders is how to grab power rather than the urgent need of how the king will get cure. Citizen 1's line points to this direction: "It looks like the nut they find very difficult to crack is not the health of the king as much as what will happen to the throne in the absence of his highness" (p. 7). Elder 1 who hails from the same clan with the ailing king (clan of the Desert, a metaphor for the North West Zone of Nigeria) demonstrates stark nauseating bias for his clan when he insists that the king is well even when it is apparent that the king could not perform his constitutional duties for quite some time due to ill health. His insistence that the king needs not be taken out for medical attention, simply due to a hidden agenda of retaining power for his clan, even when the local medicine men recommend, takes the nation for granted and is unfair to it: "I insist that there is actually nothing wrong with our king and all the talk of sending him across the sea to our neighbour's medicine huts is a calculated attempt by our enemies to" (pp. 10-11). These desperate attempts to convince others that the interests of the ruling class (clan of the desert) are the interests of all other clans conform to the thrust of Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. However, postcolonial theory has proved this to be wrong, particularly when it comes to colonised territories, with the argument that such self-professed imperialist "messiahs" are actually inheritors of colonialism whose interests is nothing but greedy desire for power in order to have access to the collective resources of the African post-colonial state.

Even after the king has been taken to a foreign land for medical attention, the infighting, mutual distrust and quarrels continue to intensify as suspicion is heightened. The council of Elders are still at loggerheads over what should happen to the throne, whereas the law of the kingdom already makes provision for an eventuality like this. The conflict is exacerbated at this point due to exertion of power by dominant hegemony from three blocks. These include the wife of the ailing king, the Chief Law Officer of the Kingdom and the clan of cronies of the ailing king that are operating through Elder 1. This is a clear demonstration of ethnicity which always thrives on group interests, but dangerous to the development of a nation when exerted negatively. These desperate efforts aimed at retaining power deepen the conflict of the play.

The prolonged argument about who should occupy the throne amounts to mere rigmarole and deliberate manipulation of the unfortunate situation of the kingdom to suit the selfish interest of a cabal that hails from a particular part of the land. Suffice it to say that they are all aware of the provision of the law but lack the political will to invoke it. This amounts to taking the people of Odolu kingdom (Nigerians) for granted. Constitutionally, Leader, by virtue of his being the second in command to the ailing king, should mount the throne in an acting capacity. This position is angrily enunciated by Elder 4 when he insists that "according to the laws of Odolu kingdom, when the King is indisposed, the leader of Elders… should naturally occupy the throne until the king regains his full strength... (p. 33). Notwithstanding, he is being blocked desperately by the dominant hegemony because they fear that his interest may not be compatible with that of the current (though ill) king and the blocks he represents. This rigidity by the leader of the desert region amount to politics of ethnicity and it is damaging to the unity of the kingdom. This is implied by Citizen 2: For God's sake, what were all the clannish sectional ethnic colourations about his ill health and eventual death for? Why? (p. 43).

Most disturbing, however, is the hypocritical posturing of the kingdom's Chief Law Officer who, rather than attempt to help the kingdom at such critical period by giving the right interpretation to the relevant provisions of the law decides to twist it. He says that the king could rule the kingdom from anywhere, when it is obvious that the king lacks the mental and physical ability to run the affairs of the kingdom. The truth here is that the head hunter is from the same clan as the king, so he is playing ethnic politics. Also, some cronies of the king, such as the head hunter, Elder 1 and others like them who enjoy the gains of power, being the epitome of neo-colonialism, do not want to lose grip of it. They, therefore, prefer the king to rule by proxy (through them) than allow the evocation of the constitutional provisions in this regard.

While the tussle over approach to handling the king's illness and the succession crisis lasts, the conflict throws up some other issues of national significance such as monopoly of power, marginalisation, resource control, poverty in the land, lack of development, and injustice. These are

some of the root causes of the power tussle and acrimony that engulf the kingdom at this point. This is Idegu's way of throwing up salient causes of disaffection in post-colonial Nigeria. Disaffection over monopoly of power and marginalisation of some minority section resonates as the disagreement thickens over whether or not Leader should begin to function in acting capacity while the king is still absent. For example, Elder 1 cannot bear that power slips from his clan and he voices this out:

> Elder 1: (*Fuming and almost foaming on the mouth with rage*) I speak for myself and the clan that I represent here that it will never happen. We shall resist all the clandestine plans to usurp the throne from us …
>
> Elder 2: … What is wrong with my clan finally getting what it deserves after several seasons of inhuman and selfish commandeering position you and your clan occupied in this kingdom all these years (pp. (29-30).

It is important to note that resort to violence by Irahub's supporters because he loses the election to the throne of the king is outrageous as the courts are there to address whatever grievances their principal may have. The earlier statement by Irahub, to make the kingdom ungovernable, if he and his clan are robbed of success (p. 53) accounts for the resultant arson and murder that follow the declaration of the result. This demonstration and venting of anger in desperation for a chunk of the political space is in every term condemnable, extremely unfair to the kingdom and amounts to political injustice. However, postcolonial theory has adduced reason for the violence that often accompany power struggle in the colonised countries. The violent nature of colonialism itself, which had not only exerted its fang on the colonised but has also constituted a great influence on the victims of colonialism, is responsible for these violent tendencies. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017) notes that, "colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another". Therefore, the characteristics of colonialism are what the colonised are exhibiting here and the playwright outrightly condemns it.

Irahub's action does not portray him as someone that is worthy of ruling over the kingdom as his attitude smacks of the spirit of "it is either me or no one else". This is what Citizen 2 means when he says: "Oh I weep for the likes of Irahub who believe that because they are not chosen as king the kingdom must be destroyed" (p. 70). This reflects the violent disposition that has been identified with the Nigerian democracy since the attainment of independence in 1960. The violent reaction (burning of houses and other valuable materials) to the result of the regional election of 1962, popularly known as "operation wet e" (douse it with fuel) in the Western Region and that of old Ondo State (1983) following the announcement of the result of the governorship election in which the Unity Party (UPN) believed that the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which controlled the centre, robbed it of its mandate remain indelible in the memory of many Nigerians. Many lives and valuable property were lost in both.

While Citizen 2, mouthpiece of the playwright, does not give Irahub any chance of winning, and also feels that the fusion of small opposition groups may not be formidable enough to wrest power from the king: "there is no gang up as you said, that can move the king from the throne if he is interested in staying there longer" (p. 93), he, nevertheless, confesses that "The only thing that can move the King from the throne is failure" (p. 93). Recent developments seem to have altered the political equation (balance of power) in Nigeria after the publication of this play. Erstwhile opposition political party has taken over power. By implication, the candidate of the opposition political party, who is given no chance of winning in the play, has won the last two presidential elections (2015 and 2019), thus becoming the new President of Nigeria. Probably Irahub has passed through some political reorientation and personality rebranding to have been accepted by majority of the electorates, contrary to the warped image (personality) of him conceived by the electorate in the past. Nevertheless, one of the probable reasons can be deduced from what Citizen 1 metaphorically refers to as the "greatest gang up in Odolu Kingdom" (p. 92). By this, he refers to the merger of political parties to form a stronger one: "I heard that other groups have also come

together to form the greatest opposition to any King in this Kingdom. Nothing, nothing can stop this great assemblage from …" (p. 93).

Although the play ends with no election held yet, the political personages are busy preparing and the playwright gives us hope of peace for the kingdom, as expressed by Citizen 2: "… no matter the seeming confusion and apprehension, Odolu kingdom will come out of this trying moment a better, united and formidable kingdom (p. 96). The veracity of this statement seems to have been confirmed with the smooth transfer of power on 29th May, 2015 from the incumbent President to the opposition candidate. This, itself, is the confirmation of the playwright's line of thought that the king would leave, if he loses. This he expresses through citizen 2 in response to Citizen 1's question: "He will leave of course" (p. 95).

Beloved Odolu Kingdom, therefore, is an allegory, a representation and commentary on Nigeria's recent political situation. The period dramatised by the play ranges from year 2007 to sometime in 2014, a period when Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua ruled this country for close to three years, died and Goodluck Ebele Jonathan took over, first as Acting President and later as President. The ethnic cleavages, self-centredness and leadership failure afflicting this nation and endangering its development are conspicuously dramatised. These, postcolonial theory believes, have their roots in colonialism. The inheritors of colonialism who have mastered the antics of the colonialists and the political system introduced by the colonialists are the perpetrators of these destructive power struggles, and the dangerous display of ethnic politics with all the appeal to primordial and sectional sentiments that are dramatised in the play. The dramaturgy of the play therefore, shows that Emmy Idegu is aversed to operations of these kinds of political personages in Nigeria's political space. This implies his rejection of the politics of the beneficiaries of colonialism and the colonialist's canon that serves as the premise within which they operate.

4.3.2 Politics, Rejection and Aftermath in *Another Odolu Kingdom*

Political contest usually ends in either of two ways – success or failure. Apart from the fact that political contests are characterised by intrigues, intense power struggle and the clash of

interests, one can never be absolutely sure of the end of political contest until it finally comes to an end. In the politics of space of many nations, the aftermath of victories and losses also determines the wellbeing of such nations. The aftermath of political contest in some countries have resulted in peace while for others, it has put the nation in political turmoil.

Many African post-colonial heads of state or presidents often hold on to or want to hold on to power, even when it is apparent that such leaders have lost their political relevance, due to growing loss of popularity, occasioned by their political ineptitudeness. Examples of such leaders in Africa are Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Paul Biya of Cameroon, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Joseph Kabila of Democratic Republic of Congo, to mention just a few. Many of them are proxies of colonialsim, who tolerate neo-colonialism that serves the interests of the imperialists. The consequence of this is further colonial exploitation of the Africans. However, there are a few who still relinquish power honourably and thus avert possible breakdown of law and order in the post-colonial states. The eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory are committed to evocation of political consciousness, and inclusive political participation by all and sundry. At the same time, they advocate political probity, commitment to the truth and maturity of political players, so that the post-colonial Africa can truly be independent.

Before we examine how Emmy Idegu treats the politics of rejection and its aftermath in *Another Odolu Kingdom*, we shall do a brief synopsis of the storyline of the play.

Synopsis of *Another Odolu Kingdom*

The advisers of King Akpeja are divided on whether he should present himself for approval by the people of Odolu Kingdom to serve them as king for another term of four years. For further consultation he resorts to the elders of his own clan (the Riverside) who give him the nod, assuring him of their support on behalf of the entire clan. His decision to proceed is, however, not with some setback as some of those who used to be his political allies are withdrawing their support, one of them from his Riverside Clan. The strategy of the opposition to form a more formidable front this time and field a charismatic candidate (Adode), who though had failed three times in the past in his

attempts to become king in the kingdom pays off as Akpeja loses and Adode emerges the new King of Odolu Kingdom. While the supporters of Adode in their jubilation to celebrate the victory of their candidate do so in a violent manner, Akpeja restrains his own supporters from being violent, accepts defeat and congratulates the winner.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *Another Odolu Kingdom*

Another Odolu Kingdom takes off from where *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* ended. In this play, Idegu continues his attempt to mirror the realities of his nation through the instrumentality of drama with a view to proffering possible solutions to problems he perceives requires urgent creative attention. The play is a metaphor for the political development of Nigeria between 2011 and 2015, a reference material on the political development of his nation in time and motion. In the dramaturgy of *Another Odolu Kingdom*, Idegu still maintains the technique of two divergent locales of the society as he does in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*. While all other characters constitute the political class, including their supporters whose actions are presented in mimetic form, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 represent the observer-critique or socio-political commentators. This strategy creates an avenue for some critical views on the unfolding action in the play and probably also enables the playwright to somehow include authorial views more conveniently.

In *Another Odolu Kingdom*, Emmy Idegu depicts and satirises the political contest of the fourth Republic in Nigeria, particularly the presidential election of 2015 which was a contest between the incumbent president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and his challenger, Muhammadu Buhari. Prior to that election, opposition parties in the country since the beginning of the Fourth Republic (1999) had been existing and operating along primordial (ethnic nationality) terrains. Notable opposition parties at the time included Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), Congress for Political Change (CPC) and All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), including much smaller parties such as All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) and Labour Party (LP). These parties were not strong enough to confront the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) that was in power.

To wrest power from the PDP therefore, the smaller parties closed ranks and later merged to become All Progressive Congress (APC) to go into the 2015 election. However, there are still pockets of smaller parties that contested on their own. Since power is constituted through the use of idea and knowledge (Gramsci, 1971, as cited in Heywood, 1994, p. 101) they did not stop there, employing superior ideas, they broke the rank of the PDP which by then had been having internal problems, and succeeded in making some key members of the party switch camp to the APC. In the election of 2015, the APC won the Presidential race and wrested power from the PDP.

The politics of space in this play takes the form of preparation for electoral contest, electoral loss, electoral success and the critical aftermath of political contest (result). The beginning of the play provides evidences of disunity amongst the ruling class, as emblemistised in the rancour and tension in the camp of Akpeja, King of Odoluland, even at a critical period in election year. Emmy Idegu ended the play that preceeded this (*Beloved Odolu Kingdom*) at the point when the kingdom was preparing for another electoral contest through which a new king was to be chosen, since the tenure of Leader (this is the name of the king in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*) was winding down. *Another Odolu kingdom*, therefore, begins at the same point where preparations are in top gear for the choice of a new king. The rancour and disunity in the camp of Akpeja, the reigning king, are already signs of his impending failure or rejection in the soon-to-be-held political contest. Adviser's line below is a pointer to this disunity: "It is obvious that we all have only two positions. Those who feel that His Highness could take another shot at the throne…. The other position is that His Highness should not attempt it at all" (p. 8).

Prior to the time of choosing a new king, Akpeja had been the incumbent, running the affairs of the kingdom. As the time to choose a new king approaches, however, his opponents restrategise. Rather than challenge him as fragmented oppositions which they had been in the preceding play, now they close ranks, even attract some strong members of the king's clan to strengthen their own camp. The signs that the stratagem will be effective are evident in the statement of Friend 1:

> We have set all the foot soldiers in all strategic clans of the kingdom. It may interest you to know that a powerful and influential chief from the current king's clan is already with us wholeheartedly. A number of chiefs working with the king are with us. As we speak with you, quite a number of his advisers and key figures in the palace are already with us. We can tell you right now how many of them are ready to abandon the king and come to our side. The resources to make you king are on ground (p. 36).

The statement above indicates the extent to which the opposition has gone in strategising the defeat of the king. They have reached out to many people, penetrated the camp of the king, and secured assurances from his key allies who are ready to switch camp to the side of the opposition.

It is clear in the play that Irahub, candidate of the opposition, had been rejected by the people of Odolu Kingdom in three previous contests. This accounts for while he becomes reluctant and unwilling to put himself forward as a candidate for the position of the king. It, therefore, takes persuasion and pressure from the political groups that team up to form a bigger one for him to accept to stand as a candidate. This is why Friend 1 says, "Sir, everything is on course. (*Adode smiles rather disappointingly*). All we want from you is a yes response to the wishes of your people" (p. 36). The question, however, is why was Adode rejected three times in his previous attempts to become the king of Odolu Kingdom. The answer simply is, it was his past colonial characteristics, that is, attitude and actions, and both the eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory frowns at these seriously. He was a hunter (a soldier), head hunter for that matter (a military head of state). Postcolonial theory sees the military's venture into politics as another form of colonialism. Having been trained by the colonialist they now use their skill to oppress the populace and "subjugate" them, contrary to their wish, with the colonial weaponry.

Postcolonial theory expects the military to solely defend the territorial integrity of the nation, not to oppress the citizens. That is why the playwright uses the clause "while you perched on the throne" (p. 39). It is a deliberate action by the playwright. He could have used "while you

mounted the throne", but does not. The word "perch" as used by the playwright refers to sitting on the edge of the throne. When a person sits on the edge of a chair it denotes not sitting comfortably with peace and confidence. It denotes a temporary kind of sitting, especially on a seat that may not necessarily be legitimately one's own and from which the person may be ordered to leave at any moment. Most significant and striking thing about the 'perch' is that it symbolises the aberration that military regimes are in politics.

The constraints brought by Adode's past are deciphered from his statements here: "They continuously say that I have a terrible past. All those steps I took in the past out of my love for moving the kingdom forward are being used now to pull me down" (p. 37). The excuses always given by African leaders, as given by Adode above, for their act of oppression and brutality are not acceptable to postcolonial theory. Military regimes in post-colonial Africa are known for their penchant for brutality and oppression of the populace in the name of security and the argument that development can only be achieved under a peaceful atmosphere. Postcolonial theory, therefore, consider them as an extension of colonialism. This implies that Postcolonial theory does not agree with the messiahship posturing of the colonialists in their attempt to justify colonialism. The civilising, knowledge and developmental missions are considered by postcolonial theory as mere smokescreen devised by the colonialists to continue to oppress and exploit the colonised. Apparently, it appears Adode has a distasteful past that needs to be atoned for.

To win the election, therefore, the opposition knows that it must doubly prepare and become stronger than before and all other areas of preparation must be very sound, and this they did. That eventually ensures its success. A critical examination of their political strategy reveals certain strategic political indices (characteristics): (i) Reflection (ii) Realisation (iii) Regrouping/Realignment (iv) Reorganisation (v) Recognition/Re-identification (vi) Repackaging (vii) Re-launching and (viii) Resilience. These can be identified as the play progresses, as they are located within the play. Friend 2's statement buttresses the issues of Reflection and Realisation: "We travelled here after consulting far and wide and we are of the conclusion that this time around,

we shall not fail" (p. 32). This implies that the opposition failed in the past in their bids to snatch power; they have reflected on their past failure and realised why they failed.

Since this is a body of opposition groups, the three friends (Friends 1, 2 and 3) that come to woo Adode to be the candidate of the opposition in the contest could be interpreted to be the representatives of the three major opposition political parties that first came together in 2013 (ACN, CPC and ANPP), starting first as an alliance in 2012 before later transforming into a single political party in 2013. By "consulting far and wide", Friend 1 must be referring to consultation amongst themselves as members of individual small parties and consultation between small parties which are willing to come together to pursue a common interest. In this also is the hint of "Regrouping or Realignment" of political forces that have common interest.

In the same vein, the opposition "Reorganises" its house by putting in order things that made them fail and putting in place things that could reposition them to succeed. Again, Friend 1's line reveals this: "Great hunter of Odolu Kingdom, we have put in place whatever we need to do to succeed. We have sought the views of opinion leaders across the kingdom" (p. 35). Similarly, because of their earlier "Reflection", "Realisation", "Regrouping", and "Reorganisation", they come to the "Recognition" that urgent steps need to be taken to save the nation from an inept leadership. Friend 1's statement reflects this: "All those we spoke with are of the same opinion that when there is something wrong in the forest, there is definitely something wrong in the society (p. 35). Friend 1 explains further to Adode's request for the meaning of his statement: "A wrong step by a leader is a warning to the followers. Odolu kingdom is witnessing wrong steps from the current leadership and it is time for us to do something" (p. 35). Friend 2 eexpresses the same opinion: "Sir, it is better to eat a hyena than to be eaten by it. We must act fast now to prevent Odolu Kingdom from total collapse" (p. 35).

When Friend 1 and Friend 2's statements could be referring to two issues that were paramount in Nigeria at that time, both of which attracted condemnation from notable people in the society and which made many citizens become tired of the Jonathan administration. One, the

problem of corruption had become endemic and seemingly ignored by the government; two, there was grave insecurity in the land, particularly the one that threatened national security – Boko Haram insurgency -, and it appeared the government had no clue about how to tackle it. The other recognition by the opposition in the play is that such a serious situation of the kingdom requires somebody that is strong in character, upright, disciplined, firm, courageous and with zero tolerance for corruption as the next king, if the kingdom will be saved from collapse. They believe that Adode possesses these qualities, hence their appeal to him to accept their offer as the candidate of the opposition.

Having recognised the type of candidate they need in Adode, they are not willing to be dissuaded by his refusal to accept to run for the Kingship. It is, however, important to note that Adode is unwilling to run because he is discouraged and afraid of failure, having failed three times in the past. Notwithstanding, the three friends encourage and assure him, based on the groundwork – reflection, realisation, realignment, reorganisation, and recognition – they have done and other plans ahead, to repackage, re-launch and be resilient until they succeed. Before Adode could be fielded as Presidential candidate, arrangement has been made to repackage him. If he contested and lost three times in the past certainly something accounted for the losses. The opposition determines to fix those things. The following statement points to such plan: “We will so repackage you that even your most vocal critics will sell you to the generality of the citizens of Odolu Kingdom with contagious conviction (Friend 1, p. 37).

Two things can be deduced from the play. In those three times when Adode failed, he did because one, he did not campaign far and wide; he only limited his campaign to his clan. That means he was perceived then by the people of Odolu (the electorates) to have consideration or preference solely for his tribe (a tribal politician). The second reason is that his party at that time did not have a wide reach in terms of membership. This suggests tribal politics too. The reality in the political space in Nigeria, which forms the world (setting) of the play, at that time in history was that, except the PDP, all other political parties were regional or tribal parties. At best, we can

refer to them as small parties, but the truth is that they only won elections in the regions where their leaders (founders) hailed from. Evidence that Adode is truly repackaged as promised is shown in his speech to some of his supporters shortly before the selection of the new king:

> As you go back to your various clans disregard all the attacks on my person and my past spread all over the market squares, farmland and parts of Odolu Kingdom. Unlike the other attempts, this time, I want to remain peaceful to the oath of peace that all of us aspiring to be king took. I enjoin you all that even in the face of raw aggression and character assassination, maintain the peace of the land (p. 60).

The above speech is unlike Adode, named Irahub by the playwright in his earlier play, *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*. Rather than being violent, he now preaches peace and tolerance.

The "Re-launch" by the opposition, after Adode's acceptance to run as their presidential candidate pays off, because the opposition has grown stronger; with widespread influence all over the kingdom. The populace of Odolu Kingdom then begins to see Adode as their hope for change. These account for the positive turn of event for the opposition and its candidate at the campaign by the two candidates: "Both leaders are at their best talking with their listeners in a desperate attempt to get their support. … However, there are more people, including chiefs, leaving Akpeja's group for Adode's. Akpeja is visibly shocked at this development …" (stage direction, p. 45). The opposition is committed to the struggle to snatch power and enthrone a new political order as they intensify their campaign and sustain the tempo. Their victory at the selection is the result of their "Resilience" and refusal to give up.

It is disheartening, however, to note that despite its success at the selection process, Adode's supporters still engage in violence and bloodletting, oddly against themselves, for that is the impression given by Citizen 2: "Now you have a glimpse of the position I always maintained …. If for celebrating victory these people are killing and maiming themselves this way, what will happen by the time those in favour of His Highness come out?" (p. 69). It sounds so odd and paradoxical that to celebrate the victory of a candidate, supporters of the candidate will have to start

killing themselves. This, to us, negates one important part of the dramaturgy which presents Adode as a rebranded and repackaged leader? The message being conveyed here by the playwright is that the political elite are all the same, and that the menace called violence still remains one of the signatures of Nigerian politics. In postcolonial theory's interpretation, violence in politics, irrespective of the perpetrators, is an extension of the political strategy of colonialism and the brand of politics being played in many nations of Africa is a colonial politics, characterised by different imprints of colonialism.

There are pointers toward electoral fraud in *Another Odolu Kingdom*. The playwright presents the selection process as smooth and fraud-free in the Riverside Clan (Niger Delta) while in the Mountain Clan (the North) it is the other way round. The stage direction (p. 62) tells us that only adults are allowed to vote in the riverside (south-south) area but where Adode votes the contrast is the case:

> …In a distance from this very hut is seen Adode with a group of people.. … In turns, all people on the queues, both adults and infants enter the hut after which they raise hands as directed by the elders on duty (pp. 61 – 62).

The phrase "both adults and infants" in the quote refers to both adults who are eligible to vote and infants who are not eligible to vote are allowed to cast their votes in the Mountain Clan (the North). Apart from violence that has been mentioned earlier, fraud too is another imprint of the colonial system of politics which have been introduced or imposed on the colonised.

Both the eclecticist and nativist model of postcolonial theory see these vices as contradictions of democracy. The traditional process through which kings are selected in Africa is considered by postcolonial theory, particularly the nativist model, as more transparent and credible. For example, in most Yorùbá communities, apart from the kingmakers who deliberate on the choice of appointing a successor when there is need for it, the supernatural is also involved in the selection process, through the instrumentality of "Ifá" oracle, which is considered to be the repository of knowledge who does not miss the substance of anything, who speak with precision and able to tell

the future as it is and also able to proffer solution to all naughty human challenges (*Ifá elériìpín, asòrò mayè, atórí eni tí kò sunwòn se, olùmò lótun olòkànràn lósì*).

However, the most striking thing about the play is the aftermath of the election, this time the reaction of the incumbent to the announcement of the result of the selection exercise which shows that he loses to Akpeja. After due consideration, he expresses his readiness to concede defeat. Unlike some African leaders who exhibit impunity by rejecting the outcome and resulting to violence, Akpeja, reiterates that "my ambition to be king … is still not worth the blood of any citizen of Odolu Kingdom" (p. 28) and stands by it. He stands by the statement before, during and after the selection process. Even before the public announcement of the result he congratulates Adode and embraces him. Although his supporters attempt to become violent, brandishing various types of dangerous weapons, he restrains them, in keeping with his word to maintain the peace, no matter the outcome of the selection exercise. Apart from the miming of this scenario on page 71 of the play, the statement of citizen 2 sums it up: "to prove his words …, he has accepted the king makers' verdict (p. 71). Alemazung (2011, p. 36) notes that African leaders who exhibit such attitude as done by Akpeja "guarantee a successful transition … facilitate democratic consolidation". This shows that we can still have a sane clime in our politics if every leader does what is right by putting their supporters in check and maintaining the peace. The leaders who allow peaceful change of baton (transition) become heroes, their loss at the polls notwithstanding. That is exactly what Citizen 2 means when he says, "In this contest, Odolu kingdom is the victor, Adode the winner but Akpeja is the hero" (p. 72).

The play also shows that in Nigerian politics there is the perception by politicians that your political opponent who does not share your ideological belief is an enemy. This is disturbing and should be corrected as it is most times the catalyst for hatred, violence and bloodletting. The nativist model of postcolonial theory still considers this as one of the faultliness of colonialism, it considers the colonised's traditional system of administration and selection processes as effective because they do not really engender any cause for hatred and violent reaction. Therefore, the fraud,

acrimony, hatred and violence that constitute the contradictions of democracy in which the best candidate may not emerge the winner are legacies of colonialism.

Grouse over monopoly of power and marginalisation of minority clans in the politics of space also feature as sub themes in *Another Odolu Kingdom*. While Citizen 2 complains that "I know all the agitation is because His Highness is from a minority clan in this kingdom" (p. 17), Citizen 1 as part of his response says, "Tell him that the support of his clan notwithstanding, a lizard in the village can never be a crocodile in the city" (p. 17). He added shortly after, "Warn him however, that if the cockroach wants to rule over the chicken, then it must hire the fox as a bodyguard. We shall see" (p. 17). The metaphor of lizard and crocodile, and that of cockroach and chicken are both signifying contrast of unequal phenomena and covey the message of impossibility of a prey lording it over the predator in the struggle for power. This metaphor of predator and the prey, therefore, connotes a relationship of unequal partnership in the politics of space in Nigeria, the picture of "Self" and "Other" particularly between the majority and the minority. That forms the crux of the warning by Elder 1 that "no clan in this kingdom should ever think they hold monopoly to the throne" (p. 23).

Finally, from the point of view of postcolonial theory, the political absurdities demonstrated by the supporters of Adode, in form of electoral violence constitute the signatures of colonial political system with all its contradictions which the inheritors of colonialism have imbibed but which the playwright outrightly rejects as incompatible with the African pre-colonial political system that was truncated by colonial domination. In contra-indication, the playwright's preference for a political personage that conforms to African pre-colonial political ideals is symbolised in the character of Akpeja (including his political loyalists). We have noted that Though he loses in the political contest despite being the incumbent king, yet he concedes defeat and congratulates the winner, and thus peacefully allows a change of government. This is one of postcolonial theory's ways of asserting the tolerant character of a typical African leader and also a way of negating the

assumptions of the colonial discourse theorists that Africans are incapable of governing themselves and maintaining peaceful political entity.

4.3.3 Politics of Restructuring in *Great Odolu Kingdom*

Restructuring has always been part of life and society, especially for the purpose of human, organisational, community and national development. Various reasons can necessitate restructuring of a nation, but it is always geared toward the peace, progress and development of such nations. What specifically is restructuring? Simply put, restructuring is to change the ways in which a company, government or system is organised. For instance, Indians restructured their nations in 1972 by enacting a law that abolished all monarchies and turned the country into a full Federation (Nwakanma, 2018, para. 2). Nigeria had done some form of restructuring in the past. For instance, in 1963, Nigeria amended its constitution to change the nation into a Republic, operating regional governments and a coordinating centre that ensured national security.

Following the coup and counter coup of 1966, the military government of General Yakubu Gowon (retired.) restructured the nation and adopted the unitary constitution, leading to a unitary system of government and the creation of 12 states (1967), additional 7 states in 1976 (Obasanjo's regime), 2 more in 1987 (Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida's regime), 9 in 1991 (also Babangida's regime) and 6 in 1996 (Sanni Abacha's Regime), making thirty-six as presently constituted. In spite all these, there is apparent disunity among the ethnic groups, particularly the three major linguistic groups – Yorùbá, Hausa and Igbo. In the case of Nigeria, therefore, restructuring could mean to re-assess, redefine and review the unity bequeathed to the nation by the colonial masters.

There are however, various reasons why people call for restructuring in Nigeria today. Such problems could be social, political or economic. Whatever they are, postcolonial theory believes that all of the problems are implicated in the colonial experience of Nigeria; the political class is merely taking advantage of the existence of the problems, to satisfy their desires to perpetuate their ambition or satisfy their political whims and caprice which has remained insatiable (Farayibi, 2017, p. 2), themselves beneficiaries of colonialism. The incessant ethno-religious conflicts, inequality in

resource distribution, lopsided federal appointments, unequal development of the geo-political zones, increasing poverty in the land and growing insecurity, among others constitute the reasons for agitation for restructuring (Dapo-Asaju & Bamgbose, 2019, pp. 14-16).

Notwithstanding, a lot of obstacles have been identified as standing in the way of restructuring of the nation which include elite interests, fear of ethnic dominations and political idiosyncrasy (Nwafor-Orizu, Eze, & Okolo, 2018, p. 26). Perceived lethargic disposition toward necessary restructing of a nation could deepen suspicion, distrust and cleavages, and may result in unnecessary tension, if care is not taken. Before we examine how Emmy Idegu treats the theme of politics of restructuring in *Great Odolu Kingdom*, a brief account of the storyline is considered necessary.

Synopsis of *Great Odolu Kingdom*

There is disagreement amongst Baba's children over the unequal treatment of six children of Odolu Kingdom by Baba. While Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 bring more food to the family than the other children, they feel they are treated unfairly and given less of the food, when it comes to sharing amongst members of the family, than given to their brothers. When Child 2 reminds Children 1, 3, and 5 that not too long ago he and his brothers contributed the food that fed the entire family, they would not listen. They still argue that their father is unjust, bias in favour of Children 2, 4 and 6. For those reasons, they lose confidence in their father and faith in the family. While they believe and push that the family should break up because they have lost hope that it can ever work, Children 2, 4 and 6 feel otherwise. They believe that given some understanding, patience and tolerance the family will live cohesively and peacefully. This is also the position of their father, but that does not fly before Children 1, 3 and 5 who insist on the family break-up, unless there is rehabilitation of the house to bring about justice, fairness, equity and love. By their recalcitrant actions they bring a lot of trauma on their father. When the three (Children 1, 3 and 5) make good their threat and carry their loads to leave the family their father promptly agree to rehabilitate the

house so that the family can bounce back, be revived, reunited, re-strengthened and totally renovated. Promptly, they all join hands together to do it.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *Great Odolu Kingdom*

Great Odolu Kingdom is another of Emmy Idegu's attempts to resolve what, arguably, is today the most notorious challenge faced by his nation – problem of resource distribution and the associated misgivings, acrimony and discord generated by it. This is a major subject in the realities of Idegu's society and it has remained a daunting one to tackle from independence till date. This same problem, and a few others, have given rise to the agitation for restructuring in Nigeria, a call that is still sustained till date.

The politics of restructuring in this play is enunciated by Idegu as he creates conflicting human group formations with apparent dissatisfaction with how the political systems in their society works, and they manifest this overtly. Right from the opening of the play, the image conveyed about Odolu Kingdom is that of negativity: "Action begins in the dark, thick darkness" (p. 1). This already creates a worrisome picture, a picture of despair, an abyss and a precipice from which the kingdom can dangerously plunge. He follows this up with images of disagreement, disunity and rancour:

> Several voices are heard on and offstage. From the several voices can be heard, "We agree", "No not now", "We do not agree at all". "It can never be", "It will come to pass", Let us give it a trial", "No", "Yes", "No", "Yes" repeatedly. In the midst of this uncertainty, voice disagreement. … For a couple of moments, the agitation, struggle and fight continue. Then there is a big bang. Hurried footsteps. More bangs. A multiple hurried footsteps. A very loud bang …. (p. 1).

Idegu maintains this trend throughout the play and it is to sustain the scary situation of the kingdom and generate, within the reader, the urge for something to be done urgently to save the kingdom from disaster, or at least from disintegrating. In postcolonial theory's interpretation, this condition of acrimony, disunity and apparent conflicts emanating from seeming incompatibility experienced

by African post-colonial states are the aftermath of colonial domination. Many postcolonial states of Africa suffered and are still suffering this kind of condition due to their multicultural configurations which do not support the mindless mergers the colonialists imposed upon them.

The way Idegu organises the play, specifically in terms of dramaturgy, approximates to a typical Nigerian political situation. Interpreted, Odolu Kingdom represents Nigeria as a nation, Baba stands for the managers of the nation (the ruling hegemony since independence), and the six children (Children 1-6) symbolise the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, as presently constituted. As the play has six children representing six different groups, so also Nigeria has six geopolitical zones – south west, south east, south south, north west, north east and north central. The children, as Baba introduces them to us, are born of different mothers. That means that each of them represents different interests.

Great Odolu Kingdom demonstrates in clear terms that the politics of space engaged in by political actors in Nigeria since independence is not only centered on power on its own, but on power as a route (access) to the nation's resources. Idegu here uses Baba as the pivot of a drama of national regeneration. The opening line by Baba speaks volume. In fact, it can be taken as the summary of the entire play, except the resolution. Quite a long line, it details the history surrounding the establishment of the family and how it came to the state in which it is. For the purpose of elucidation of the dynamics of a complex family like this, it may be apposite to present a fairly abridged form of the line:

> As we progress in the entertaining encounter, permit me to always refer to Great Odolu Kingdom as family. Family because, the entire kingdom is after all made up of brothers and sisters… A moment ago you heard rumblings from all these children around and about me, who (looking back and sideways), are already asleep. You sure need an explanation from me, do you? … They are children by the same father (pause), me but through different mothers, my beautiful wives. … They are products of marriages of convenience in which I their father and their mothers had limited

> say. I dare say they are sometimes referred to as children of convenience based on their backgrounds. Their mothers and I agreed to be together and so they were born and grew up to see all of them trapped, no - trapped may be too harsh a word - They found themselves avoidably together and … In spite of our diversities, I always believed that we can work out the relationship and stay as one indivisible family (pp. 4 - 5).

The quote above shows that the children are always fighting and at no time at all united. The description that, "They are products of marriages of convenience in which I their father and also their mother had limited say" perfectly suits the situation of Idegu's country, the Nigerian nation which is a product of the 1914 amalgamation by the then British colonial administration, headed by the Governor-General, Frederick Lord Luggard. This buttresses the point that postcolonial theory's reference point and subject is colonial history and condition of the colonised. The statement, "Their mothers and I agreed to be together and so they were born and grew up to see all of them trapped, no - trapped may be too harsh a word - They found themselves avoidably together", which forms part of the quote, is postcolonial literature's reference to one of the consequences of the indiscretional mergers that characterised many post-colonial states.

The right word to use, in actual sense, is what the playwright initially uses, "trapped", for many of the African states who find themselves in these mergers are trapped because, the truth is, while they are only managing to get along with each other or one another, unfortunately, they don't find separation easy today for many reasons. One of such reasons may be the profiteering opportunity the situation affords some collaborators and agent of neo-colonialism who are the managers of state affairs since independence. Another reason is the unwillingness of a dominant tribe to let the minority leave because of the benefits it derives from the unequal political marriage. Also worthy of note is the part of the quote that says, "They found themselves avoidably together". The statement is postcolonial writing style that indicates that the colonisers' practice of merging

different cultures into one nation was oftentimes unnecessary, but was done for administrative conveniences and for selfish economic and political gains.

The disagreement and rancour demonstrated by the incessant quarrelling and sometimes brawls suggest that their coexistence is devoid of peace. It suggests animosity, hatred, distrust and unwillingness to cohabit. It is an evidence of deep dissatisfaction by some of them, particularly Children 1, 3 and 5, with the system of administration or management of the Kingdom by Baba. The problem with the system, or rather the grouse of the Children against Baba, is located in how Baba has managed the Kingdom over the years. This is enunciated clearly in Child 1's statements:

> Baba, you talk of equal right in this family? You do not treat us and you have never treated us as equals. Where there is no equity and justice peace remains elusive. I have said it for the umpteenth time, this contraption of a badly forged family is not working. It never worked and it will not work … Take a look at that bowl, who contributes the highest farm produce there? Me. Who gets the smallest portion when food is shared? Me. And you want me to remain here? (*Loudly*) Never. I will go. … There can be no peace here until the issues of equal rights, equity, fairness, justice and similar matters are equally dispensed to us…. (pp. 20 - 22).

From the above statements, it is obvious that the direct confrontation of Baba by Children 1, 3 and 5 is provoked by the frustration inflicted on them by the system. These three children and the group they represent are so frustrated that they believe the relationship cannot work. Child 3 and Child 5 also express similar sentiment. Even when Child 4 attempts to play down the gravity of the problem, that things are not as bad as Child 1 paints them by saying "… True, we may not have got to where we ought to be but I tell you we are far from where we began" (p. 7), Child 3 considers that statement as political and hypocritical. Therefore, he replies him bluntly: "Deceit plus insincerity equates avoidable confusion. I may be blind sighted, but I can smell burnt food and also detect same with my tongue. Let the truth be spoken, we are trapped to fail" (p. 7). This is a clear evidence of distrust and deepening aversion for each other in the union called Odolu Kingdom.

In the same manner, Child 5 is of the opinion that

> until the rotten tooth is pulled out the mouth can never enjoy any chewing. Let none of us pretend that things are normal. For God's sake *olomadujimoli, madonejimnemo*. You can tie logs of wood together but you can never tie people together. Let each of us find his or her way out of this endless circle. Kai, kai, kai, kai, kai, kai (p. 8).

Judging from the way Child 1, Child 3, and Child 5 confront Baba, it is apparent that in postcolonial theory's interpretation, Baba epitomises the inheritors of colonialism, the ruling hegemony since independence. He represents the beneficiaries of colonialism and facilitators of neo-colonialist imperialist hold on African post-colonial states, as symptomised in the entrenchment of the legacies of colonialism. No wonder, the resistance mounted by these characters against Baba is very strong and threatens his dominant position. He tries spiritedly to dissuade the children from forging ahead with the decision to rock the boat to no avail. In keeping with the feelings of their mothers' lineages they increase the pressure until Baba capitulates – a sign of the enthronement of a new order, which represents change.

Just like Nigeria, as a nation, has passed through enormous trauma as a result of confrontations and fighting arising from the conflicts emanating from its multicultural complexities, so also Baba experiences a lot of trauma in the play. The civil war of 1967 – 1970 and other ethno-religious violence that have been experienced by Nigeria are ready reference points here. Baba himself expresses the pains of these traumatic experiences when he says:

> The only time I experience peace is when these children are sleeping. These days I can hardly sleep myself because the moment I want to do so, the fight that ensues even in their own dreams drives away sleep from my eyes a thousand kilometres away" (p. 9).

It is important to note the phrase, "even in their own dreams" in Baba's line above. It is common knowledge that enemies or combatants fight in the physical and once they go to sleep, the fight is

suspended until they wake up. To fight with each other in dreams while sleeping may sound strange to many. However, in the context of Africa, particularly to the nativist model of postcolonialism, fighting in the dream is practicable through magic and mysticism. Apart from that, the phrase also reflects the playwright's intention to emphasise the seriousness of the deepening controversy and disunity among the distinctive human blocks that make up the Kingdom. The phrase, therefore, underscores this dual semantic signification.

The unfortunate avoidable Nigerian civil war is even used by Idegu as part of the materials for the dramaturgy of this play, as it is reflected as a tableau in Situation Two. In that tableau, Baba nearly dies as he actually collapses and goes into coma before he is resuscitated by the leaders of the groups. The scar of that oddity is the battered body of Baba: "Finally, he is helped to a sitting position on the floor with bloodied face and weary frames" (stage direction, p. 11). This is a reference to the heavy blow laid on Nigeria by that war – many lives were lost, both on the side of the federal troop and that of the secessionist Biafra, property running into billions of pounds destroyed, psychological damages inflicted on the citizens, international image dented and development process grounded. As Baba passes through the threat of death here, so also Nigeria nearly ceased to exist because of the threat posed by the civil war. This unfortunate situation is one of postcolonial theory's evidence of colonialism's complicities in the underdevelopment of Africa and the poverty that engulfs its citizens today.

That is not the only time Baba experiences such thing in the play. In other instances: "Baba is rattled and collapses" (p. 28); "Baba runs from one group to the other until again he collapses. This time around he goes unconscious" (p. 34). This trauma inflicted on Baba is a representation of the trouble Nigeria has passed through in the hands of the political class due to the politics of space - the struggle to attain power in order to have access to the nation's resources. It is the argument of both the eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory that the strange political arrangement contrived by the colonial "Masters" before their exit from the colonies is responsible for the hostile disposition of members of the post-colonial states and their appeal to primordial sentiments.

Several times Child 1 threatens to pull down the hut that provides shelters for all the members of the family. He shakes the stakes and pillars of the hut, sometime violently so much that his actions threaten the structure. In an instance, when he threatens to vacate the hut and go elsewhere and Baba says he can't do that, he shouts: "That is a lie. I will go out. In fact I will go out or …" (p. 40). The stage direction indicates his next line of action: "He runs towards the main pillar and shakes it so violently that some parts of the roof begin to drop. Baba looks desperately helpless as Baba shouts for caution" (p. 40). The unity of many post-colonial states has been threatened over and over. The conflicts experienced by some have even degenerated to an unbearable level that has led to break-up (often violently) of the incompatible units which are actually primordial nationalities on their own. Examples here include Congo, Guinea, and Sudan.

Although some attempts are made to dialogue and find solution to what Baba refers to as "the wrangling, bitterness, animosity and unbrotherly behaviour you are all exhibiting in recent times…" (p. 19), the attempts do not yield any good fruit. Instead of a forum where discontents will be explained and possible solutions suggested, it is turned to a forum for venting of anger and making accusations. Even where eventually such meetings are concluded the outcomes are not implemented by Baba. That may account for the reason why Child 1 accuses Baba as being the problem of the Kingdom, "Yes you. You. You are the beginning, the middle and the end of all the problems in this fake Kingdom" (p. 38). The level of cleavage in the kingdom is so high that the children never value their relationship. For instance, Baba refers to Child 1 as Child 2's brother, but Child 1, in anger, responds that he is not Child 2's brother: "I never was and will never be". It means there was no time in the history of Odolu Kingdom that he ever saw Child 2, a member of the "family" as his brother. That accounts for the numerous conflicts Nigeria has experienced in the past, some of which played out in violent confrontations. This is the outcome of colonialism's forceful marriage of strange bed fellows as the case is with Nigeria.

Baba in this play, as earlier mentioned, represents the managers of Odolu Kingdom, that is, the head of the kingdom, just as we have the past military rulers and the present political elite in

Nigeria and the heads of such hegemonic group from period to period. However, Baba has a dual identity in the play. He also personifies the nation, Nigeria, as the situation warrants. This is to say that, for the purpose of dramatic expediency, the playwright crafted the play to give Baba this dual identity so as to demonstrate the various facets and enormity of the, psychological and physical battery and trauma Nigeria has passed through as a result of the conflicts emanating from the struggles for power, recognition and resource redistribution in the political space.

Just as Child 1 holds Baba responsible for the woes and conflicts of Odolu Kingdom, it appears that Idegu is holding the political elite, particularly the leaders of Nigeria (past and present) responsible for the inter-ethnic conflicts and the political woes of Nigeria. Idegu may not be far from the truth here; the set of people he has identified as being culpable in the socio-economic and political woes of the kingdom are actually the same group identified by eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory as inheritors of colonialism and collaborators in the neo-colonial and imperialist plundering of the post-colonial Africa. In another way, the playwright also adopts a second dramatic strategy of erecting a physical hut, with six distinct apartments, to depict the habitation of the many sub-nationalities (as represented by the six children and their primordial groups) that are presently co-habiting in this nation, with all the attendant hostilities against one another. By this twin phenomena (Baba and the hut), the human and geographical existence of the Nigerian nation is exhibited, with the attendant consequences of the conflict.

To Idegu, the problem of Nigeria is avoidable and resolvable, provided there is the political will on the part of the managers of this nation. He views the combination of the problems confronting this nation as a political conflagration that has the capacity to consume the nation, if not attended to. He, however, believes that the danger can be averted if the nation can go the way of restructuring. His call is expressed through the characters in the play. When Child 3 expresses his pessimism that Odolu Kingdom is a contraption, it is not working and cannot work, Child 4 does not share that pessimism. He argues that though the experiment (Odolu Kingdom) is not working solutions can be found to make it work. Consequently, Child 5 suggests that “until and unless we

go back to the very foundation of this experiment and reorganise the stones, this building will continue to crack" (p. 6). It is the same restructuring Child 3 insinuates when he argues that, "there can be no peace here until the issues of equal rights, equity, fairness, justice and similar matters are equally dispensed to us … There are only two things you do to a leaking ship, you mend it or jump out of it" (pp. 22 - 23). The word "mend" means "to restructure".

However, the conclusion by the dissatisfied groups in Odolu Kingdom is that Baba has paid too much lip service to their demands, hence their decision to opt out of the family. They believe that all the call by Baba that "…we should concentrate on those things that bind us together than those things that we differ in…" is a mere rhetoric, therefore, Child 1 ignores it and tells him that, "Baba, that is what we have heard for well over fifty years and we are still the same disunited but compulsorily tied together people" (p. 7). Even when Baba calls for patience over the matter, and asks, "Give me some time to set things right" (p. 26), his plea falls on deaf ears. Also, when in anger Child 3 begins to shake the pillar of the hut violently and in desperation Baba appeals to him to stop the act, appealing that they should dialogue, the agrieved children refuse. In annoyance, Child 1 replies him: "No more. How many times have we spoken? What came out of the long deliberations. I will not waste my time talking anymore" (p. 41).

The playwright's drive for a solution to the problems emanating from the politics of space in his society, in our opinion, makes him to pursue the option of restructuring to a logical conclusion, for when Baba realises that the children will make good their threat to break up the kingdom by leaving the family, he desperately asks them for what they want done in order to assuage their nerves. Child 1 spearheads the final rebellion that finally makes Baba to capitulate; having shaken the pillars of the hut as if to pull it down completely; he then makes for the entrance with a big bag hanging on his neck. Children 3 and 5, who see him leaving, waste no time in packing their belongings too, ready to leave. Baba, who could not stand to see his family disintegrate, makes the last efforts to stop it. He rushes to the entrance to block them and pleads with them again, desperately and Child 1 emphatically reels out their demands:

> We want what our founding elders stood for, justice, fairness, equity, love for one another without suspicion. This hut must be rehabilitated to accommodate all of us with equal treatment by you, irrespective of which wife of yours gave birth to who (pp. 42 - 43).

Baba immediately pleads guilty before all of the children and promises to meet their demands: "Together we shall rehabilitate this hut and our family will bounce back. He makes more elaborate pledges:

> We shall all collectively work on the roof, the apartments, the floor, and most importantly, thenceforth (sic) food will be shared in a way that those who labour more will have more than they had before, without making those who produce less food feel abandoned and short-changed (p. 43).

The joy that fills the hearts of all the children and Baba as Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 drop their bags and collectively begin to work on the hut, with Baba supervising as they continue with the renovation, is an indication of a new order, the change that comes.

A number of inferences and symbolism could be drawn from the resolution of the play. First, the capitulation of Baba and his plea of guilt symbolise the collapse of his erstwhile strong, recalcitrant and unjust hegemony; it is a reversal of the mentality of "Self" who flaunts himself as greater and more knowledgeable than "Other", and therefore should dominate "Other." Second, the pressure that bends Baba is the combination of the sub-nationalities acting together in unity to achieve their goal. Third, the action of the children in renovating the hut, notwithstanding that Baba supervises, is the enthronement of a new order (socio-political and cultural). This indicates that the children are now in charge (controlling their own destiny) as their word is Baba's command. This is the restructuring that the playwright advocates. Fourth, the end of the renovation itself, the new look that the hut will wear when renovation is completed and the new joy that the family has already started experiencing, which is expected to reach a crescendo at the end of the renovation are the changes that are expected, that is, the outcome of the restructuring.

All of the above are the expectations of postcolonial theory, especially the eclecticist and the nativist models. They aim at dismantling the apparatuses of colonialism, with all its dominance and exploitative tendencies that did not stop at the colonial period but has extended to the post-colonial as symptomised in the reprehensible activities of the hegemony of the political elite who are the inheritors of colonialism. Postcolonial theory wishes to revert power back to the people rather than being exercised by a click who are stooges of the egocentric "Centre" who lord it over the "Margin". The eclecticist model has the penchant for rejecting the "Master"/Servant" relationship and advocating equal humanity, and that is what the playwright here insists on.

The question, however, in more specific terms, is, what type of restructuring does Idegu advocate in this play? The answer could be found in similar statements of two characters in the play. They are Child 1 and Child 5. As the conflict of the play escalates, and Child 4 expresses his belief that there is always a solution to every problem, child 5 responds: "As far as I am concerned, until and unless we go back to the very foundation of this experiment and reorganise the stones, this building will continue to crack" (p. 6). On his part, as Baba asks in desperation what the demands of Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 who are at the verge of leaving the family are, to stop them from leaving, Child 1 replies: "We want what our founding elder brothers stood for. Justice, fairness, equity, love for one another without suspicion. We want our family to be back to where it used to be" (p. 42). The statements of these two children suggest a return to regionalism or at best what we can call restructured federalism. He wants a Nigeria where more power will be devolved to the federating units and make them stronger than the centre. Idegu himself buttresses this observation in an interview with this researcher:

> That's why in my latest work, *Great Odolu Kingdom*, I'm advocating a return to the status quo, to the basics, where each region stood on its own. We had the Northern region; we had the Eastern region; we had the Western region. Each region … remained independent of other zones, that way by the time we meet at the centre, it's just ceremonial. The centre is ceremonial; the power blocks were principally at the

> zona/regional levels. So, if we go back to that life of proper federalism, classical federalism where each region is now dependent on what it produces, we then take some percentage of what you produce to the centre. That is when we now begin to think about the acceleration of this nation, if not, everything will continue to be a mirage. That's my position (interview with Idegu).

If Idegu advocates for reversion to regionalism or a strengthening of the present pseudo-federalist state to reflect what he terms "classical federalism" but the same set of political personages who are inheritors of colonialism remain in the driver's seat in this nation, what is the assurance that it will not be business as usual, since the leopard cannot change its spots? Although Idegu's assumption may be that change might not necessarily come in the form of replacement of personnel all the time and sometimes it could be in terms of systems and processes (such as the wrong way things are done), it needs to be stressed that more often, both are needed for effective and lasting change. In all however, Idegu's dramatisation of the cleavages that characterise post-colonial Nigeria is his creative strategy of externalising the havoc done to traditional African political system by the coloniser. Postcolonial theorists, particularly the eclecticist and nativist models, ague that the cleavages are products of colonial domination and subjugation in which incompatible pre-colonial linguistic entities were lumped together as a single nation. By implication, Idegu rejects the politics of inheritors and canons of colonialism.

4.3.4 Politics, Colonialism and Resistance in *Ata Igala, the Great*

We have earlier noted that colonialism has been described by Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017) as "a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people to another". It noted colonialism as a form of conquest that was expected to benefit Europe economically and strategically. In other words, colonialism refers to "the conquest and control of other people's lands and goods" (Loomba, 2005, p. 8), "the forcible takeover of land and economy, and … a restructuring of non-capitalist economies in order to fuel European capitalism" (Loomba, 1998, p. 23). That means that colonialism in Africa was a form of conquest and exploitation of the

African people and its territories by Europe. The evils of colonialism were exceedingly great. The exercise of European hegemony and its domination of African people had long started before the former partition of Africa that took place in 1885. The evil called slavery was about the most agonising and traumatising form of domination the world has ever known.

The terrible practice of man's inhumanity to man, also called the Trans-Atlantic Trade had started as far back as the 16th century after many foreigners from European countries, such as the Portuguese, British, French, German and Belgian arrived and settled in Africa, initially for trading activities. This dual phenomenon of European domination of Africa, which spanned over four centuries, for many African countries finally came to an end in the other half of the 20th century when the last batch of Africans to attain their "independence" did so. It means for over four hundred years Africa was literally dominated forcefully. The most terrible injustice that can be done to a man is to take away his freedom, subject him to excruciating trauma and, above all, dispossess him of his belongings. This is precisely what was done to Africa. Whichever way one looks at it, colonialism was one-sided (Rappa, 2018, p. 3) since the relationship was a forced one and maintained by force coming from a supposedly "superior" power, who had the advantage or means of exerting that force. So, the question of humanism was not in consideration at all by the dominant party in the relationship. Exploitation, brutality, wickedness, deprivation, subjugation, and sometimes killing, all of which were exerted by political and military control, constituted the hallmarks of colonialism.

In addition, religious emasculation by way of imposition of a foreign religion, broadly speaking cultural imposition was notable. The coloniser branded the traditional worship of the natives as paganistic, simply because they did not understand the religious practices. Refusal by the natives to accept the Whiteman's religion was met with crushing blows that took away the sovereignty of such native leaders. This is in addition to the divide-and-rule political policy that was applied in the colonies, particularly as practised by British colonial authorities in India and the northern parts of Nigeria. A different political policy (direct rule) was applied in the southern part

of Nigeria. This was due to the uncooperative attitude (resistance) of the majority of the traditional rulers in the south with the British colonial authority. Although the colonial discourse theorists tend to attenuate the negativity of colonialism by offering variegated excuses such as its "the need for the colonised to be 'raised up' through colonial contact" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 37) as exemplified in their infertile arguments like the civilising mission, the development mission and the knowledge impartation mission, the fact of colonialism being deliberate, hypocritical, selfish, one-sided, imperialistic and subjugating is incontrovertible. The contact with the whites has produced amongst the Africans, and somehow amongst the whites, hybridised human beings who are neither white nor black, with its accompanying ambivalence which causes laughable, sometimes ridiculous actions by objects of ambivalence, particularly the natives.

In what way does Emmy Idegu treat the theme of politics, colonialism and resistance in this play, *Ata Igala, the Great*? Just before we commence the examination of how he does this, we want to give a brief account of the storyline of the play, for ease of understanding by our readers.

Synopsis of *Ata Igala, the Great*

Ata Igala, most loved by his subjects and celebrated so, is disturbed in his heart over the unbecoming disposition of Oyibo (whiteman) towards his commitment to the culture and tradition of his forefathers (ancestors), especially going by the entreaties, threats and warnings from the colonial administration which considers his religious practices as heathen. Although Ata and the people of the land accept nearly all developmental ideas and projects introduced into Igalaland, they outrightly reject the whiteman's attempt to submerge their religion and culture which they guide jealously, despite Oyibo's repeated warning. To make matter worse, the political strategy of divide-and-rule adopted by the colonialist through personal acquaintance with some natives and through introduction of their foreign religion causes deep cleavages within Igalaland, and further estranges the Ata from the colonial administration. Above all, the petition written by three indigenes of Igalaland to the colonial administration, alleging that Ata sacrificed human beings to his gods and ancestors becomes the last stroke that breaks the camel's back. Though investigation

of the allegation by the colonial administration proves the petitioners wrong, but Oyibo can no longer tolerate Ata as the king of Igalaland and so determines to dethrone him. Having been invited to report to the big Oyibo (District Officer) in Kaduna for a meeting, but aware that if he honours the invitation as king he will not return as one, and also considering the traditional implications of deposition and the accompanying shame that it will generate, he decides to commit suicide. However, he becomes more honourable at death even more than in life.

Critical Analysis of Themes in *Ata Igala the Great*

Politics of space in *Ata Igala the Great* is dramatised in the form of a "fight" between the intruding colonial "Masters" and the people of Igalaland (represented by their king, Ata, and his chiefs) over the control of Igaland. The colononialists has established their presence in Igalaland, but the Ata still remains the king of the land, controlling the affairs of the land and overseeing the welfare of his subjects. The beginning of the play appears very pleasant as it is time for the "celebration of life festival" and the people really celebrate with pump and pageantry. The Ata uses the ocassion to shower blessings upon his subjects, just as they demonstrate the great reverence they have for him by honouring him and submitting to his authority. Great commitment to culture and tradition could be seen in the lifestyle of the Ata, his chiefs and the entire citizenry, but the colonialists, represented by Oyibo, will have none of this.

To the colonial administration, the Ata is a heathen because his traditional way of worship and sacrifices to his gods and his ancestors completely negates the religion of the Whiteman. The situation presented here is explicated by postcolonial theory as the colonialist's way of ascribing superiority to "Self" as against the inferior "Other". It argues that the colonialist always made an attempt to create the impression that the religion of the colonised was occultic, barbaric and unacceptable to global humanity which they measured only by themselves as reference point, including presenting the personality of the colonised as primitive and uncivilised. This is really the underbelly (hidden grouse) of the disagreement the colonialists have with Ata Igala.

Confronted by the Whiteman's attempt to take away his political authority and power, Ata Igala adopts different strategies that are best known to him to fight for his space. As a traditionalist, the most important weapon at his disposal is to consult the gods and his ancestors. That is the reason for his calling on Ohioga (Ifá Oracle priest) to consult for him and ask the oracle to unravel the convoluted circumstances that surround the threat to his stool. In the process of the power tussle between the Ata and the colonialists, the king consults the oracle on three different occasions. This underscores the level of his troubles and how desperately he searches for solution. However, it appears Ohioga does not find things easy securing any solution on each of the occasions. Ata actually has a premonition that something wrong could happen to him and the throne, but does not know what and how. Shortly after the celebration of life, at which everyone is happy, from the citizens to the chiefs, including the Ata, he has a terrible experience, a serious nightmare that makes him feel uneasy. As soon as the day breaks, he summons a meeting of the Council of Chiefs and tells them about his experience so that they could deliberate to know what the problem is: "my people, the days ahead are heavy" (p. 18). At the meeting, he repeats this statement up to four times (twice on page 17, once on pages 18 and 19). His intention is to prepare the heart of the chiefs and warn them to be vigilant.

His consultation of the oracle after the meeting is what gives him a clue to the impending problem. In his troubled heart he asks the diviner: "Am I in trouble? Is the land in trouble? Has any of my people committed a hidden crime against the land? Tell me (pause), Ohiog'Ede, tell me. What is it? Why that strange dream? Although the ancestors say there is nothing to fear, nonetheless, they warn him against the Oyibo who constituted a stumbling block to the land in their preparation for the festival they just celebrated: "And again the kind of planned resistance we had from Oyibo and those who have chosen to sell their mothers for pittance from him was unparalleled. … Just a little caution with Oyibo, the leper in our midst" (p. 25).

The metaphor of "leper", a reference to the Whiteman by the people of Igalaland is instructive as much as it is symbolic. Leprosy is considered a very dangerous and scary disease

because of its perceived contagious nature and its ability to cause physical damage to the body of its victim. In time past, it was a disease that was incurable and those who were afflicted by it were not allowed to live among the people in the community. They were isolated and made to live outside the town so that they would not infect others. This can be liken to the way those who are afflicted by the virus called ebola were quarantined or the victims of corona virus are quarantined these days. The dangerous nature of the disease, therefore, made people disassociate themselves from victims. This is the sense in which the playwright has used the word "leper" in this play. The natives regard the Whiteman as a dangerous human being who always causes damage to any society where he goes because of his imperialist nature and the tendencies to want to subjugate others through the use of force, therefore, the need to avoid him or deal with him at arm's length. It is in the same sense that the Ifá priest, Ohioga warns the Ata to deal with Oyibo with caution. This metaphor continues throughout the play (pp. 62-71) due to its strong symbolic connotation and relevance to the danger colonialism poses to the coloniser.

Since the Witeman has colonised the country (Nigeria) at the time, then Igalaland is part of the country and the influence of the colonial administration spreads to the land. Therefore, the colonialists cannot be avoided altogether, but caution must be execrcised in relating with him as Ohioga warns. This metaphor of leper is precisely the way the eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory regard the presence of the colonialists in Africa. The two models count the colonialists as impostors, oppressors, imperialists, a real danger to the peace, progress and developmental potentials of all the nations (colonies) that they occupied in Africa. The theory, therefore, objects to colonialism and in its operations. In postcolonial literature, words like "leper" as used in this play is a welcome development as it is resistant to colonialism, which is always after snatching other people's space, a dangerous practice that is regarded as the coloniser inscribing "Himself" on the space of "Other".

As the imbroglio continues with the Oyibo, Ata continues to seek guidance from the gods and the ancestors, but does not stop at that. He adopts other methods of resistance, including

physical confrontation to let Oyibo know that if he will accept anything from the colonial administration at all, he will not allow the culture of his people to be suppressed and their religion abrogated. This is his position when he tells Oyibo in clear language:

> Like I always stressed, you can go ahead and do whatever both you and those who sent you want in developing my land. … But on one condition … Tell your people both at home and in Kaduna that the moment you attempt to negate or encourage your followers to negate the traditions of our ancestors, I will resist it with the last breathe from my nostrils" (p. 37).

One of the reasons why the Ata takes this stand is expressed in an earlier conversation between him and his chiefs about the provocative attitude and activities of Oyibo in Igalaland:

> Ata: The water project that I embarked upon is part of those ways of Oyibo that will benefit us. … But not his religion because accepting his own belief system will vex our ancestors.
>
> Ohiomogbolo: *Agabaidu*, that is obvious.
>
> Ochai Ata: Your highness, that is why we have sworn never to be part of his funny religion.
>
> Ata: Elders of the land, a religion that does not have respect for our ancestors is not acceptable to us at all (p. 30).

The above conversation reveals that the Ata does not reject Oyibo entirely, since the reality is that he is already present in his land (Igalaland) and colonised his country. The development ideas brought by the Oyibo are accepted by him. For instance, apart from the water project mentioned above, he also accepts the school and the hospital expansion projects (pp. 36-37), so also the aerodrum project (pp. 40-43). He does so for the benefit of his people. However, postcolonial theory punctures this seemingly benevolent gesture of the coloniser which the colonial discourse tends to presents to justify colonialism. It is the argument of postcolonial theory that such gestures coming from the colonisers were baits and smokescreen to secure a fear-induced consent from the

colonisers for their continued domination. This is Rappa's (2018, p. 1) observation that colonial discourse theorists argue that "colonisation was designed to improve native lives, to change the native penchant for simplicity, belief in pagan gods and spirits that lived in rocks and trees with a superior language, a superior culture, a superior religion and hence a superior civilisation". He counters this misleading argument: "Of course this was not true. It was to enslave the natives to make them work for the strange foreign currency and laws that they never received and did not understand" (Rappa, 2018, p. 1).

As a matter of fact, Ata never trusts Oyibo, in spite of his "good gestures". This is exemplified in the caution he issues to his chiefs about Oyibo: "Elders of the land, the show of white teeth by a neighbour or guest does not mean good will or friendship. We must watch the events with caution" (p. 32). He appears to be correct in his perception as the coloniser's strategy to entrench itself in the colonised's space continues with the adoption of divide-and-rule tactics. This is decipherable in Ata's continued warning to his chiefs:

> Don't forget royal elders that when you want to burn down your own house, your enemy will lend you fire with haste. … A few of our people have agreed to be fooled by the leper and his strange religion using education and government work to convince them. But I tell you elders, except this is not Ayegba's land, they will all end up in shame (p. 33).

Therefore, Ata's resistance against colonial domination in the politics of space continues as emblemitised in his summon of two of his subjects whom he accused of treachery, because they write a petition against him to the Oyibo in Kaduna: "What did the leper use to charm you that you decided to join forces with him to confront me? … You dare champion the writing of a letter against me to the leper in Kaduna (p. 69). This is the continuation of the coloniser's divide-and-rule strategy in order to cause cleavages in the land and, therefore, find it easy to take more space. In anger, Ata places severe curses on the two (1st Man and 2nd Man) of them. One loses parts of his body one by one until he dies while the other has his right hand permanently paralysed.

The content of the petition is later revealed to us through the conversation between two converts of the Whiteman's religion (pp. 77-79) to be an allegation that Ata used a human being for sacrifice during *Ocho* festival, but the allegation is later found to be baseless and unfounded. Scientific investigation into the matter shows that the blood at the shrine was not that of human a being. Despite that, the coloniser is still bent on dethroning Ata. Postcolonial theory interpretes this as the hypocrisy of the coloniser, that his real aim was not because of his puritan virtue or his intention to serve humanity but to plunder, conquer and dominate. The following conversation further exposes the contradictions of colonialism:

> 1st Convert: But what is the unforgivable offence of his highness? What is it?
>
> 2nd Convert: They said his highness vowed he can never abandon the gods of the land for Jesus Christ.
>
> 1st Convert: That is not enough reason for all this hanging fiery furnace. Didn't the missionary teach us that some conversions are speedy while others can take time, and so we should be patient when we come in contact with such people .

By the statement above, 1st Convert, insinuates that the coloniser does not do what he preaches (p. 84). He preaches tolerance and patience in winning the sinners to Jesus Christ, but he is inpatient in the case of the Ata Igala whom he accuses of heathen worship. It exposes the hypocrisy of the coloniser. His real intention is imperialism – mercantilism, desire to promote their capitalist economy at the expense and detriment of the colonies. This is exactly what Rodney (1972) means when he alleges that the imperialist activities of the Europeans are culpable in the underdevelopment of Africa. Therefore, the eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory hold that colonialism is implicated in the present sorry state of African post-colonial states, socially, economically, culturally and politically, including religious intolerance as demonstrated in the irreconcilable disposition of the white man towards the Ata Igala – he still found the monarch guilty, despite the evidence that exonerates him from the allegation levelled aginst him.

The decision of Ata Igala to commit suicide, rather than be dethroned by the coloniser, is a bold step to prevent a traditional catastrophe and preserve his own political space for his future generation. The point is this; if he allows himself to be dethroned, his lineage will be deleted for ever from those which are qualified to produce Ata Igala for Igalaland. That is the practice in Igalaland and the playwright in an interview with this researcher confirmed this. Ata is convinced beyond any doubt that there is no going back on the decision to dethrone him, therefore, he must do something fast. This delicate angle to his predicament propels Ata to outsmart the coloniser in committing suicide before being dethroned. His suicide statements attest to this:

> Oh ancestors, I come to you not because I am ready, not even because my time is up, but because my refusal to come will cause more grievous disruption of harmony between the living, the *abegwu* our ancestors, and *Ojo Chamachaala* … I come to you heroic, refusing to succumb to the excesses of the leper. I come over to you into the higher realm and the abode of the abegwu our ancestors with pride that my lineage, the ruling lineage of our ancestors that I represent, will not be blotted out of sitting on the royal throne because I come to you this way, and not how the leper wanted. I come to you giving a heavy blow to the leper and all he represents, including the shameless traitors of the land that supported him in his plan to commit an abomination to the royal stool (pp. 92-93).

Ata's action turns out to be a wise one because, as the playwright points out, his lineage is preserved as one of the four ruling houses in Igalaland till today:

> Now from that sacrifice he was buried as an Ata and because of what he did, the current Ata Igala, Michael Ameh Oboni II, is his son. He came in three or four years ago, he is the son to this Ata Igala the Great. There is no way he would have been Ata now if his father did not commit suicide (interview with Idegu, 2018).

To the Igala, therefore, the act performed by Ata Igala was a heroic one, a patriotic one as portrayed in this play. This is what distinguishes this meta-text from its text, which is Yerima's

play *Ameh Oboni the Great*. As explicated by Idegu, "Yerima's text does not disclose the real reason why Ata Igala the Great committed suicide" (interview with Idegu, 2018). By his suicide action, he pays a big sacrifice to preserve the royal stool (political space) for his children, grand children and great grandchildren. Beyond that, he deprives the coloniser of the pride he will have derived from dethroning, and possibly exiling another African king, like he did to some other African leaders in history, such Jaja of Okpobo of Bonniland and Ovonramwen N'ogbaisi of Benin kingdom, both of whom were exiled and died in the West Indies and Calabar respectively.

In this play, therefore, Idegu negates the canon of the coloniser, who always want to present the colonised as inferior, unintelligent and evil, by presenting the protagonist of the play and his people in the contrary. He presents the Ata as a man who loves his people, loves the development of his land, and a strong character that will not bend even in the face of threat. He exposes the hypocrisy of the coloniser who preaches one thing but does another and whose real intention is not about the development of the land of the colonised but imperialism and mercantilism. Characters like 1st Man and 2nd Man who are used by the coloniser to destabilise the political dynasty of the Ata due to the pecuniary gains they are deriving from their relationship with the coloniser are symptomatic of the inheritors of colonialism in the post-colonial African states who are collaborators with the colonisers in their neo-colonial imperialistic practices through which they still siphon Africa's wealth, particularly under the guise of globalisation. Consequently, Idegu rejects this kind of treacherous politics by beneficiaries of colonialism. By allowing Ata Igala to hold on to his culture and tradition, contrary to the expectations of the coloniser, Idegu negates the canons of the colonialists who regard their own culture as superior to that of the Africans which they pronounce as barbaric and unacceptable to global humanity.

4.4 Structure and Style as Reflections of Politics of Space in the Selected Play-texts of Emmy Idegu

Having earlier provided a background for style and structure when we treated the same subject in Salami-Agunloye's plays, doing the same here will amount to a repetition. We will,

therefore, go ahead to examine structure and style in the selected plays of Idegu. Idegu's style of writing is very descriptive with attention to detail. He pays particular attention to stage instructions. He describes the environment of the character with clinical detail and does the same thing with the character and the actions involved at every given time. As we proceed, we will examine plot, characterisation, language, dramatic technique, and symbolism.

4.4.1 Plot as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Emmy Idegu's *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom, Great Odolu Kingdom,* and *Ata Igala the Great*

The plot of *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* is a linear plot. It is a cause-and-effect plot with one action issuing from another. It possesses a good unity, (time, action and place); it has discernible beginning, middle and end. Rather than use the conventional acts and scenes, the playwright delineates the incidents of the play in what he refers to as "Happenings", and there are fourteen Happenings in all. Happening one is an exposition where Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 reveal what just transpired at the meeting of the council of elders. They are divided on whether the ailing king of Odolu Kingdom should be taken outside the kingdom for treatment at another medicine man's shrine. Citizen 1 lends us an insight into the cause of their disagreement – what will happen to the throne in the absence of the king. Happening two shows the persistence of the disagreement where, contrary to others' opinion, Elder 1 objects to taking the king out. In fact, as far as he is concerned, the king is not ill. In Happening three, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 emerge from where they have been eavesdropping to the conversation of the council of elders and express their disappointment over the division and the dirty politics the elders are playing.

As we get to Happening four, the king has been taken outside the land for treatment as could be extracted from the statement of the elders at their meeting, but there is no good news yet. In Happening five, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 resume their commentary about the political happenings in the kingdom, especially the divisive and mercantile attitude of elders in the land who pay visits to the shrine where the king is taken for treatment. Happening six shows more complications as it opens up the second phase of the conflict. There is disagreement over whether the Leader of the

Elders should occupy the throne before the return of the ailing king or not. Some consider it necessary to save the affairs of the state while others do not.

In Happening seven, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 resume their comment over what they observe about the affairs of the kingdom. From them we know the Leader has assumed position as Acting King. Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 actually make us to understand that the law of the land says that the king "can only rule from the throne and right in the centre of Odolu Kingdom" (p. 38). Happening eight only record the incident of the death of the king. The announcement comes from Leader, the only character that speaks in happening eight: "After a gallant fight with edumago, our king went to join our ancestors" (p. 41). However, they all mourn him. In Happening nine, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 continue their comment and also provide useful exposition such as how the elders politicise the death of the king, how the corpse of the Oba was brought into the kingdom at night and the king not informed. Further exposition from them reveals that plans for the selection of a new king is on and the current acting king is contesting. In Happening ten, we initially see a mimetic campaign going on at the opening. Later, Irahub, address his supporters, threatening to be violent if robbed of victory, but added an overflow of emotion as he bursts into tears. This development leads to comments by the two, particularly Citizen 2 on the past activities of Irahub who was once a leader of the kingdom when he was a hunter. This is another exposition. Leader too campaigns to the people. Happening eleven shows that the selection has been done and Irahub did not win, therefore, he makes good his words and calls his supporters out on violence. We know this through stage direction.

Happening twelve is the reaction of the king and his chiefs (the elders) to the tragedy after the selection. The incident again becomes another forum for disagreement and exchange of offensive words with all colouration of ethnicity as the blame for the deaths is laid at the doorstep of Irahub. Happening thirteen presents us with the evidences of good governance, such as more food in the land, happiness of citizen. For this reason, Elder 2 suggests the king could seek the throne for another four years. In Happening fourteen, we understand, through Citizen 1 and Citizen

2, that available evidences show that the king wants to contest again. This generates some tension among those who want him to go ahead and those who think the decision is unwise. However, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 agree that if the king eventually contests, he will leave if he loses; they equally agree that the kingdom will come out of it stronger, whichever way. From the plot of *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, it is evident it is a simple, linear, and cause to effect type.

Another Odolu Kingdom was written by Idegu and published immediately after *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*. The plot is not too different from that of *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*. It has a simple plot, linear, and it is a causal plot. One action leads to another from the beginning until the end. In this play, unlike in the preceding one, the incidents are arranged into situations, rather than in the traditional Acts and Scenes. There are ten Situations in all. The incident in Situation One is the disagreement among the chiefs over the contemplation of King Akpeja to present himself for selection when his current four-year tenure ends. This comes to an end with Akpeja informing them that he is still consulting to know whether to vie or not. In Situation two, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 also disagree on whether Akpeja should present himself again for selection as king. Here, tribal sentiments are expressed and the scene ends. Akpeja meets with the people from his clan, Clan of the Riverside, in Situation three as he continues with his consultation. At the end, he makes up his mind to vie for the post of the king. Situation four presents a herculean task by Friend 1, Friend 2, and Friend 3 to convince Adode, a person who had contested three times in the past for the position of the king in Olodulu kingdom and lost to agree to contest the fourth time.

In Situation Five, Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 resume their disagreement on the propriety or otherwise of king Akpeja presenting himself again as a candidate. While Citizen 1 is against, Citizen 2 is in support. All actions in Situation Six are mimed. It represents canvassing session (for support from the people of Odolu Kingdom) involving Akpeja on one side and Adode on the other. However, it shows that Akpeja is losing ground to Adode. Evidence that Akpeja is becoming unpopular springs up in Situation Seven as two Elders from his clan (Elder 1 and Elder 2) discuss under a tree the numerous odds against his candidature – some of his advisers are treacherous, the

neutrality of the head of kingmakers is not certain, and his opponent is stronger. Situation Eight shows that Adode is gaining more ground and sure to win. We know this from the discussion between Friend 1 and Adode as they discuss his chances, judging from the turnout of people at the political campaigns they have carried out. In Situation Nine the election to pick one of the candidates as the king is held, all done in mime. The activities indicate free and fair election in the place where Akpeja cast his ballot while there is rigging where Adode casts his. In the final scene, Adode wins the selection and there is jubilation. In the midst of it, however, there is violence which incredibly is attributed to the supporters of Adode while Akpeja calms his own supporters who want to be violent. Remarkably, however, Akpeja accepts defeat and congratulates the winner.

Great Odolu Kingdom is another play of Idegu with a simple plot, a linear plot, and with actions of the play progressing in a cause-effect format. The play has an early point of attack in which the principal characters make a move to achieve their aim early in the story, but with a counter move by the antagonist to stop them, thus leading to complications that keep the story progressing. Like in *Another Odolu Kingdom*, the incidents in *Great Odolu Kingdom* are also delineated in Situations, rather than in the traditional form of Acts and Scenes. There are eight situations in all. In Situation One, signs of disunity are perceived in Odolu Kingdom, going by the disagreement among the voices that are heard in the dark atmosphere within which the play starts. Baba provides the first exposition, as he tells the story of his life and family. Right there, we also hear protest and resistance from one of the children, saying that the experiment called Odolu Kingdom will not work and some of the six children supporting him, while others are against.

In Situation two, the disunity continues, as the children even fight one another in their dream. As Baba continues with his story, we lean of the experience of war in the kingdom in the past in which the children fought themselves (this is enacted in a flashback). Situation Three reveals the kingdom as prosperous, made possible through multiple resource generation achieved through the individual efforts of the six children. However, while some bring in much, others bring in little, but they are all happy, except Child 1 (largest resource contributor) that expresses

restrained happiness or better still, suppressed displeasure. In Situation Four, atmosphere of disunity increases as the character on stage engage in a brawl. More sign of cleavage seen in Situation Four as Baba distributes the food unevenly – those who brought in little get more, those who brought in more get very little – and there is a mild protest.

Situation Five provides an opportunity for the children to voice their likes and dislikes in the kingdom as Baba invites them to a meeting to settle differences (disunity) which he terms wrangling, bitterness, animosity and unbrotherly behaviour. Rather than have the differences settled, it increases, for tempers fly up over favouritism and preference of some by Baba to others. Above all, there are threats of separation by the aggrieved. In Situation Six, the aggrieved children (Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5) attempt to pull down the hut but resisted by the other three who are less aggrieved. Attempts to save the hut stress Baba and he collapses, unconscious. In Situation Seven, Baba has a terrible nightmare; he is heavily bandaged, lying on the floor and in that horrible situation Child one attempts to shoot an arrow at him. This portends danger to the life of the kingdom. In the final situation, division reaches a head as Child 1 leads the final "rebellion" to break up from the family, actively supported by Child 3 and Child 5. The resolution, however, shows that Baba finally yields to the pressure to rehabilitate the hut in the interest of all.

Ata Igala the Great, just like the other three already treated above, has a causal plot also, with incidents in the play issuing one out of the other. The incidents in the play are also delineated in situations and not in acts and scenes. There are nineteen situations in all. In Situation 1, the people of Igala do the celebration of life and the Ata is well celebrated. There we see the grandeur and reverence with which the people treat their king. They are all happy because the ancestors accept their sacrifice. Situation 2 takes us to the inner chamber of the Ata where we see him hold a meeting with his chiefs. Here Ata is seen in a heavy mood denoting that he is troubled by something, for he has a premonition of an impending evil occurrence, but cannot say specifically what it is. However, they conclude to consult the oracle to shed light on the matter.

In Situation 3, Ohioga, the Priest of Ifá, comes to consult for the King, but finds nothing too serious except that the king must exercise a little caution in his dealing with Oyibo (the colonial representative), whom he refers to as "the leper". Situation 4 gives us a clue to the development projects embarked upon by the Ata, such as kola nut project and the water project. There, Ata speaks of how circumspect he has been in his relationship with Oyibo. While he takes what "can benefit us", he "discards whatever will desecrate our land" (p. 30). Oyibo also comes to express gratitude to Ata for the scholarship he gave to some children and to seek his permission to expand the school and the hospital in the town. Ata gives him go ahead but warns him against the negation of the tradition of the ancestors. As soon as Oyibo leaves, he warns his chiefs to be vigilant because, "I do not fully trust Oyibo anymore" (p. 38). In Situation 5, the people of Igala in a suburb of Ida are seen clearing a bush in order to expand an existing land for the construction of an aerodrum, with Ata personally supervising the workers and everyone is happy.

In Situation 6, Ata visits another suburb of Ida in a welfarist tour and he is lavishly welcome by the people. Two things that extol the magical power of Ata happen in this Situation. A fruit from the tree under which Ata sits nearly falls on his head. Ata curses the tree, that it will never bear fruits again. A tailor from the east who disregards Ata while other citizens honour and praise him is also cursed and he dies instantly. Ata accuses him of disrespect and disregard for the culture and tradition of the Igala. In Situation 8 (numbering omitted 7 but the play is still complete), we see two fearful Christian converts with all their hybridity discussing the socio-political situation in the land and the recent action of Ata. It is from here we know that the tree that Ata cursed actually died. Situation 9 prepares the reader's mind for a possible confrontation with the colonial authority as Oyibo comes to deliver the Queen's warning message to Ata so that they can prevent "avoidable bitterness". (p.61). Here also, Ata remembers the earlier warning by Ohioga, on the need for him to be cautious with Oyibo the "leper".

After the departure of Oyibo, Ata and his chiefs ponder on the message he brought and conclude that Oyibo is an ingrate, an intruder, who "now asks for the stool of our ancestors" (p.

64). Two men that are accused of treachery (they petitioned the Oyibo in Kaduna that Ata used a human being for sacrifice) are brought to the palace and Ata curses the two of them. In Situation 10, still troubled by the political development in the land, Ata consults the oracle again in the dead of the night, but the signs are ominous as darkness engulfs the land. In Situation 11, Convert 1 and Convert 2 are seeing praying for peace in the land, with Convert 2 still in his fear. As usual, he lets out some information about the rift between Oyibo and Ata, that Oyibo says he can no longer work with Ata. Situation 12 is a worrisome atmosphere of danger that hangs over the land. This is presented through stage description; there is no dialogue at all.

In Situation 13, Convert 1 and Convert 2's conversation reveals that the big Oyibo has threatened to dethrone Ata. In a desperate effort to protect his stool, Ata consults the oracle again in Situation 14, but no sign of respite. In Situation 15 Ata, with the help of At'ebo offers sacrifice to the ancestors, but the signs are not positive. Through the conversation of Convert 1 and Convert 2 in Situation 16, we learn that the Oyibo man in Kaduna has summoned Ata and sets to dethrone him as soon he sets his feet in his office. Rather than honour the invitation and be humiliated or removed from the throne, Ata, in Situation 17, commits suicide. Ata is buried in Situation 18, with all citizens of the land mourning him. Finally, in the last Situation (p. 9), Oyibo, reflecting on the mass of human beings that throng Ata's burial place, extol his virtues, but regrets and weeps, that he did not accept the Christian faith.

As demonstrated in the plots of the four plays discussed here, all of them focus on politics as emblemitised in the struggle for power by the political actors in them. The incidents in the plays are arranged to suit the actions of politics. In *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, the action and counter actions are carefully arranged until the characters are set for another election. In *Another Odolu Kingdom*, the incidents take off from the preparation for a new election, being a follow-up play to *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*. It goes on and on until the election is held and a new king is chosen. In *Great Odolu Kingdom*, the incidents also follow in linear progression, depicting the ethnic bigotry that has been the bane of many post-colonial political arrangements until it is resolved in favour of

restructuring. Finally, in *Ata Igala the Great*, one can see the coloniser's (as "Self") imperial action of taking over the space of "Other", through the use of force and violence.

4.4.2 Characterisation as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Emmy Idegu's *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom, Great Odolu Kingdom, and Ata Igala the Great*

In the four of Idegu's plays that are examined in this study, he carefully developed the characters to suit the politics of space that he sets out to dramatise. The characters' roles are strategic to the political messages and the authorial insights and recommendations being projected for national re-orientation and change being advocated for his society.

The creation of characters and the arrangement of locales in which they operate in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* is a dramatic device that enhances the plot and helps in the communication of the political message. Idegu creates two sections of locale and character blocks. One represents a mirror of his society; the other personifies the commentator on the society. This arrangement typifies the classical Greek dramatic oeuvre of actors and chorus, in which the chorus made comments on the happenings in the society or introduced the audience to oncoming incidents, as dramatised by the actors. Idegu's arrangement, coupled with his linguistic application effectively drives the plot of the play. In one locale is the Council of Chiefs, the membership of which can be sub-divided into three and possibly examined along that line. The other side has Citizen 1 and Citizen 2 who are more or less the socio-political commentators that do not only whet the reader's dramatic appetite but also engage in critical comments on the action of the play.

Looking at the Council of Elders, they could be divided into three segments, as earlier mentioned, and examined so. These are, the Leader as an individual character, Elder 1 who in many facets is a departure from the others and Elders 2, 3 and 4 who more or less represent and exhibit common interests and fronts. Elder 1 is presented as a self-centred character, having dogged allegiance to primordial interests, cantankerous, parochial, intemperate, having disrespect for leadership and common humanity, and overwhelmed by the allurement of power. Although he sometimes sounds unreasonable, in his argument to other characters in the play, but he knows

exactly what he is doing, he represents a clan, the clan of the Desert, and he is ready to protect the interests of that clan. He serves as the thread with which the playwright sews the conflict of the play together. First, his insistence that there is no need to take the King outside the kingdom for medical treatment, whereas others are of contrary opinion throws up the conflict of the play.

While everybody in the kingdom are apprehensive that the king may die if a more professional and adequate medical attention is not extended to him, Elder 1 insists that, "there is actually nothing wrong with our king and all the talk of sending him across the sea to our neighbours' medicine huts is a calculated attempt by our enemies to …" (p. 10). In essence, he suspects the other Elders' moves as an attempt to manipulate the prevailing situation of the King's illness to snatch power. This heightens the tempo and gravity of the conflict of the play as other elders see this as an affront on their clans. Even after the king has been flown abroad for treatment Elder 1 insists that the vacant seat cannot be occupied by anybody until the king returns. In postcolonial theory's interpretation, this kind of character represents the inheritors of colonialism who always want to take advantage of the vulnerability of any political system to dominate the people, not considering their interest and welfare. The eventual loss of power by this character and his clan represents the playwright's rejection of his kind of politics.

Elders 2, 3 and 4 have common character traits, except for a slight difference. They are united in their perception of the situation confronting Odolu Kingdom; they are united in the awareness that there is an urgent need to save the king's life by providing a more efficient health facility than is available to him at present; they are united in the belief that nothing is wrong if power changes hand and will in fact prefer it does. They are very tough, firm and ready to defend their position. However, a deeper examination of these characters reveals that they also have allegiance to primordial identity. While the playwright rejects the leadership style of Elder 1. He merely partially prefers these three elders' leadership style. Their ethnic politicking needs to be purged, going by comments from Citizen 2: "Can you imagine elders playing dirty politics with where our king should be treated? Can you imagine that attitude?"

Citizens 1 and 2 are the commentators on the political realities of the kingdom. While the two are observant and critical of the political elite, Citizen 2 appears more critical. In fact, he can be seen in the play as the mouthpiece of the playwright. The two characters have deep concern for the wellbeing of their society. They display deep concern when the Council of Elders are undecided on whether or not to take the ailing king to a foreign medicine man for medical attention. They are somehow symptomatic of the Chorus in the classical Greek dramatic tradition which make comments on the dramatic activities and sometimes provided a hint of what to expect next in the drama. They represent the pulse of the masses of the kingdom that yearn for the right things to be done and for the kingdom to move ahead on the right tract. They also represent the conscience of the kingdom which points the direction that ought to be followed when the political elite appear confused. They are very passionate about the welfare of the kingdom and its citizens as they groan and cry when things are going in an appalling direction as the elders take what they perceive to be wrong decisions or sometimes when tragic things happen.

Leader, as a character is the leader of the Council of Chiefs and the second-in-command to the ailing king. The playwright, throughout presents him as a cool-headed, gentle and unassuming leader. He is humble, patient and accommodating. This makes him a good contrast to Irahub and so helps to advance the conflict and plot of the play. Although he struggles for power, he does so patiently but doggedly. He provides the appropriate leadership to Elders 2, 3 and 4. He is also resolute on what he wants – power. He goes about pushing for what he considers to be right: he wants the king taken out for treatment overseas; he wants power to be transmitted unto him as King in acting capacity and; he wants to be accorded the constitutional recognition in that capacity. He is neither ready to betray the confidence reposed in him by a section of the council nor is he willing to stop providing the much-needed encouragement by the other partners in the battle against hegemonic domination. Although he wishes the ailing king well, he knows that he is at a vantage position as the next in command to get to the apex of power. His philosophy appears to be “slow and steady wins the race”. He, therefore, exhibits self-control, but with a steady eye on power.

Notwithstanding all the "fights" being put up by Elder 1, Leader merely bids his time for the right opportunity to provide itself for him to take the throne. The playwright considers this character as suitable for his society and eventually makes him to attain power legitimately.

The development of the characters in *Another Odolu Kingdom* contributes in no small measure to drive the political import of the play. This approach to characterisation also enhances the strength of the conflicts in the play as characters with conflicting interests are pitted strongly against each other, holding on to their own space and advancing same doggedly with a view to gaining the upper hand in the struggle for power. For instance, Akpeja is presented as a peace-loving leader, a statesman, calm, consultative, patriotic, gentle, patient and wise. From the beginning of the play, he demonstrates the attitude of someone who wants to seek the opinion of people about his intention to re-present himself for selection as king of Odolu Kingdom. By this, he demonstrates that he is not someone who takes decision hurriedly. As he seeks the opinions of his advisers about his ambition, so also, he seeks those of Elders from his clan (the riverside).

The whole thing becomes convoluted, however, as Akpeja's advisers offer conflicting opinions. The realisation that there are traitors among his chiefs even leaves him more confused as he cannot really identify who they are. However, in spite of subtle display of hostility by some of them in the course of a meeting with them, he remains calm and unprovoked. Also, the dramaturgy of the play clearly presents Akpeja as a patriot, a man of peace, a statesman and a hero. As a sitting king he loses the selection bid and has the power to sit tight and refuse to vacate the seat, even if that will cause chaos, but he refuses to abuse his power. The fact that he stops his supporters from being violent because he loses the election is one important act that makes him both a patriot and a statesman. Notwithstanding, Akpeja is not perceptive enough to convince himself of the implications of his advisers working against him. He should have known that once there is no overwhelming support it might not be wise to go ahead with his ambition. Besides, he is sometimes slow to take decisive action where necessary or when it matters most. He discovers the identities of his advisers who are working against him: "Elders of my clan … I began to see the reality of deceit

in some of my own very intimate and confidential advisers" (p. 21). A decisive action should have been to drop them from his cabinet and replace them with trusted others, but he fails to do that. He leaves them in his government until they do the damage.

Adode is another important character in the play. He is presented as an unwilling candidate for the throne but turns out to be the toast of the majority of the citizens. Having attempted the throne three different times and lost, he becomes discouraged and decides not to present himself for selection as king again in the kingdom. Although he seems to have lost favour with the populace, but due to pressure from his friends he decides, reluctantly, to change his mind. His inglorious past as someone who had perched on the throne of the kingdom in the past seems to hunt him until now, as he points: "Great friends … They continuously say that I have a terrible past. All those steps I took out of my love for moving the kingdom forward are been (sic) used now to pull me down. …" (p. 37). Paradoxically, a fragment of that same past turns out to now work in his favour. He was seen then to be too tough, but the fact is that he has a clean record and very disciplined. His political associates take advantage of this quality to sell his candidature to the citizens of Odolu Kingdom. That is the import of Friend 1's statement to Adode:

> Great hunter, we are representing the same people you risked your life for a couple of decades back. You took some questionable decisions in the past while you perched on the throne no doubt. What is also not in doubt is your firmness to tackle evil deeds. That is why your people need you back (p. 39).

This strength of character that has been rediscovered in him now endears him to the people. No wonder, Friend 2 says to him: "Nevertheless, you cannot turn down the popular wish of your people to rule them as king" (p. 34). In view of his past political mistakes and negative public image, he needs to be repackaged so as to be marketable to the citizens who will select the new king. Although this character wins the selection for the position of the king, the playwright doesn't seem to approve of him as a kind of leader Africa desires, for the reason of violence that is traced to

him. Postcolonial theory regards this type of leader as a beneficiary of colonialism, an inheritor of an imperialist system.

Citizens 1 and 2 represent the citizens of Odolu Kingdom in the play and by extension, the citizens of Nigeria of which this play stands as a metaphor. The two characters, unlike in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, are not in tandem on the choice of the new king. While Citizen 1 objects to Akpeja seeking re-selection and prefers Adode, it is the other way round for Citizen 2. The treatment of these two characters this way is probably the playwrights' way of delineating the diverse opinions of the Nigerian citizens about the 2015 presidential election which is the subject of this play. Citizen 2 is very critical of Adode while Citizen 1 insists Akpeje has no business contesting for re-selection, having already been on the throne for four years. As expected of such divides in a matter of this nature, sentiments and emotion resonate in furtherance of individual positions. Sentiments expressed range from allegation of marginalisation of the minority, monopoly of power by the people of the rising of the sun (north), and allegation that the people of the rising of the sun consider the kingship as their birthright. Their conversation which are often expositions shed a lot of light on the politics of the kingdom and help to advance the plot.

The embarrassing violence that emanates out of the celebration of the supporters of Adode who is selected as king, however, brings the two characters to an agreement on the condemnation of violence. Both of them therefore, are lovers of peace as they hate political violence. Apart from that, both of them are also patriotic because they appreciate the mature and statesmanlike attitude of Akpeja in accepting defeat and prevailing on his supporters to eschew violence and embrace peace. The eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory ascribe violence in post-colonial African politics to the indoctrination received through the colonial masters as regards political contest. Political contests in pre-colonial Africa were not known to be violent since the system of selection had processes and mechanisms that guaranteed transparency and truth, and provide little or no room for fraud.

In respect of Elders 1, 2 and 3, they are committed characters, committed to their clan and to king Akpeja, their "son". Character-wise the three of them are the same and operated within the same objective and interests – to guide their son on how to retain power. However, in the course of doing this they sound very pedagogic. On the other hand, Friends 1, 2 and 3, are the representatives of the opposition. A critical look at them reveals they have the same mindset and goals, politically – determined to snatch power from the current king and working assiduously to actualise the goal. In their unity of purpose, they speak the same thing, though in different words. It is in furtherance of "dislodging" the reigning king and replacing him with a new one that they engage in all the reforms, realignment of political forces, extensive consultation and other necessary groundwork, all of which are joint efforts. These efforts serve as counterpoint to that of Akpeja's camp who struggle to retain power. The same reason also accounts for why their language is, most of the times, rendered in the plural noun, "we". They are able to gauge the mood of the people of the kingdom concerning the type of candidate they will prefer as the next king and they rightly identify the same in Adode. Besides that, they are foresighted enough to realise that there are certain parts of Adode's lifestyle that require to be retouched and reshaped, if he must be totally acceptable to the citizens who will do the selection, hence they conclude that he needs to be repackaged. The fact that they eventually succeed in repackaging him and successfully sell his candidature to the people of Odolu Kingdom, who whole-heartedly accept him to the point that he unseats the incumbent, demonstrates that they know their onions politically, they are knowledgeable, committed, always pessimistic, and reliable political assets.

The characters in *Great Odolu Kingdom*, as developed by Idegu, have helped tremendously in advancing the subject of the politics of space and the plot of the play. There are seven speaking characters in the play. They are Baba, Child 1, Child 2, Child 3, Child 4, Child 5, and Child 6. There are others too but they are mute characters who are given no speaking roles. They are the masses of the kingdom while the speaking ones are their leaders or representatives. From the beginning, Idegu positions his characters, particularly Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 at the

very centre of the conflict as they are pitted against Baba, whose character too is well developed. A careful examination of these characters will reveal how they have contributed greatly to dramatise the politics of space and enhance the resolution of the conflict. We shall analyse Child 1, Child 3, Child 5 and Baba separately but analyse Child 2, Child 4 and Child 6 collectively.

Baba is the central character in *Great Odolu Kingdom* and it is around him the play revolves. Baba has a dual role, he represents both the nation Nigeria, and at the same time, her political elite, or what we can refer to as her successive political heads who have managed the affairs of the nation since flag independence. Baba is obviously an old man with a lot of experience. The fact that he had been married for more than fifty years attests to his old age. The dramaturgy of the play reveals him as someone who takes management of the affairs of the family (the kingdom) for granted. He is bias, discriminatory, unjust, and tardy politically. However, he is forbearing, attentive and resilient, but lacks the political will to carry out far reaching reforms, unless pushed (pressured) to do so. How all these play out in his characterisation shall be seen presently. The problems that are the causes of the wrangling, disunity, animosity, hatred and conflicts in the kingdom have been there over the years, yet Baba did not attend to them until now that it reaches a boiling point. It shows that he assumes everything is alright with his family, whereas it is not.

Baba does not correctly gauge the mood of his children to know whether there is dissatisfaction or not, and when he does, he does not take proactive measures to address discontent. It, therefore, also denotes that Baba is tardy in terms of taking corrective actions and achieving what is politically correct. The playwright presents him as biased. While he treats some children fairly, he does the opposite to others. However, he is a forbearing character. This quality reflects clearly in his attitude, and it is what gives him the ability to absolve all the molestation, insults and embarrassment heaped upon him by his three disgruntled and rebellious children. Associated with the quality of forbearance is his listening ability. He listens each time his children come with their complaints of disaffection. Even when those children are speaking to him with anger, he still listens

to them. However, one thing is to listen, another thing is to take action to address the grievances; he listens but rarely acts on the complaints. Baba is a resilient character who can absorb different kinds of unfriendly and sometimes injurious circumstances and occurrences. The trauma that he passes through in the hands of his disgruntled and recalcitrant children inflicts on him a lot of injuries and other ancillary damages, yet in each time he comes out of them and bounces back. However, Baba seems to lack the political will to put in place a far-reaching reform. This attitude sustains the political conflict of the play till the end.

Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 are three characters that constitute the bedrock of the resistance in *Great Odolu Kingdom*. The three of them possess similar character traits, except that Child 1 appears to be the most vocal. Each of them, like the other children of Baba - Child 2, Child 4 and Child 6 - represents a particular zone of the Kingdom. The playwright deliberately develops these three characters (child 1, Child 3, and Child 5) to be aggressive, violent, bold, cantankerous and heady. They bring in larger resources than the others. Child 1 in particular contributes the largest regularly, yet he is given very little compared to what his colleagues, particularly Child 2, Child 4 and Child 6, gets. In addition, Child 1 is uncompromising and intelligent. The three are developed in this way so that they can successfully exhibit the power of resistance to turn the table against Baba, the dominant hegemony in the play and reinvent the power structure in the political space. Child 1 is obviously the arrow head of the resistant groups in the play. Right from the beginning, their forcefulness and aggression are obvious. This is sustained till the end of the play, when they have their way. However, among the three, Child 1 appears to be the strongest and the most charismatic. He possesses the ability to convince others to align with his point of view, which is a major instrument in the politics of space.

Child 2, Child 4 and Child 6 are three characters who, though are citizens of Odolu Kingdom, can be described as a group of clans who obviously desire improvement in their living conditions, but are liberal about such desire. They believe in liberal change, contrary to Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 who desire and fight for a radical change. Each of them is also a representative

of a particular group. They represent the groups in Odolu Kingdom who are favoured by Baba in resource distribution; and because they are favoured, they are not as antagonistic of the dominant hegemony as may be expected. The playwright develops them as a check on the antagonism and aggression of Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5. They are a bunch of optimists who hold strongly to the position that the kingdom will work. They admit there are challenges but do not believe in the approach of the other three children to apply too much pressure on Baba for the problems to be solved. Although each of these three clans, as expressed in the character of their representatives (Child 2, Child 4 and Child 6), have subtle discontent, they do not believe in rocking the boat of the kingdom. Whilst they are not totally opposed to restructuring, they are also not completely in support of it, especially because the present political arrangement favours them. They, therefore, rather prefer that the status quo be maintained than to rock the boat of the kingdom. That accounts for why they support and sympathise with Baba and even defend him as the others torment him. As far as they are concerned, the family is destined to live together and there is no need tampering with destiny. This temperament is voiced in the statement of Child 4: "we found ourselves as members of this great family with little or no efforts of ours. We should therefore settle with the realities of our inseparability and forge ahead" (p. 21).

In postcolonial theory's interpretation, characters like Baba who represent the political leaders of Africa's post-colonial states over the years and have caused political and economic damages to the countries they manage are inheritors of colonialism with all its vices of domination, subjugation, exploitation and unequal relation. Apart from that, the kind of political problems experienced by Odolu kingdom, in the eye of postcolonial theory were engendered by the imperialistic characteristics of colonialism which culminated in displacement and lumping together of incompatible political entities. Idegu rejects this type of politicians for post-colonial African states, for having too synonymous dispositions with that of the coloniser.

The dramatisation of politics of space in *Ata Igala the Great* is weaved mostly around some prominent characters. They are Ata Igala, the chiefs, convert 1, Convert 2, Oyibo and the

masses of Igalaland. However, we can categorise them into two classes – the coloniser and the colonised. Ata is a popular political leader in his domain. He is everything to his own people, the citizen of Igalaland, apart from God. He is highly venerated by his people. This is epitomised in the various names they call him. "Ochai" refers to him as "the sunlight of Igalaland that no darkness can submerge" (p. 14); his advisers call him "the tree that does not bud but blossoms with fruits to the dismay of your enemies" (p. 48). He is a man of culture and tradition; foresighted (pp.36, 41) and; courageous.

The Whiteman has colonised the larger political enclave of which Igalaland is a part and the coloniser is not satisfied with the resources and the land that he has taken, he also wants to take away the entire culture of the people; he wants to deprive the people of the worship of their God, but Ata Igala will not agree to that. He, therefore, puts up a strong resistance to the coloniser. He tells Oyibo: "Tell your people both at home and in Kaduna that the moment you attempt to negate or encourage your followers to negate the traditions of our ancestors, I will resist it with the last breathe from my nostrils" (p. 37). Ata continues to put up resistance against colonial imperialism, but in the midst of this, he demonstrates the capacity to initiate developmental projects for his people, using the Whiteman's technology, in addition to his. It shows that Ata actually loves to develop his land, what he resents is further subjugation which Oyibo represents.

Ata will not tolerate anything that will take away his culture and tradition from him. That is why he deals ruthlessly with the two men who write a petition against him to the Oyibo in Kaduna. He curses the two of them. One of them loses the use of his right hand permanently while the other continues to lose his body parts one after another until he dies. This demonstrates the magical power of Ata through incantation. It also negates the Eurocentric wrong assumption that magic consciousness in African literature is of pre-historic period. Ata and his people refer to Oyibo as "the leper" to demonstrate the aversion they have for the coloniser, but the Oyibo in Kaduna is bent on taking him out of the political space, he therefore, labels him a ritualist. This is part of the coloniser painting the colonised as evil, his religion as paganistic and his culture as barbaric and

unacceptable to global humanity so that he could have a good reason to dominate and exploit him. Rather than allow himself to be dethroned from his political space, Ata demonstrates courage by committing suicide. Although he dies, he does so gloriously. This is the only way he could preserve the throne for his generation because in Igalaland's tradition, any king that does not die as Ata, his lineage will be expunged from those who are eligible to rule the land.

The Chiefs' characterisation is developed to complement that of Ata. They belong to the same political cabinet and serve the political entity together. They are resistant to the colonial hegemony and are always in agreement with Ata. They are equally given to the culture and tradition of the land and see Oyibo as a leper that must not be tolerated. They are sources of encouragement to Ata and link to the grassroots. They actively stand by the Ata in his defence of the people's culture and the political space, and the veneration the people of the land have for Ata is not without their input. This gives Ata a lot of courage that later helps him to preserve the stool for his lineage.

The role of Ohioga as a character cannot be ignored in this play. He represents the custodian of the spirits of the ancestors, in the sense that he is the custodian of the oracle through which the ancestors communicate with both the king and the entire Igalaland. It is, therefore, important to see Ohioga and the oracle together as one. This implies that in Africa, the oracle is an integral and important part of the political system, because it is through him the communities receive guidance when they want to move; clearance when they are confused; strength when they are weak and defence whey they are attacked. This is the reason for Ata's incessant consultation of the oracle throughout the play. Throughout the tussle with the colonial power, Ohioga and the oracle are consistently involved. He provides Ata with information and guidance on how to manage the political disagreement. For instance, he cautions Ata about Oyibo, "… just a little caution with Oyibo, the leper in our midst" (p. 25). At the end, it is the same Oyibo that is the architect of Ata's downfall. This proves the oracle and Ohioga right.

1st and 2nd Converts are hybrid characters in the play, with all their convoluted religious understanding. Aside providing information on previous events and impending actions, they are part of the reasons for Ata's grouse against the coloniser. Ata believes that such people are misfits in his domain, in the sense that he considers them as teaming up with the Whiteman to move against culture of the land since they accept the religion of the colonialist. The same thing goes for the two men who write a petition to the Oyibo in Kaduna alleging that he sacrificed a human being during a festival. These characters help to thicken the conflict of the play until resolved.

Oyibo is the colonial figure in the play. He dominates, subjugates, exploits and violates the colonised as symptomised by his presence in Igalaland. Contrary to the colonial discourse claim that Africa was colonised because it needed development and civilisation, postcolonial theory debunks those claims as false, rather they are mere excuses for domination and mercantilism in Africa and other colonies. In his bid to take over the space of the Igala people, he insists that Ata should accept his own religion, and since Ata is not ready to acceed to his demand it becomes a crime for which he must be dethroned. In the understanding of one the converts, conversion should not be by force and time should be allowed for the target of evangelism to consider it. Therefore, the decision to dethrone Ata on the account of his refusal is hypocritical and betrays the contradictions of colonialism. Although Oyibo's oppressive, intimidating and forceful colonial administration eventually hinges Ata towards suicide, the imperialist, in the conviction of the playwright, could not subdue the spirit of Ata and his people. Notwithstanding, his domination drive is what provides the cause for Ata and his people's resistance, keeping the battle for the soul of Igalaland alive until the end of the play.

Characterisation in Idegu's works in the selected plays has, therefore, been done to dramatise the politics of space and majority of actions are geared toward negating the assumptions of the colonialist. Moreover, as a playwright, he rejects the politics of the coloniser as emblematised in the politics of the inheritors of colonialism.

4.4.3 Symbolism as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Emmy Idegu's *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom, Great Odolu Kingdom,* and *Ata Igala the Great*

Symbols are objects (animate or inanimate) or any phenomenon that are chosen to represent a larger one; it could be something chosen to represent an invisible or abstract phenomenon. Symbolism, therefore, is an artistic or creative expression (tangible or intangible) that is used to represent intended objects, situations, or phenomena. The other part to symbolism in this study is the significance of certain events. Both of them are being examined here to establish how they further the themes of the plays, particularly the politics of space that is dramatised in each of the play-texts.

The first thing that needs to be noted in the area of symbolism is the titles of the four plays of Idegu that are under consideration in this study. One of them is an eponymous play (Ata Igala the Great) which dramatises the political travails of Ata, a traditional ruler in Igalaland during the colonial period. The other three plays – *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom*, and *Great Odolu Kingdom* – are symbolic. Odolu from what has been established in our analysis symbolises the society on the playwright. It is a pseudo name that metaphorises Nigeria, Idegu's country of origin. Nigeria is a political entity, therefore as a creative writer, Idegu, whose intention is to address the socio-political ills of his society, finds it apt to adopt such a name to represent his society in order to criticise the socio-political absurdities that he has observed. Considering that three plays have Odolu as reference point, Idegu is able to extensively address the political issues of his society over some years, using the media of these three different plays. Equally, names of the principal characters in the plays are not the real names of the political personages who are implicated in the stories of the plays in real life. For instance, in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, the fictional character of Irahub symbolises a political figure in recent Nigeria's political history. The same goes for Akpeja and Adode in *Another Odolu Kingdom*. This also applies to Child 1, 2. 3, 4, 5, and 6 in *Great Odolu Kingdom*, they all symbolise specific geographic areas of Nigeria. It is the same way he uses Desert Clan, Forest Clan, Erosion Clan, Riverside Clan, Middleland Clan and

Mountain Clan in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* and in *Another Odolu Kingdom*. All of them represent the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria.

In *Great Odolu Kingdom*, Baba is also a symbolic personality. He symbolises the political leaders of Nigeria since independence. He is also the father of the six children so can be interpreted to be a symbol of the nation Nigeria, just as the hut also stands for the physical structure of the nation (Nigeria).

Also, Idegu often uses the symbol of "darkness" to communicate the phenomenon of gloom and tragedy, or bad omen in his dramatisation of the politics of space. At the beginning of *Great Odolu Kingdom*, the first sentence is "Action begins in the dark, thick darkness" (p. 1). Similarly, in *Ata Igala the Great*, the very first sentence of Situation 17 is "Thick darkness" (p. 92). Such statement is symbolic, as it immediately communicates a message of danger, disaster, death, and every form of gloom, conceivable. In *Ata Igala the Great,* that is the Situation (scene) in which the king (Ata) commits suicide and; in *Great Odolu Kingdom*, the statement ushers reader into the political space of a disunited Odolu Kingdom.

4.4.4 Dramatic Techniques as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Emmy Idegu's *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom, Great Odolu Kingdom,* and *Ata Igala the Great*

Dramatic techniques are special dramatic devices employed by a playwright to tell his story. The first thing that cannot be missed by any reader of Idegu's plays is the practice of making his drama visible through stage directions that vividly describe his intended actions. Without words, Idegu creates actions that are crystal clear, using stage direction/description in such a way that, even when the play has not been taken to the theatre, the pictures are already deeply embeded in the reader's mental faculty. His descriptions are often done with deliberate care and clinical details to create a dramaturgy that makes a lasting impression on the reader's mind. The stage direction is done is such a way that, apart from giving direction on actions that are accompanied with dialogue, it oftentimes gives direction on solely mimetic actions. All of his selected plays for this study have this dramatic stamp. For instance, in *Ata Igala the Great*, the opening of the play has five and a half

pages of stage direction which detail description of numerous actions before the commencement of dialogue, As the play progresses, the stage descriptions that are given, though not as much as at the opening, are nonetheless substantial. There are even some of the Situations (scenes) that are purely stage description, no dialogue. Examples here are Situations 10, 12, 14 and 18. The same goes for Situation Six and Nine in *Another Odolu Kingdom*. Since these descriptions are actions in themselves, they resonate the dramatic actions of the plays. An example here is the stage descriptions employed in *Great Odolu Kingdom*. They are done with such deliberate care and clinical detail that they create so vivid pictures of the state of the nation and issues that breed the anomalies within the national grid. The same thing applies in *Another Odolu Kingdom* and *Ata Igala the Great*. The description given at the opening of *Ata Igala the Great* subconsciously, but effectively, transports the reader into Igala culture. Besides, all the descriptions given in all the selected plays gives mental pictures of the political situations that obtain in each of them. Space constraints will not permit us to exemplify some of them in this report.

It is apposite to state that the theme song that comes up intermittently in G*reat Odolu Kingdom* is very significant in a number of ways. It is, first and foremost, Idegu's deliberate strategy of driving the plot of the play. Each time it is sung, it reminds both the characters and the audience that there is a "battle" that is being fought which has not been won, therefore, we should not relent until it is won. The lyrics also give us a hint of the requisite attitudes for the goal to be attained. The song is in two forms. The first form which goes thus says:

We shall overcome (2x)
We shall overcome someday
By unity and faith,
Peace and progress,
We shall overcome someday (pp. 1-34).

The song is also a dramatic strategy to provide a background of hope against the grief and dissatisfaction in the kingdom. It also reinforces the themes of the play, which includes the struggle

for reforms in Nigeria's political system, leadership style (in form of attitudinal change), need for improvement in understanding the multicultural dimensions of the nation and equity, fairness, justice and love in both the administration of the country and in dealing with one another. The second form of the same song is the outcome of the efforts of the first. The song's lyrics read:

> We have overcome (2x)
>
> We have overcome today
>
> With unity and faith,
>
> Peace and progress,
>
> We have overcome today (p. 44).

The second part (above) of the song is a celebration of the success of the interventionist efforts of the dramatic personages in Odolu kingdom and, by extension Nigeria. It is a prophetic allusion to the victory that is underway for Nigeria in her efforts to attain a better and more humane society through the interplay and collaboration of vibrant and progressive political players and patriotic citizenry. This is the expectations of postcolonial theorists for the Africa's post-colonial states.

4.4.5 Language as a Reflection of Politics of Space in Emmy Idegu's *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom, Great Odolu Kingdom,* and *Ata Igala the Great*

To the ecleticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory, the language issue is a critical factor to literature in addressing the problems posed by colonial domination. While the nativists insist that the language of post-colonial literature must be the language of the indigenous people of Africa, and argue that writing in the language of the coloniser is an extension of colonialism, the eclecticists allow some measure of flexibility in the use of English language in African literature. The eclecticists' alternative device is to "seize" the language and replace it significantly through abrogation and appropriation. This is a process of dismantling the English language to make it a different kind entirely, one that is easily understood by the indigenous population because their language has been made to substantially take over that of the "Master". The eclecticist group of

post-colonial writers is what Idegu belongs to, hence his selected plays for this study are written in "english" language.

Language is a great weapon. Although it is a tool of communication, but it is a powerful tool that can be employed in different forms, that is, for different ends. Both the eclecticist and nativist models of postcolonial theory believe strongly in the efficacy of the African language to accomplish multidimensional outcomes in communication (positive and negative). It can be used to eulogise, castigate, encourage, discourage, hypnotise, for propaganda, to indoctrinate, instigate, control, intimidate, threaten, and a lot more. The language of politics is quite different from the ordinary day-to-day language because it is specifically meant to achieve political ends. The use of language by Idegu in the selected plays is rich and synonymous with political register that draws from the culture of his society, Nigeria in general, but Igala in particular. It is apt to note that the kind of political themes that are treated in each of Idegu's plays dictates the variant of political language he applies in it. This is because in politics itself there are variants – ethnic politics, religious politics, gender politics, politics of race, politics of resource distribution, and so on. However, the aim in all of these is to gain advantage for one's self or the group you represent and that, itself, is political.

In *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, Idegu uses language to stress the negative presence of ethnic bigotry in Odolu kingdom and to show the reason for change in the approach of the kingdom to politics, if she must make progress. This divisive language and language of "Self" without consideration for "Other" can be found in different parts of the play. For example, Elder 1 reacts to the debate on the need to have an acting King while the current king is ill and away for medical attention in order to stop the drift being experienced by the kingdom and Elder 2 also counters him:

> Elder 1: I speak both for myself and the clan I represent here that it will never happen. We shall resist all the clandestine plans to usurp the throne from us. … We shall fight till the last drop of our blood to make sure all enemies of my people are brought to shame.

> Elder 2: … proving again his deception that if it is not about them and their clan, nothing moves in Odolu kingdom. That is a lie. … A blatant lie. … Odolu kingdom is greater than any individual, the clan you represent or misrepresent notwithstanding. … Who do you think you can intimidate here? Go and tell them we are ready for the worst this time around and there is nothing any of you can do about it (pp. 28-29).

The above is the nature of the language that spreads all over the play.

Political language, especially when it comes to campaign is a language of rhetorics. In *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, Idegu makes use of rhetorical language for Irahub and Akpeja, the two political candidates for the stool of the king. An analysis of their speech reveals interesting things about the language of politics. Space constraints may not allow us to feature the quotes here; however, we will make reference to important features in them. In Irahub's speech, he says, "Sank you sank you and sank you again. I came here today to see pur maself what kind of sufot I have wis my fiful". This is rhetorical. This opening part of his speech is meant to impress the electorate and enlist their attention to listen to him. There are three times he says sank you (thank you). So, in the language of politics we see repetition to make impression. In the same speech, there is the language of incitement: "za past time you said I should try, za enemies of frogress fruosterated us. Za second time you brought me up to try, again za enemies of frogress will not allow us". This is meant to polute the minds of his supporters against his political opponents and at the same time incite them against the opponents.

Another part of the speech reveals propaganda:

> Our ancestors have blessed us more zan we expected. We have so much land to pam yet our children are hungry. We have so much rainfall but no water to drink. We have so many fiful who are ill, yet no herbs to cure zem. Do you want to kwantiniu like zis. Zat is why I agrre to fresent myself again (pp. 52-53).

The language of threat and violence is also typical of political language and is contained in Irahub's speech: "Za blood of za monkeys and dogs shall mingle in this land if za enemies of the kingdom trick me out of bin king" (*Response of agreement and support*) (p. 53). Politicians are very clever; they may threaten and talk tough, then they will come down and cajole the people: (*Then he goes a little mild*) Les me conclude by saying zat I loaf zis kingdom bery bery well. (He goes calm). True, I am so sad zat we are not debeloping at all" (p. 53).

When it comes to Akpeja the incumbent, but also a contestant in the selection, we can identify three things in his speech. The first is the ploy to catch the attention of the people: "Great people of Odolu kingdom… I am here again today to thank our ancestors for all they have done for us to keep us united as one" (p. 59). The second is that he prepares the mind of the people for his message: "I thank every one of you for your support. I am so glad that we all have our differences no doubt, but we have nevertheless agreed to remain one united Odolu kingdom" (p. 60). The third one is self image-building: "May I say here and now, like I have always stressed that my ambition is not worth the blood of anybody in this kingdom" (p. 60); and then again confidence-building: "Let me assure you that your views will count. Everybody's view will count this time around" (p. 61).

Due to the kind of politics in *Ata Igala the Great* which borders on colonialism and the resistance to it, the language that is used by Idegu is more of resistance to the colonial hegemony and the language of assertion of "Self" as a strategy to reverse the image of "Otherness" imposed on the coloniser by the colonial "Master". Idegu employs the use of abrogation and appropriation in the process of his doing this. Gilbert and Tompkins (2002, p. 166) observe this as the postcolonial playwrights' "determination to interrupt the transmission of the 'correct English' in favour of local languages, the regional variants, shifting registers and indigenous accents (among many other forms of linguistic communications)". The other is open resistance to the Empire by speaking directly to power. For instance, Idegu interrupts the transmission of the "correct English" by infusing the indigenous language into it at different times.

The encounters between Oyibo and the Ata, with his chiefs reflect the kind of aforementioned resistance, so also the encounter between these royal personages and the two Igala men who seem to have switched their allegiance to Oyibo against their fatherland. At the tail end of the meeting with Oyibo, Ata's chiefs tell Oyibo to take his leave and that Ata will get back to him but he seems hesitant, wanting Ata himself to speak. Amanata, in a seemingly reproachful manner, speaks to him: "*Ugbodu kimam'egba kolu ad'eja*. The unskilful one does not know when the fish sleeps. (To Oyibo) Are you still waiting to hear from *Agabaidu* or what?" (p. 62). In the other instance, Ohimogbolo speaks to the two Igala men considered as rebels: "Gentlemen, *atu je gbogbo yia wofabo*. No matter how far the antelope strolls, it must assuredly return to the *abo* tree" (p. 67).

The language of open resistance, when Ata or his subjects express rejection of the Whiteman's ways, is legion in *Ata Igala the Great*. For example, during a meeting with his chiefs, Oyibo comes in to see the king to thank him for the good relationship between them and to seek Ata's permission to expand both the school and the hospital built for the community by the colonial administration. Ata grants the request and any others that relates to development, but adds a caveat:

> But on one and only one condition. (*Silence*) Tell your people, both at home and in Kaduna, that the moment you attempt to negate or encourage your followers to negate the traditions of our ancestors, I will resist it with the last breathe of my nostrils (p. 37).

This spirit of resistance resonates throughout the play.

Most often, Idegu uses poetic language in his dramatisation of politics of space in this play as he resists colonialism and its corollary domination. One typical example is handy here. On two occasions, Ata Igala employs the use of incantation as a poetic language to attack those he considers as enemies of his kingdom, either because they have collaborated with the coloniser or because they have no regard for the ancestors and Igala culture. To the easterner tailor who disregards him while others pay respect, and even demonstrates open rebellion, Ata says: "A snake never embarks on any journey without its venom. Any settler that shows disregard … This

easterner will not see the sunshine beyond today and neither will he sit to sew clothes in this world anymore" (p. 52). Ata also uses his power of magic to make pronouncement against a tree whose fruit nearly falls on his head, that it will never bear fruit in its life time any more, and the tree dries up (pp. 47-48). These incidents demonstrate the magical power of Ata through incantation. This also negates the Eurocentric wrong assumption that magic consciousness in African literature is of pre-historic period. It equally shows the potency of African spoken words that it could be used to control situations and human beings, if used in the prescribed way.

In the politics of space, therefore, this chapter has revealed Idegu as an astute advocate of politics that guarantees the right of every citizen to political power, a sacrificial leadership style, with a lot of prescriptions of how the search for power needs to be characterised by decorum, as against the presently unorganised and vices-inflicted practice. In addition, it has shown how power possessed must be exercised with justice and equal rights for all and the non-negotiable necessity for restructuring of the nation. With the use of postcolonial theory, we have discovered that Idegu's plays negate the cannons of the colonialist. He writes with the inscriptions of his historical, mythical, cultural and linguistic ontology that seek to reverse the canonical colonial discourse and the knowledge inscription of the "Metropole" on the "periphery". In this process, he strives to reconstitute global epistemic order.

The biography of Emmy Unuja Idegu, as well as the political themes in Idegu's selected plays, constitute the concerns of this chapter. The politics of space is contextualised in the light of the politics of succession and ethnicity in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom,* politics, rejection and aftermath in *Another Odolu Kingdom,* politics of restructuring in *Great Odolu Kingdom* and politics, colonialism and resistance in *Ata Igala, the Great*. Similarly, the prevailing structure and style in Idegu's selected plays are contextualised in the light of how they reflect the politics of space through the analysis of the characterisation, symbolism, dramatic techniques and language. The subsequent chapter therefore, contains a comparative analysis of politics of space in the selected plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu.

CHAPTER FIVE

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICS OF SPACE IN SELECTED PLAYS OF IRENE SALAMI- AGUNLOYE AND EMMY UNUJA IDEGU

5.1 Introduction

This chapter carries out a comparative analysis of the works of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu, two post-colonial African playwrights. In this attempt, attention is placed more on their treatment of political themes, structure and styles of their works. This is done with particular reference to the struggle for power in the political space. The different shades of intrigues that are associated with the interplay of power within the political space are also considered. It is an attempt at unearthing the two playwrights' perception of their world (their society), especially its dislocations, oddities and anomalies and their approach to confronting these socio-political dysfunctions. The instrument employed here is the comparative methodology. In this process, we examine their areas of similarity and the departure points.

Ontologically, Salami-Agunloye and Idegu are of the same sphere (both are Africans from the same country, Nigeria). They are, however, of different nationalities primordially, that is, pre-colonial wise This, itself, has a lot of bearing on their cultural productions. While Salami-Agunloye is a Benin woman, Idegu is an Igala man, and both of them make use of the history of their primordial societies in their creative endeavours. They use culture, myth, songs, history, and linguistic idioms such as tropes, metaphor, proverbs and imagery, to advance dramatic aesthetics that aim at societal change.

By the application of their culture, myth, proverbs and other African linguistic idioms in their works, they seem to be in concomitant with Achebe's (2007, p. 104) rejection of Africans' capitulation to European universalism and his insistence that rather than succumb to any form of racial inferiority, what the post-colonial Africa should do is to "look back and try and find out where we went wrong, where the rain began to beat us". This is so in order to adopt corrective measures to "put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement" (Achebe, 2007, p. 104).

5.2 A Comparative Analysis of Politics of Space in Selected Plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu

As rightly noted by Idoko and Ademiju-Bepo (2009, p. 204), Salami-Agunloye is a creative writer who believes that art should be employed to recreate the society and she is determined to do just that through her works. This same observation is true of Idegu. This is to say that the two playwrights belong to the extrinsic school of thought which argues that arts should educate and correct, that is, "as means to some recognised moral goods" (Monro and Scruton, 2014, para. 102). These two classes are commonly referred to as "arts for life" and "arts for arts' sake" respectively. The two playwrights have shown through their works that they are abreast of the enormity of the absurdities in their society – the social anomalies and the political dysfunctions that have given rise to many other societal dislocations such as insecurity, violence, political betrayal, corruption, inequality, culture of impunity and gender politics, political injustice, exclusionist politics, ethnic politics, politics of resource distribution – and, therefore, use their arts to address these problems with a view to effecting the necessary change. A reflection of these in the dramatic and theatrical output of these two Nigerians is a mirror image of the political space which appears to be undergoing noticeable dynamism from 1999 to date.

Comparatively, both Salami-Agunloye and Idegu are overtly political in nearly all their works and the politics of space is dramatised in different ways that are either similar or dissimilar. Salami-Agunloye's works centre more on confronting the marginalisation of women in politics and her concerted efforts to reverse the trend by advocating for creation of enabling environment that can give room for more women participation in politics. This is the focus of *More than Dancing*, *Sweet Revenge* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin.* In *More than Dancing*, Madam Bisi leads other women of the United People's Liberation Party (UPLP) to "revolt" against men's domination of the political space (the elective and appointed positions in the party). Her first statement at the UPLP's mini-convention enunciates this:

> Stop the drumming! Stop dancing! Stop immediately … Year in year out, primaries come and party elections go, all we do is dance. … United People's Liberation Party is a party for men, dominated by men, safeguarded by men. Men are chairpersons, secretaries, vice chairpersons, … financial secretaries and so on. … For how long must we be denied our constitutional rights? … You must realise it is your fundamental human right to participate in governance. Democracy is for all. … Return to your homes. … Return to your home (pp. 1-2).

In *Sweet Revenge,* Salami-Agunloye strengthens the political agency of the women by allowing Sota to fail those who elected him into the senate and turning around to make Aisosa, the abandoned wife of Sota to contest for the same space and win after Sota has been recalled by his constituency. Aisosa does not only become a senator she secures the highest political space in the Senate and the National Assembly as a whole – rises to become the Senate President twice. Interrogated with postcolonial theory Sota represents the inheritors of colonialism who, having studied abroad has learnt the way of the coloniser. Rather than transform their indigenous societies they exploit it. This is not too different from what happens in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*, where Idia, the Queen Mother, questions the status quo by resisting the traditional requirement on her to die because her son has become king in Benin. In spite of the pressure from the Council of Chiefs to eliminate her so that they could have full control over the King, she overcomes the move and soon proves her warrior's prowess by leading the battle against the Igala and eventually wins where men shiver at the sight of war. This development secures for Idia a commanding political space in the politics of Benin Kingdom. This has profound political connotations for our present democracy as it reveals the types of men and women the nation requires to provide leadership in our nascent democracy – leaders with courage, unbending resolve, and integrity. However, from the postcolonial's point of view, war is escalated and encouraged in Africa by the coloniser. In their mercantiling practices, they sell guns to the natives and encouraged them to kill themselves.

Idegu's treatment of politics of space, the attainment and use of power, is somehow skewed against the women, compared to the no-holds-barred dramatic approach adopted by Salami-Agunloye in the handling of women issues, especially politics related matters. This may not be far from the fact of their genders, one a male, the other a female. For instance, while in all her plays that are examined in this study, the womenfolk constitute the centre of Salami-Agunloye's drama, in that of Idegu, it is the male. In a nutshell, Salami-Agunloye's portrayal of women in her plays is akin to what Tsaaior (2013, xv) describes as "makers of history, strategic to the narratives of their nation, the discourses which they constitute and endow them with a viable voice and crucial role to play in the engineering of society".

Thematically, the dramatisation of politics of space by both playwrights concentrates more on power struggle within the democratic space. While two of Salami-Agunloye's plays – *More than Dancing* and *Sweet Revenge* – explore the present liberal democracy being practised currently by Nigeria, Idegu who seems to be concentrating more on the Nigeria's democratic experiment interrogates the politics of space in this Fourth Republic in three of his works – *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom* and *Great Odolu Kingdom.* Being critical realists, who believe in the ability of individuals to provide the leadership for vanguard of change (individual heroism), their historical plays *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*, by Salami-Agunloye and *Ata Igala the Great*, by Idegu equally find relevance in the scheme of politics of space, as the protagonists of those plays become worthy examples to follow in the march towards political change.

The reason for the above is that despite that those characters are historical figures, their production in the literary and dramatic genre at this dispensation of democracy is borne out of the playwrights' conviction that they are relevant to the contemporary political milieu, and indeed they are. From the point of postcolonial theory, particularly the eclecticist and the nativist models, there is still regard for the traditional form of politics as bonafide part of the political arrangement of the society to which they belong or where they originate. As a matter of fact, the nativist model revers

the traditional political institution as the closest administrative institution to the grassroots and one that understands the temperament of the citizens more than the orthodox political system imposed by the colonisers.

Political despotism or mildly put dictatorship, but which we have chosen to refer to as Garrison Democracy is also dramatised as one of the strategies of politics of space in Nigeria. Figueroa and Sives, as cited in Omotola (2009, p. 196), have noted that politically, a garrison "is a veritable fortress where the dominant party and/or its local agents/supporters are able to exercise control over significant political, economic and community related social activities". Salami-Agunloye in particular dramatises this absurdity in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* and *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*. In the former, the Council of chiefs insists on the death of Queen Idia, on the account of a traditional requirement while in the latter, the Council of Chiefs instigates the King, Oba Orobiru to send Ògún, his brother and next heir apparent, into exile on a spurious accusation of Ògún's growing popularity and becoming a threat to the incumbent. The Oba too does their bidding and exiles Ògún (pp. 19-20). This, obviously, is a strategy by the incumbent at entrenching himself in power by coercion; it is political victimisation and persecution of political opponents, a practice that is not scarce in Africa's present democratic experiments.

A derivative of the above is the phenomenon of Political Advisors as catalysts of dystopia in Nigeria's political space, all in a bid to remain within the corridors of power. The activities of members of the Council of Chiefs in both *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* and *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* are unbecoming of people who are saddled with the responsibility of advisory role in the realm of politics. Central to their action is the selfish motif. They refuse to be guided by national interests and so go all out to precipitate crises in Benin Kingdom at different periods. In their inordinate ambition to hold on to power the chiefs decide to entrench a weakling (Orobiru) in power so that they can help themselves to the state treasury as they wish:

> Iyase: Our strategy will be to convince him to banish Ògún from the Kingdom.
>
> Oliha: What if he disagrees? …

Iyase: Orobiru is not that firm. He is a weakling. He cannot withstand our united force.

Ihama: … Remember their father Ohen was also weak, but he was able to withstand the chiefs for a long time *till he was taken care of.*

Ero: … That is why he specifically said that Ògún should succeed him, knowing that Ògún is strong, honest and just. You all know very well that Ògún's reign will not be in our favour.

Another thing worthy of note is the clause uttered by Chief Ihama above, "... but he was able to withstand the chiefs for a long time *till he was taken care of"* (p. 14). The italicised clause is a veiled reference to the heinous act of killing. It is a veiled reference to the fact that Oba Ohen, father of Orobiru, Irughe and Ògún, was actually killed by his chiefs. This statement points to political assassination which is one of the problems of Nigeria's democracy today. Even in resolving the conflict of the play there is yet another political assassination that takes the life of Oba Irughe. Notable politicians that have been assassinated in Nigeria between 1999 and 2019 include Harry Marshal, Funsho Williams, a PDP chieftain in Lagos State, Former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige, Banabas Igwe and his wife, both murdered in a single day and a host of others (Igbafe, A. A. and Offiong, O. J., 2007, pp. 14 – 16). However, in postcolonial theory's interpretation, violence and bloodletting in politics is part of the contradictions of democracy, a political system that was imposed on Africa by the coloniser. The eclecticists and nativists hold that the traditional system of selecting political leaders, such as kings, was not fraught with the kind of exploitation and violence that are associated with the western political arrangements.

Similarly, in Idegu's *Another Odolu Kingdom*, political advisers also become a source of problem to the incumbent king in Odolu kingdom as some of them demonstrate disloyalty to the king. They betray the king as he prepares for re-selection for the second time (a second term). In

the same way, two citizens of Igala land betray the Ata by writing a secret letter to the Whiteman (colonial master) to disparage the king and jeopardise his throne.

Also, Idegu's three plays about Odolu Kingdom, a metaphor for Nigeria, – *Beloved Odolu Kingdom, Another Odolu Kingdom* and *Great Odolu Kingdom* – are written in such a way that the problem of tribal politics in Nigeria is laid bare before the readers. Despite the stark reality that the king is ill in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom,* the fear of losing grip over power leads Elder 1 to dogmatically and selfishly insist that the dying king should not be taken out of the kingdom for treatment because he is not ill – all because the king hails from his clan (the Desert Clan) and he fears they may lose power. Even after the king is eventually taken out to another land for treatment, the hegemonic block to which the king belongs, some of whom are Elder 1 and the highest law officer of the kingdom, gang up to claim that the law allows the king to rule Odolu Kingdom from anywhere in the world. The truth is that they prefer to rule the kingdom by proxy than allow power to be transferred to the king's next-in-command who is from another clan other than that of the king. *Great Odolu Kingdom* even exposes the tribal sentiment more than others. The protracted conflict between the six children and the sustained affront against Baba demonstrate the delicate situation Nigeria is in, even as Idegu advocates for restructuring, especially as regards resource distribution so as to reduce the desperation for power at the centre in Nigeria.

In *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* and *Another Odolu Kingdom,* the politics of space pointedly takes the form of tussle over power as the target is the throne. Citizen 1's statement illuminates our mind over the motive that spurs the conflict amongst the council of Elders: "It looks like the nut they find very difficult to crack is not the health of the king as much as what will happen to the throne in the absence of his highness" (p. 7). In *Great Odolu Kingdom*, it takes the form of centrifugal threat to the unity of Nigeria and the danger of disintegration of the nation due to grouse over resource distribution. In the three plays, each character tries to defend and fight for the primordial interests they represent, rather than the national interests.

Each of the children struggles to defend and at the same time advocate for political concessions that could place it higher and above the other. The explanation of postcolonial theory for these cleavages in Africa's post-colonial states is that colonialism as a system of domination and oppression was also a system of displacement that displaced many natives from their land and also lumped many incompatible pre-colonial independent nations together. This they did for administrative convenience and ease of selfish mercantlilism on the part of the coloniser. This is responsible for the cleavages and conflicts that encumber many post-colonial African states today. Nevertheless, Idegu in the dramaturgy insists on the centripetal. He rejects the politics of the inheritors of colonialism by ensuring that the reactionary forces do not have the upper hand.

Apart from political assassination, there is also the threat posed by political or electoral violence. This is dramatised more in Idegu's works than in Salami-Agunloye's. For instance, Irahub issues threat of violence if he is denied of victory and he carries it out or, at least, encourages it to be done. Issuing the threat, he says:

> It is eiza I get za stron or we will make Odolu kingdom ungovernable for zem. … Let me say it again empatically, if za Ccouncil of Elders eat with two hands and rub us of our success, we will turn Odolu Kingdom into a battle zone. … (p. 53).

Later, as the election is lost by Irahub, there is a violent reaction and as a result, many lives are lost and property destroyed; many people are also injured (p. 67). Also, in *Another Odolu Kingdom*, even when Adode wins the selection his supporters, out of the euphoria of victory unleash violence against themselves (pp. 63–64) and many lives are also lost.

In *Great Odolu Kingdom*, as they mount pressure on Baba to correct the inequality and injustice they notice in the way he treats them, compared to the way he treats the others, Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 exhibit apparent acts of violence. They are violent against Child 2, Child 4 and Child 6 who they adjudged as being treated better by Baba and are violent against Baba too. The flashback to the Nigerian civil war of 1967–1970 is equally a reference to violent acts. In the politics of space therefore, Idegu identifies violence as one of the peculiar absurdist instruments

always employed by Nigerian politicians. Even in resolving the conflict of *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*, Salami-Agunloye too employs the use of violence as a means of accessing power. Oba Uwaifiokun is murdered by Ògún in order to regain the throne. From the point of view of postcolonial theory politicians who engage in violent extremism in the space of politics and those who engage in war are inheritors of colonialism. The imperialistic characteristics of colonialism and its dominant tendencies are still exercised by them in their desperate bid to attain power. The playwright rejects such politicians like Elder 1 and Irahub who are inheritors of colonialism and who practice the politics of the coloniser. In the same vein, because of colonialism's imperialist's tendencies, colonialism promotes war because it profits in the wars through the sales of arms and ammunition. Arms and ammunition used by the Biafran and the Federal soldiers in the civil war of 1967-1970 in Nigeria were believed to have been supplied (sold) by the colonisers.

The problem of electoral fraud (rigging) as a means of gaining access to power is also a sub-theme in Idegu's drama. This is one of Idegu's concerns in *Another Odolu Kingdom.* This is related to the sub-theme of manipulation of government institutions or the failure of institutions of government to be unbiased umpires in matters of national interests. These two related issues are treated by Idegu as part of the factors that determine who gains access to power in Nigeria and who does not. For instance, at the meeting of the elders of the Clan of the Riverside (king Akpeja's clan) to discuss the chances of the Akpeja at the coming polls, Elder 1 casts shadows on the impartiality of the electoral empire: "It is so frustrating to hear that even the leader of the kingmakers is seriously suspected to have pitched his tent with the other prince". The play also reveals a fraudulent situation in the process of the selection as can be seen when people cue up to indicate their choice of candidate at the selection field. The selection process is free and fair at the Riverside Clan (south-south) where Akpeja cast his ballot (p. 61) but fraudulent at the Desert Clan (the north-west) where Adode cast his own. State instruction says, "both adults and infants enter the hut, after which they raise their hands" (p.62), meaning they all cast their ballot, contrary to electoral law. Postcolonial theory has identified democracy as an imposed system of government by the

colonisers, therefore, the anomalies that come with it, such as fraud and violence, are the contradictions of a colonialist system.

Put together, most of these political absurdities which also play out in Nigeria's political space can be described, in the light of performance aesthetics, as political theatricality. Obafemi (2017, para. 3) lends credence to this when he observes that "partisan politics involves a great deal of theatricality - platform actions, simulation, persuasion, suspense, and so on". Moments of political theatrics are special moments (most often desperate moments) in the process of contestation for political space by political gladiators and their theatricality could be quite interesting.

As critical realists, with belief in individual heroism, Salami-Agunloye and Idegu create characters that provide enviable leadership that reverses the direction of anomalous situations in their society. The dramaturgies of their plays are carefully woven around credible individuals who can provide the required wherewithal (ideas, skill, oration, and integrity) to restore societal sanity where their critical assessment as playwrights reveals the society as drifting and endangered. This practice is a dramatic strategy by the two playwrights to evolve and explicate nuances of politics of space and the dramatis personae that could be involved. This is particularly so with their plays which draw their source materials from the history of their people. For instance, in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine*, the eponymous character is the pivot of all actions and around her also evolves the resolution of the play's conflict; the same thing with Idia, in *Idia, The Warrior Queen of Benin*.

The situation is not too different with Idegu's *Ata Igala the Great*. Ata becomes the rallying point for the forces that provide the needed resistance to the authority of the coloniser. Two things that are peculiar to all such characters are selfless service and sacrificial leadership. They are leaders who consider the interest of their society as the first priority, even when their own interest is still at stake. This particularly negates the colonialiser's fallacy that the pre-colonial Africa's political system, and political leaders were evil, primitive and incompetent.

Again, as we look at Emotan as an example of a selfless personage, though she is a widow and childless, she does not allow her situation to bother her, nor does she allow it to prevent her

from bearing the burden of her society. She sees the need to press for justice in Benin, having discovered the lies and hypocrisy of the dominant hegemony which wants to entrench itself after it has usurped the throne of the rightful heir. Her statement below is insightful:

> Iye, Iriowen, Iye, Imade, my fellow sisters of Oba market. I greet you all (Itu Uwa). Have no fear for my life. I am ready to lay it down for this cause. Put yourself in Prince Ògún's situation, a prince and heir apparent to the throne of Benin, wondering about in the forest, living on wild fruits, lizards and rats. I am not just fighting for Ògún. I am fighting for the good of Benin. This injustice must not be allowed to take a bed and lie down in our land. No. Never (p. 55).

Despite the threat to her life, ridicule from her co-women and disparaging of her personality, all in the attempts to cow and intimidate her, she is resilient, unperturbed, and determined to ensure the restoration of the throne to Ògún, the rightful heir to the throne. Even when she later has to choose between her life and the struggle for the restoration of power to the rightful heir and peace to Benin, she chooses the latter and gives up her life, and restores the soul of her society.

Idia too is a revolutionary woman who questions the status quo. She would not succumb to the whim and caprices of the dominant hegemony represented by the Council of Chiefs who insists on her death on the flimsy and retrogressive ground that tradition demands it. She is a woman who would not give in to the pressure and intimidation coming from the chiefs: Her response to plea by her friend, Sogie, that she should accept her fate shows how strong and resolute she is:

> Iyesogie, let it be known today that I, Idia, the Queen Mother, refuse to cease shining. I stand to question our tradition. I demand for my life. Why must I, a woman, stand condemned to die simply because I am the mother of the reigning king? Is being the mother of a king a crime? (p. 4)

Since the Chiefs could not win the superior argument of Idia and her resilience, they are left with no option in the power play than to create a new political space for her. By that, she becomes the first Iyoba of Benin, a new hegemony and a strong power block, as suggested by her son, Oba

Esigie. Surprisingly, when the time comes for the Chiefs to prove themselves, they fail the same tradition that demands them to defend their kingdom in the face of external aggression. Paradoxically, Idia comes to the rescue and defends the kingdom. That silenced the Chiefs forever. This dispels the postcolonial discourse's assumption that the subaltern cannot speak. Therefore, the playwright rejects the politics of domination and exclusion that colonialism and political system symbolises. The political intrigues and power play involved in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* is similar to that of politics of Oyo Kingdom in the 18th century between Alaafin Atiba and Kúrunmí, the then Generalisimo of Oyo Empire as dramatised by Ola Rotimi in his play, *Kúrunmí*. Atiba (then Alaafin) would not want his son, Adelu, to die as tradition demands, when he (Atiba) dies, but Kúrunmí will have none of that. The ensuing conflict generated by this leads to a big war that eventually consumes Kúrunmí and his four sons, apart from many citizens of the kingdom who lose their lives in the battlefields.

The real reason why the Chiefs want Queen Idia dead can be deciphered from Ezomo's line at one of their contentious meetings:

> Do you know what we are saying, by asking for Idia to be spared? Queen Idia is a powerful queen, politically and diabolically. She has a strong influence on her son. We would end up being ruled by a woman if she lives (p. 18).

It is, therefore, clear that all the moves by the Chiefs to eliminate Queen Idia, is politically motivated (the politics of exclusion), tradition is secondary. She proves herself, however, as a strong character, with good leadership qualities. Salami-Agunloye is fond of creating very strong female characters as protagonists. For instance, Emotan, Idia and Bisi demonstrate radical traits that are close to what Queen Amina of Zazzau and Mrs Olufimilayo Ransome-Kuti did in their time in history. Of all her plays examined in this study, only Aisosa is not as radical, though focused and visionary.

Similarly, Ata in *Ata Igala the Great* is a strong character, though he dies in the play. The fact, however, remains that the coloniser fails in his bid to humiliate the number one man in the

whole of Igalaland because his plan to dethrone him and subject him to public ridicule fails as the Ata outsmarts the coloniser by committing suicide. Even in their plays that are set within the liberal democratic environment, Salami-Agunloye and Idegu still create characters that are strong enough to lead in the present post-colonial Africa. These include Bisi, in *More than Dancing,* Aisosa, in *Sweet Revenge,* as earlier mentioned above, and Leader, Akpeja and Child 1, in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, *Another Odolu Kingdom* and *Great Odolu Kingdom* respectively.

In this chapter, we have done a comparative analysis of politics of space in selected plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu. The concluding chapter of this study, which is the chapter six, covers the summary, findings, recommendations, suggestions and conclusion.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SUMMARY, FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

This study has examined the politics of space in the post-colonial plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu. By this, we mean the problems emanating from the binary of politics and power relation in Nigeria, particularly in our present democracy and how these are framed and interrogated in the selected plays and by extension in Nigeria's post-independence drama. The study also postulates that the various strata and structure of power constitute in themselves specific spaces around which politics, as a practice and process revolve. Since these, in themselves, constitute or produce various levels of power relation, the dramaturgy of political theatre, cannot escape the nuances of the space of politics.

In our conceptualisation of space, we have found that schematically, each society offers up (produces) its own peculiar space as an object of analysis and overall theoretical explication. Politics, being a superstructure of the society lends itself to such analysis in Nigerian drama. We have explicated that the lived activities in the political space, which Lefebvre refers to as "lived practices" (Massey, 1994, p. 67) made reference to Lefebvre's insistence, among others, on the importance of considering not only what might be called "the geometry" of space but also its lived practices and the symbolic meaning and significance of particular spaces and specialisations. These are what constitute the greater part of politics of space and dictate the occurrences within the political space. The political space can, therefore, not only be decoded, it can also be read through the realm of the social which can also be politically constructed. The triad terms of perceived space (physical), conceived space (mental) and lived space (social), combined, find accommodation in the political space and thus become relevant in the politics of space. It has also been noted that space can be expounded as a political metaphor, in the mechanics of privilege. It is our thesis, therefore, that to understand political drama, the central organising principle is the notion of the political space as a malleable, negotiable, elastic, flexible and pliable category of space.

This study also critically analysed the selected plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu. In examining Salami-Agunloye's plays, political themes and the politics of space are interrogated using the sub-themes of politics of exclusion/gender politics in *More than Dancing*, political betrayal and poor representation in *Sweet Revenge*, politics of exclusion and political injustice in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* and politics of exclusion, obnoxious tradition and war in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*. Subsequently, the recurring structure and style in the selected play-texts of Salami-Agunloye are examined as a reflection of politics of space under the icons of, characterisation, dramatic techniques, symbolism of events and language.

The analysis of political themes in Emmy Unuja Idegu's selected plays are also contained in this study. By extension, the politics of space is contextualised in the light of the politics of succession and ethnicity in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, politics, rejection and aftermath in *Another Odolu Kingdom*, politics of restructuring in *Great Odolu Kingdom* and politics, colonialism and resistance in *Ata Igala, the Great*. Similarly, the prevailing structure and style in Idegu's selected plays are explained in the light of how they reflect the politics of space through the analysis of the characterisation, symbolism, dramatic techniques and language.

This study climaxes in a comparative analysis of politics of space in selected plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu. In addition, the summary, findings, recommendations, suggestions and conclusion of this study are provided within the purviews of our analysis and deductions.

6.2 Research Findings

The study has shown that at the heart of the politics of space is power. The argument is that since politics is also about conflicts and resolutions, then, the catalyst of such conflict may likely be the clash of interests, and since this is in the domain of politics, the most likely direction is the struggle for power. Interestingly, postcolonial theory has identified many theories of power that are particularly important in the treatment of Empire/metropolis relationship. The agency theory, which Lisa Veneklasen and Valeries Miller (2002, p. 55) describe as "power to" and power with" is

discovered to be very important to postcolonial literature, because it refers to the ability of post-colonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power”**.**

The study has revealed that ideas can play a lot of positive roles in improving the condition of the society. Ambivalence as a theory of power describes the complex medley of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The theory shows that the relationship between the colonised and the coloniser is ambivalent because it is based on mimicry, which is never far from mockery. Bhabha (1994, p. 90**)** has posited that the threat of mimicry comes from “the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, ‘no itself’. And that form of resemblance is the most terrifying to behold”.

Binary opposition and coercive powers are also identified as theories of power. The former can be hierarchically violent in cases where one term of the opposition is always dominant – man over woman, birth over death, white over black – and, in actual sense, exists to confirm the dominance, especially in post-structuralist and feminist literature. The latter is notorious with African politics. This is not to say that there is no legitimate force, such as employed by the state in crime control, but John Lock, as cited in Dugan (2003, para. 3), has posited that there is illegitimate use of force. In post-independence Nigeria, like in many other African nations, the theories of power already mentioned and many others regulate the power relation in the political sphere and dictate the direction to which the pendulum of power swings, as portrayed in the nations postcolonial plays.

Exploring the confluence of politics and power in Nigerian post-colonial drama and theatre therefore, available literatures have shown that the early independence Nigerian dramatists became disappointed and disenchanted with the socio-political turn of events in the new state. Having experienced the fang of domination from the European imperialists and are anxious to be ridden of the oppressive and repressive system, there was a high expectation for a new nation where freedom and socio-economic emancipation would be guaranteed. However, that soon became a forlorn hope, due to the absurdist recklessness of the political elite. Rather than strive to fashion out how to

effectively manage the affairs of the inchoate state the new power seekers began to jostle for the positions vacated by the departed colonial masters and that unwholesome politics of space polarised them into ethnic and primordial nationalities divide.

This shattered dream changed the face of the Nigerian drama and theatre which prior to independence had assumed the role of nationalism, confronting the dominant hegemony of the imperialists in what appears like a homogenous and aggressive current, in its bid to get rid of the imperialists. Ògúndé, who had been the leading light of that drama and theatre (pre-colonial), had produced a number of plays that unsettled the colonial administration. The same political dystopia (that of the South West) produced Ògúndé's *Yorùbá Ronu* (Yorùbá – think!), in 1964.

The shattered dream which had been foreseen a few years before the final exit of the colonial masters dictated the dramaturgy of Soyinka's play, *A Dance of the Forest*, a commissioned play for Nigeria's independence in 1960. The same unfortunate development produced a pessimistic and tragic view of Nigerian society in the minds of its dramatists and subsequently led to the publication and production of plays with tragic genres and fated characters by other playwrights of early independence years. They include J.P. Clark-Bekederemo's trilogy - *Song of a Goat, The Masquerade* and *The Raft* (1964); Soyinka's *The Strong Breed* (1967) and *Madmen and Specialists* (1971); Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* (1972) and *King Emene* (1974); and Ola Rotimi's *The Gods are not to Blame* and *Kúrunmí* (1971). This body of drama is what Olu Obafemi (2009, p. 67) refers to as "self-conscious, individualist and metaphysical dramatic theatre creations" or animist metaphysics theatre, particularly because of their pessimistic and tragic view of their society. The refusal of the political class to heed the warning of concerned people, including this first generation of Nigerian dramatists led to the collapse of Nigeria's First Republic in 1966. This military incursion into politics, the coup and counter coup and the civil war that started just about a year after (1967–1970) were manifestation of dirty politics and conflict of power within the military hierarchy. At the same time, it deepened the ethnic distrust that had become noticeable in the country.

This study has also shown that the dramatic and theatrical production of this first generation of Nigerian dramatists, as it was the case with many African independent countries, became Afrocentric, attacking colonial impositions of European cultures, ethics and values and at the same time recuperating and reconstituting the social and cultural histories of the postcolony as part of the knowledge infrastructure with which to assert its energies and cultural self-presence (This temperament is one of the major characteristics of the postcolonial literature (Tsaaior, 2011, pp. 9-53). The period of the military in governance which lasted about twenty-nine years culminated in three socio-political dysfunctions, with dire consequences on the lives of the citizenry. They are brazing abuse of power (dictatorship), frequent forceful change of governments and massive corruption that inflicted unbearable poverty on the citizenry, in spite of enormous oil wealth earned by the nation. This wrong use of power, the study has shown, was confronted by a new crop of Nigerian dramatists (second generation) with a different genre of drama and theatre which Gbilekaa has described as "Radical Theatre". Femi Osofisan, Kole Omotosho, Tunde Fatunde, Femi Fatoba, Bode Sowande and Bode Osanyin are a few examples of playwrights of this tradition.

Notwithstanding that Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu lack practical experience of colonisation, they grew up to the reality of the failings of their post-colonial state. These are emblemitised in the ethnic politics, rancorous and violent electoral processes, massive corruption of political elite, the unacceptable poverty in spite of the nation's enormous endowments and the gender politics that "alienates" the Nigerian women. Others include frequent political assassinations, arson and impunities of the political class, particularly those regarded as leaders and are supposed to lead by example. Being critical realists who are committed to the transformation of the socio-political and economic situation of their country, they view all this as a product of political dystopia and are determined to mediate with the aim of effecting change through their dramatic and theatrical practice.

A critical examination of their works has provided the lens through which we have seen the political situation of their society, Nigeria, and have been able to make further observations. The works of the two playwrights are discovered to be highly political, in that they treat salient political

themes that are relevant to their society. In the treatment of these themes they adopt certain styles that help to strengthen the themes. Even their works that are steep in historical sources are constructed and refracted to offer political relevance and interventionist missions in favour of their society. Our application of postcolonial theory, particularly the eclecticist and nativist models, to interrogate the plays, however, reveals the reasons for the sordid and atrocious state of politics of space in Nigeria.

The works of the two playwrights reveal a lot about the characteristics of politics of space (power struggle) in Nigeria. We have discovered that in the course of the struggle for power there is a deliberate and calculated attempt to relegate the women folk to the background and merely make them play the second fiddle to their male counterparts. This is what we refer to as political masculinity. This practice is in keeping with the overall sense of patriarchy that pervades the African society. Salami-Agunloye's works centre more on confronting this marginalisation of women in politics and she makes concerted efforts to reverse the trend by advocating for creation of enabling environment that will give room for more women participation in politics. However, in postcolonial theory's interpretation, the problem of patriarchy is actually entrenched by the discriminatory practice of the coloniser against women with the excuse that only men can be active in the public sphere and also to satisfy the coloniser's mercantile insatiable urge, which the colonisers consider only men to be capable of serving.

The study has also shown that in their pursuit of power, Nigerian politicians still appeal to ethnic and primordial sentiments in order to gain or retain power. This is clearly seen in the three out of the four works of Idegu that are subjected to analysis. In *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, *Another Odolu Kingdom* and *Great Odolu Kingdom*, the pandering towards ethnic sentiment and primordial loyalty resonates. In the same vein, the problem of corruption and electoral fraud do not seem to have abated as the study has revealed the involvement of adolescent in voting (underage voting) in *Another Odolu Kingdom*. There is also the heavy use of money and the pandering towards vote-buying as emblematised in the men of the United People's Liberation Party's attempt to buy over the women, to stop them from furthering their political ambitions.

There is also the attempt to buy over Nona's husband with twenty million naira (₦20, 000. 000) in *More than Dancing* so that he can prevail on his wife to drop her ambition of vying for the post of President. Sota, in *Sweet Revenge* is found to have embezzled ten million pounds sterling (£10, 000.000) government money. There is equally the sinister attempt to lure Emotan into becoming one of Oba Uwaifiokun's wives in order to stop her from pursuing the cause of justice. This tendency to political gratification either to secure the vote of others or to compensate them for their loyalty or political patronage, using public resources and official position, has been discovered in this study to be political clientelism, prebendalism or neopatrimonialism, all of which are based on client-patron relationship, a common practice in Nigerian politics. From the point of view of postcolonialism, ethnicity was engendered by the coloniser's lumping of incompatible linguistic entities, while vices like corruption, bribery and electoral fraud are the contradictions of democracy, a foreign system of government imposed on the colonies. These types of politics are unacceptable to Salami-Agunloye and Idegu, and the way both of them treat these sub-themes in their dramatisation of politics of space attests to this.

We have discovered that politics of exclusion and political injustice which manifests in different forms such as political despotism or dictatorship against political opponents are still present in our political clime as political actors engage themselves in the politics of space. We have chosen, in the context of this democratic dispensation to refer to it as Garrison Democracy. The incumbent wants to retain power and the opposition is struggling to snatch power, therefore, the incumbent act like a Garrison Commander, ordering his army to decimate the opposition. Oba Orobiru banishes Prince Ògún to the forest in *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* to prevent him from gaining access to the throne; so also, Oba Uwaifiokun is cruel to Ògún and Emotan in his bid to keep power. In the same vein, the Chiefs in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* insist that Idia, the Queen mother, must die, on the pretext of tradition.

Related to despotism is the employment of violence in the struggle for power which this study has shown still exists in the politics of Nigeria. When Irahub loses at the polls in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, rather than resort to legal means of redress, his supporters storm the streets, killing

and maiming innocent citizens. Even when Adode wins the kingship in *Another Odolu Kingdom*, surprisingly, his supporters, in the course of celebration still engage in self-destruction, killing one another in over-joy. In similar vein, Ògún has to kill Oba Uwaifiokun to become King in *Emotan, A Benin Heroine*. This may not be unconnected with the concept of politics as war in Nigeria. In *Sweet Revenge*, M*ore than Dancing*, *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* and *Another Odolu Kingdom* this temperament holds sway. So also is it on record that a serving President of Nigeria said a general election in which his party was going to be involved was a "do-or-die affair" (Olanrewaju, 2007, p. 1; Tenuche, 2009, p. 48). In postcolonial theory's interpretation, despotism, political exclusion, force and political violence are peculiar characteristics of colonialism which the inheritors of colonialism have imbibed and exhibit within the corridors of power in the politics of Africa's post-colonial states. Both Salami-Agunloye and Idegu reject this kind of politics.

One of the discoveries in this study is the recurrent problem of bad political advisers to the ruler. This theme features prominently in both *Emotan: A Benin Heroine* and *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin* and in Idegu's *Another Odolu Kingdom*. The study reveals that in Nigerian politics the political advisers and sometimes the cabinet ministers may not be trusted as they can betray their principal's (President) trust and somehow become agents of destabilisation in the country. The ignoble insistence of the chiefs in *Idia the Warrior Queen* that the Queen Mother (Idia) should die because tradition demands it, the pressure mounted on Orobiru to expel Ògún, another heir to the throne of Benin and the connivance of some of Akpeja's advisers with the opposition to antagonise his kingship and cause his electoral loss are salient discoveries in this respect.

A recurrent phenomenon discovered in this study is the important phenomenon of sacrificial leadership and selfless service to humanity. Apart from *Great Odolu Kingdom* in which the leadership quality is both contentious and ambivalent in nature, all the other seven plays that are considered in this work, place emphasis on this subject in which sacrificial leadership and political stability, peace and national development are inextricably linked. They all make efforts to remove inept and irresponsible leadership in their works. They reject leadership that equates people like the

Alamieyeseigha, former Governor of Bayelsa State, who dressed like a woman to evade the United Kingdom immigration and Joshua Dariye former Governor of Plateau State who is already convicted for corruption (Global Witness, p. 3).

Instead, Salami-Agunloye and Idegu resonate, promote and upgrade the agency of leaders who are considered to be upright, responsible, charismatic, disciplined, courageous and sacrificial. That is why *Sota in Sweet Revenge* is recalled from the Senate and his estranged wife, Aisosa, seen to be more cultured, more responsible and having the love of the people at heart, is voted in to replace him. It is the same reason why Ògún, through the charismatic, forthright and courageous Emotan, succeeds in regaining his throne from Irughe, the usurper. The same reason accounts for why Nona, the woman presidential candidate in *More than Dancing* wins; why Idia, whom the chiefs insist must die, becomes the Iyoba in *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin*; and why Leader, found to be cool-headed and wise becomes the King in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom;* and Adode, who is believed to have undergone certain ethical reorientation politically and seen to possess integrity is repackaged, leading to his becoming the new King in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom,* after three unsuccessful attempts. This is a negation of the colonial discuss theorists' claim that the colonised was weak and incapable of governing themselves, hence the ned dominate them, since they needed to be civilised and taught modern political system of governance. Our playwrights' play-texts disprove these canonical fallacies through the lofty and impressive characterisation that produces the aforementioned dramatic personages.

We have discovered also, through this study that power struggle has taken a new dimension with the advent of democracy in the sense that power now changes hand more "peacefully" than it was in the era of the military when change of governments was nearly always through violent coups accompanied with elimination (killing) of heads of government and key political leaders in the cabinets. "Peaceful" change of government is recorded in three of the plays, without the killing of the incumbent. This means that change of government is now done through the ballots rather than through the barrel of the gun. It is common knowledge that government in Nigeria has changed democratically five times from 1999 to date, including changing from incubent to the

opposition once. The exploitation of political options to resolve conflicts in all the plays, except *Emotan, a Benin Heroine*, is, therefore, noticed as the reason that may be responsible for this.

The selected plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu for analysis are discovered to be replete with the traits of postcolonial literature. Their plays as counter-narratives of the colonial knowledge production is apparent as the form and contents of the plays resonate the ingredients of reversion of European assumptions, cannons and universalism and its inscriptions upon the socio-cultural and socio-political consciousness of the Africans. In keeping with the characteristics of postcolonial literature, the works of the two playwrights give voice to the subaltern - the minorities and the marginalised groups in the society - in this case the female gender and minority tribes. This is seen in Aisosa, Emotan, Idia, and Bisi/Nona, Leader, Child 1, Child 3, and Child 5, leading characters in *Sweet Revenge*, *Emotan, a Benin Heroine*, *Idia, the Warrior Queen of Benin, More than Dancing, Beloved Odolu Kingdom, and Great Odolu Kingdom* respectively. Beyond that, they are given positive representation with strong socio-political agency.

Similarly, the use of indigenous languages, myths, history, idioms, and proverbs, mixed with English as a way of dismantling the language of the "Master" (English) so as to deprive it of its hegemony is preponderant in all the plays. Postcolonial theory has explicated this as the practice of eclecticist theorists. Also, the resort to pre-colonial myths and history as source materials by Salami-Agunloye is a way to reclaim the African past so as to reconstitute the terrain of episteme and dominant narratives of the West about Africa. The selected plays are equally adopted as instruments to address the legacies of colonialism and the socio-political absurdities of their society, which manifest in many forms such as ethnic politics, political assassination, political corruption, electoral fraud, political injustice and other impunities of the political class, with a view to reversing them. Postcolonial theory has exposed the genesis of these absurdities to be colonialism. The uprooting of the traditional African political system by the colonial hegemony culminated in the imposition of a political system that is not only foreign to Africa, but also fraught with many contradictions that are implicated in the already mentioned vices.

The study reveals that the dramaturgies of the plays of this dispensation are more temperate than obtained in the radical theatre tradition that preceded this period. This may be attributed to two phenomena. One is the change of system of government from military to democracy in Nigeria. That political development may have mellowed the radicalism of the Nigerian theatre to the present critical realism, actually an old order that held sway in the first decade succeeding the nation's independence (1960–1970). The other explanation is that, though social realism and critical realism are both realist arts, the first is driven by Marxists historical materialism and dialectic materialism while the other is idealist, based on Hegelian dialectics of thesis, antithesis and synthesis; the former is more revolutionary but in most societies its actualisation remote. Notwithstanding, the plays still have profound artistic pungency and relevance because they hit the issue of democratic change right on the head.

Related to the above is that the dramaturgies of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu, attempt to effect change and correct injustice through democratic framework than through violence or force. Viewed along the recent works of other Nigerian dramatists, such as Soyinka (*Beatification of an Area Boy*), and Osofisan (*Aringindin and the Nightwatchman*), it is discovered that there is the general pandering towards the same sensibility. The likelihood then is that the dramas of these two playwrights are symptomatic of the dramatic oeuvre of the dramatists of this democratic dispensation. For this reasons, we hold that the current character of drama in Nigeria can be tagged the drama of "democratic realities" or "demo-theatre", for short. This is because they are determined to resolve the problems of leadership and inter-group relation only within democratic framework.

The study has also shown that there is an urgent need for restructuring of Nigeria, one way or the other. Disaffection and dissatisfaction by stakeholders with the way the Nigerian project is being prosecuted is apparent in the works of Salami-Agunloye and Idegu. They depict that minority groups are being marginalised in the power relation matrix in the country and this is generating dangerous outbursts and actions that could threaten peace and security of the nation,

even its very existence. *The women in More than Dancing* complain of marginalisation, the clan represented by Akpeja (Riverside Clan) complains of the same treatment, which they refer to as the "tyranny of the majority" (*Another Odolu Kingdom*, p. 23); the same with Elder 2 in *Beloved Odolu Kingdom* (p. 29) and Child 1, Child 3 and Child 5 in *Great Odolu Kingdom* (pp. 20 -22). In all this, the problem of injustice, denial of rights, unfair and unequal treatment in the distribution of common resources hold sway and are being demanded to be redressed by some of the children. From the point of view of postcolonial theory, the cleavages experienced in the post-colonial African countries are engendered by the coloniser's forceful merger of incompatible linguistic entities as nations. This in turn has resulted in political disparities and unequal relations that are skewed against the minority groups in the relationship.

One important temperament observed in all the plays, however, is the unshaken optimism of the two playwrights about the future of their nation, in spite of all the socio-political dysfunction and dislocation noticed in the society. The resolutions of their plays point to this direction; their drama still gives hope for the nation but call for attitudinal change from all political stakeholders and a rework of the system to enhance its functionality, peaceful co-existence and corollary national development; a call for change.

In summary, the findings of this study, among others, include the following:

(i.) the problems of post-colonial Nigeria, in relation to politics of space included political assassination, electoral violence, electoral fraud and ethnic politics;

(ii.) the context of the politics of space in Nigeria's post-colonial theatre resonates in form of competitive struggles for political power;

(iii.) the dramatic representation of politics of space in the military era was characterised mostly by coercion while agency and binary nuances of power were more dominant in the democratic dispensation;

(iv.) the selected play-texts portrayed the absurdities of the political space which manifested in prebendal and tribal politics, gender discrimination, exclusionism, clientelism, injustice and selfish leadership;

(v.) the intersection of theatre and postcolonialism is that the dramaturgies of the playwrights also serve as counter-narratives to colonial knowledge production and hegemony; and

(vi.) alternatives offered by Salami-Agunloye and Idegu's plays to enhance good governance and a healthy political struggle include restructuring of the society, sacrificial and selfless leadership, political tolerance, inclusive political participation and commitment to democratic tenets.

6.3 Recommendations

Drama is known for its mimetic functionality in its entertaining, pedagogic and conscientisation or advocacy process. Making the most of the various dramatic moments that take place in the nation's political space translates into more effective political action for political theatre, with all its subversion, "incitement" and satirising characteristics aimed at correcting societal ills. Events like this go a long way in signifying the nation's political identity, but its significance, to the dramatists, lies more in the fact that they lend themselves well to drama. Thus, translated through the muse to the creative milieu, the numerous theatrics that are wittingly and unwittingly displayed at political sites constitute great dramatic actions; the various paraphernalia serve as apt costumes and props; the political arenas become appropriate dramatic locales; the natural or more often designed backgrounds, with its decorations, lightings and furniture serve a good purpose for technical apparatuses and designs; and the altercations produce interesting dramatic dialogue/language. It is, therefore, our recommendation that dramatists adopt such dramatic moments for political theatre to address the socio-political ills of this time. Such dramatic and theatrical constructions become more fitting to confront African post-colonial politics in which the culture of impunity, abuse of office and loss of sense of accountability are the order of day.

It needs to be noted that garrison democracy (a democracy with some elements of coercion) is a perverse form of democracy. Therefore, drama and theatre (dramatists), in collaboration with other stakeholders, need to strive to eliminate this from the nation's democracy in order to avert a reversal of the gains already made. It can do this by promoting the tenets of democracy, one of which vests the populace with more power, thereby making the political class subservient to the people, instead of the other way round that it is now. Concerted efforts should be made to discourage garrison democracy.

Political exclusionism has been a perennial problem in Nigerian politics where power struggle in the post-colonial state tends to have made the women folk onlookers in the scheme of politics. The paltry number of women discovered in this study to have been allowed political representation is appalling, to say the least. Though today women appear to be more visible at the site of politics (at the points of canvassing for support and balloting at election) but this is only in participation that promotes the interests of the men. The dramatisation of themes that give voice to the women and push for their political representation is not only pertinent but imperative to strengthen the politics of space. Doing this will increase the quality of governmental policies as it will help women to have direct contribution to law-making that directly pertain to their lives. It will also afford the nation the opportunity of having every policy being formulated to be sufficiently scrutinised and considered nationally from both sides of the spectrum – men and women's perspectives and interests.

Although prebendal politics (a patron-client practice in politics) that has been identified in the politics of space in Nigeria extends resources to the people, as people like Joseph (2014) will want us to believe, it is to be noted that extending resources in this manner cannot be done in a just, fair, equitable and honest way. The present practice encourages corruption and a lot of underhand practices, just to satisfy the "client". It also encourages the "client" to engage in unwholesome practices to mobilise support for his "patron". Nigerian dramatists, therefore, need to address such issues in their dramatic and theatrical oeuvre in order to push for the sanitisation of the political process. By this, Nigeria can practise the ideal democracy that is driven by the people, not by

financial and material gratifications. Also, centrifugal approach to politicking, such as ethnic politics, that tend to tear apart the nation should be made a core and incessant subject to be condemned by the theatre so as to minimise it, if not totally eliminated.

At the heart of politics of space is resource distribution. Drama and theatre should confront the perennial problems that often arise over this matter. The havoc the discontentment arising from this issue has done to the psyche of this nation is immeasurable. Ample examples here are youth militancy in the south-south, with the associated mindless destruction of national oil pipelines, the kidnapping of expatriate oil workers and erosion of the nation's image in the eye of the global community and the restiveness in the south-east in form of the activities of Independent People of Biafra (IPOB). There are other threatening issues like insecurity (terrorism in the north-east, kidnapping in the northern and southern part of the country) and high level of poverty in the land. All this have vicarious implications for the politics of space as peace and security are essential prerequisite for political administration, and studies have shown that poverty can make the youth amenable to violence, hence terrorism (Cachalia, Salifu and Ndung'u, 2016, pp. 1-30; ACSS, 2012, pp. 1-20). Drama and theatre cannot ignore such issues, as they are too crucial to the sustenance of a peaceful political engagement.

Significantly, the issue of restructuring of the nation should be viewed with all seriousness. This festering issue arises out of the discontentment that bred the Nigeria civil war of 1967-1970. The stakeholders in the Nigerian project need to fashion out how to evolve a nation that gives everyone a true sense of belonging. In doing this, power should be devolved more to the federating units, to make the centre less attractive. This will reduce the acrimonious struggle for the centre that is seen as a place where "the ultimate" power over national wealth resides.

Different kinds of Western-oriented literary and dramatic theories such as Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis, and structuralism, have been employed in the past by critics as frameworks to examine works of African dramatists, but these have often been found inadequate. The reason is that such theories do not recon with typical African socio-cultural practices such as mysticism and so lack the analytical potency to thoroughly analyse typical African literary texts.

Scholars and researchers should avail themselves of the use of postcolonial theory, as it provides a broader canvas for the interrogation of post-colonial literary and cultural productions.

6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

This study has thrown up many issues that could give cause for further researches. However, a few of them could be stated here. They are the need to:

(i) assess the various manifestations and dimensions of the politics of space in the play-texts from other Nigerian, and indeed African, playwrights of the same or different generations. This will allow us to checkmate the excesses of power play, amongst other social cum political actors. This critical lens will also help us to conduct a historical mapping, within the theatrical and dramatic frameworks, of the political, social and dialectical issues that have over time come to define the post-colonial realities of most African countries.

(ii) investigate the extent to which geographic sites or structures could determine important political decisions that can affect the entire country, either in the form of switching the pendulum of power or significantly influencing public opinion.

(iii) research into ways through which restructuring of the African nations, particularly Nigeria, could be done in such a way that the issues that cause the cleavages that are apparent in post-colonial states, as reflected in our selected plays, can be addressed amicably without rupturing the relationship of the multicultural post-colonial states. Search for dramas that have addressed this issue is paramount as it will help solve one of Africa's biggest post-colonial problems.

(iv) examine the implications of excessive application of money in politics and theatre's mapping of this in the political trajectory of Nigeria. It has been shown in the cause of this study that politicians expend a lot of money on politics, particularly in their bid to gain control of the political space, majorly power. Staggering sums that run into billions of naira are expended in this respect. This has raised concerns about vote buying and heavy monetisation of the political space. This can translate into a cash and carry politics. There is need to investigate

the role of money vis the morality of its signification and the legitimacy of power in such circumstance.

(v) study dramas' interrogation of Nigeria's political culture of "the winner takes all". By this, we mean that once a political party wins at the centre it takes all the power that the centre has to offer (ministries, government agencies and institutions, advisory positions, including power to plan and allocate resources). This situation has led to a mad struggle to occupy the centre, with a lot of atrocities committed in the process within the political space. We are of the view that there is need for further research on the appropriateness, or otherwise, of this practice for the nation's political advancement, particularly from the spectrum of the nation's dramatists.

6.5 Conclusion

This study has considered politics of space in some selected play-texts of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Idegu. Both playwrights are committed to the socio-political wellbeing of their society. They are, however, not comfortable with the atrocious power struggle, the mendacious propaganda and the exclusionist antics that drive the search for political power in Nigeria. Being critical realists, they attempt to interrogate power through their play-texts, with the dialectical temperament of Hegelian thesis-antithesis-synthesis paradigm, negotiating lived activities within the space of politics in Nigeria. They abhor, condemn and lampoon the absurdities of the political actors in the political space as implicated in ethnic politics, garrison democracy, political exclusionism, political assassination, political injustice, godfatherism, vote buying, combative and warlike political engagements, electoral violence and bloodletting, electoral fraud and indiscriminate abuse of power by those who possess it.

Every nation that cherishes a harmonious co-existence among its components does not ignore the call for political re-engineering that can heal festering wounds in the body polity, just as the onerous need of every citizen to be committed to the entrenchment of the present democratic experimentation is non-negotiable and cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, Salami-Agunloye and Idegu have used different methods to confront the political realities of their post-independence state, exposing the need for power to be utilised appropriately and responsibly to redress centrifugal

discontents that are detrimental to peace and development of the nation. Their dramatisation of politics of space has exposed the falacies of the colonial discourse theorists who tend to create the impression that the Western culture is supreme to all others. Salami-Agunloye and Idegu have rejected this European universalism and the attempt to present Africa's culture as inferior and uncivilised. This is seen in their dramatisation of politics of space, that the politics of the coloniser is a failure as the inheritors of colonialism such as Sota, the men of UPLP, Elder 1, Irahub and Baba misuse power in a political system that was imposed on the colonised.

We restate the onerous necessity to be committed to the democratic project because, despite all its inadequacies and contradictions, it still appears to offer the nation (Nigeria) a more viable, reassuring, and participatory political window (if played according to the rules) far more than the military option. The military option is certainly unimaginable. The unpreparedness of Nigeria's so-called political elite to govern sacrificially and selflessly is a sordid part of politics of space in this nation since independence. Nigeria needs principled, selfless and sacrificial leaders like Idia, Emotan and Ògún, Ata, Bisi, Nona, Aisosa, Leader, Akpeja, and the repackaged Adode. All of these are characters that have helped the exertion of drama's power as a critical art in the two playwrights' dramatisation of politics of space as a reflection of Nigeria's political space.

It is our thesis, therefore, that given the right approach to politics of space, Nigeria in the not too distant future can match up to other fast developing nations which, like her, had in the early sixties been underdeveloped. Such countries include South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore (the Asian Tigers). Among the agents of change, drama and theatre can play a role here. Given adherence to all that have been explicated here, it is also our conclusion that there is hope for Nigeria to march successfully to political greatness. Besides that, the completely civil and democratic manner in which the drama of these two playwrights strive to resolve intergroup conflicts in the political space, irrespective of their gravity and the pressure generated by this, points to a further conclusion that the drama of this period is the "Drama of Democratic Possibilities", simply put, "Demo-theatre".

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW WITH IRENE SALAMI-AGUNLOYE, CONDUCTED ON THE 26TH OF NOVEMBER, 2019

Interviewer: Good evening ma. I am Lanre Agboola, a Ph.D. student from the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The title of my thesis is "The Politics of Space in the Selected Plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu", and I am interviewing you in order to enrich my work.

Professor: Okay, go ahead.

Interviewer: So, number one ma, as a playwright, what are your social and artistic visions?

Professor: What do you mean by social vision or artistic vision precisely?

Interviewer: Social vision, like what you intend for your play to achieve within the society, then artistic vision in terms of creativity, the direction and level of creativity that you want to achieve?

Professor: Well, first of all, in my plays, as you can see, I'm concerned about women being given political space, political voice, social voice, critical voice and not seen as second-class citizens or seen as others. When men are in the forefront, women are in the background that is what I'm trying to talk about in my plays; that women can do as much as men can do and that is why in *More Than Dancing* and *Sweet Revenge* even in "Idia" too, you discover that if you read the "Idia" that many people have written, the title is Idia but you hardly hear anything about or even see Idia, so what I did is to bring Idia to the fore, because the play is about idia and there is need to look at the person of Idia. I'm actually writing a paper on Idia, there is so much that we didn't hear about her.

Interviewer: Okay.

Professor: There is a lot of politics because of her gender. There is a tendency for me to believe that most successes that is actually said to have been achieved by her son, or even her husband, were actually Idia's and she actually did most of them. Even oral tradition has it that she brought him to power; she stage-managed his getting to power by trying to outsmart the step son so that Oba Esigie will become King. So you know most of what actually happened at that time, I believe that Idia was undereported or the narratives about Idia are not completely true. Most of the things, even in "FESTAC 77" it is said that the federal government did not know that that mask was the face of a woman. It was after then, during the struggle, when they were trying to retrieve it from the British museum that they now realised that it was queen Idia's face. What I'm I trying to say, you know that mask has become the face of Africa, I'm sorry if people knew that it was the face or mask of a woman it wouldn't have been adopted as such.

Interviewer: Can we say that is an assumption ma?

Proffessor: No. It's not an assumption, in fact, I even have it in the book, in my forthcoming book, I wrote an article on it.

Interviewer: Okay, but where did you get the facts ma?

Professor: Well, somebody had mentioned it. And I'm sure it's in the papers of those days, if you check those papers in the 77's, either Nigerian observer and others, probably its there.

Interviewer: Okay ma from what you have just said now, I think you are not implying that you are writing those plays probably because you are a feminist or because you just want women above men or something, are you?

Professor: I'm not saying women should be above men, I'm talking of gender complementarity, that is both men and women complementing each other, no one is greater than the other, thats what I have always preached, gender complementarity, I wouldn't say that a woman will come and be more than a woman. No.

Interviewer: Now, in your works, if we look at the themes as I said, Like the theme of *Emotan*: *A Benin Heroine,* we can see that within that play there is a struggle for the throne and a woman standing up to say No, justice must be done, now what can you say is your intention in writing those plays?

Professor: Just like I told you in Idia, that women have done so much but men have refused to acknowledge but dehistoricise them by not documenting some of these things in history.

Interviewer: And this is part of history, are they not?

Professor: They are historical plays, they are part of history but you hardly hear anybody talking about it or document it, apart from oral tradition, even with the histories we have today they are written from oral tradition. So I'm actually talking about the politics of historiography, you know you report the one you feel suites you most and you don't want to report the other side. That's not to say that the political aspect does not play a major role in some of this things, I will say that. I'm really not a politician, I'm not into politics, but I grew up being a politician, my father was a first republic former Junior Minister of Finance and he was a member of parliament so growing up I saw my father play politics and that kind of stayed with me. From that perspective, well. And if you read *Emotan*, I said My father wrote one of the most outstanding History of Benin and each time I talk to him, he will not agree to write about women just like the others, so what I'm trying to say is that people are not giving space to women in historiography so what I am only trying to do is to retell or to bring women to the historical stage using drama, that's for the historical plays. But for the other plays that are not history the same thing, I feel grieved that women have not been given space in politics so I used drama to bring them to the political space in a prophetic way hoping that one day our heart desire will be fulfilled'

Interviewer: Okay ma, is it correct to now say that your background as somebody who belongs to a father that was a politician actually influence you to writing things that actually pertains to politics?

Professor: Well I don't know honestly, maybe it was in my subconscious act I don't know. May be, may be not, because I'm not a conscious politician.

Interviewer: When we look at the kind of characters that you create in your work, we see very strong characters, like women characters that are very strong. When you look at the array of characters that you put up in *More Than Dancing*, and you even stretch it to the history, bringing the heroes that had died, that contributed majorly to the political development of the nation. Even Bisi you created, the Nona Odaro, Idia, and Emotan, these are strong characters, so what informed this kind of artistic creativity?

Professor: Well, as you said, I'm a feminist and as a feminist dramatist, creatively what I try to do is to deconstruct the very passive bad female characters that have been created in plays like Kúrunmí and others. Mosadiwin, Kúrunmí's wife will just come in and serve food and go. So, I'm trying to deconstruct those bad characters and create stronger characters and show the society that this is not the way women are and then I happen to come from a family of strong women particularly my mother, she was a strong and successful woman. My mother built a house; she had about five houses before she died. In her era, that was transgressive because women didn't build. My mother rode a car, she drove, and women didn't drive so my mother was a strong character like that. She transgressed most of the societal expectations for women, so I'm kind of influenced by my mother, my mother was a very well-known tough woman and people used to say the only person that my father would answer or maybe that could speak to my father was her. That is because my father was known to be very tough and people used to be scared of talking to him, only my mother could talk to him, which shows she was a very tough woman. People feared my mother so I grew up having such strong character, it actually influenced the way I wrote. Some people also say sometimes I write characters that are not strong like Nona and *Sweet Revenge*, Aisosa, but aisosa later became very strong. Well, I kind of used *A Dull's House*, where he used this character; you know she started off like that.

Interviewer: Yes, and then she grew to become strong and started taking decisions by herself, contrary to the societal norms and values of the time.

Professor: Yes, her husband, so its the same thing, He sees that Aisosa has become very strong and the husband kneels down before her. In African tradition for a man to kneel down for a woman and for the woman not to be moved means she's a very strong woman. But I keep telling people, you can't say that Aisosa is a weak woman, she wasn't weak.

Interviewer: At the beginning, she appears weak, and she is taking things that are insulting regarding her husband's treatment of her personality, but later as you have said, she now grows to become, old, courageous, strong and being able to take decisions by herself without even looking back at all.

Professor: Well, I wont even say that Aisosa is weak at the begining, I wouldnt say so. I believe that Aisosa is acting up the script of the society. That's the way an ideal woman should behave. Quit your job, she quits her job; because of your children she stays back, takes care of her mother in-law, takes care of herself, because if she is weak, she would not be a medical doctor, she would not be a consultant, but she just wants to obey, to act out the societal script. That's the way the society is, you know those are the virtue a woman at that period actually should display and she does that. But when she took up a new role now as a politician even though she doesn't want to she now has to act a new script. For her to say No. you should know. The man knelt down. Actually, when I wrote that play, I made her rise, I made her make up with her husband but Jenks, late Jenks Okorie, because we were both full scholars in the US when I wrote it. Jenks said no, Irene, leave this character like that and I said Jenks, do you want to kill me, people will shout and all, so Jenks said just leave it, people will shout but that's how he should be changed, so thats why I now left it like that.

Interviewer: Okay ma, so that's how it came out this way?

Professor: Yes, that's how it came out this way, so for her not to listen to her husband, to refuse, and she said I can't put back the hand of the clock. And if you look at most of my plays, even Emotan, even the traditional ones, if you read it carefully you will see my Christian views in them, they are strong, even though they are not written, they are strong.

Interviewer: Yes, it is very clear that Emotan is a very strong character, Idia is a very strong character, infact they are not ambigous at all. Even Bisi, even though shes operating at a democratic level she is still strong,

Professor: Yes, so what I'm saying is that, if you read most of those plays, all of them, you will see that my christian values, were expressed in them in a very subtle manner but when you get to *Sweet Revenge* that is when you talk about forgiveness, you will see that, that didn't play out because, you won't say that the way a Christian should do restitution, that he should now forgive Sota. So that's something you can analyse. If you see most of the other ones, I allowed in *Queen Sisters*, you discover that Ubi is driven away against what I am trying to say because I am trying to say that the historical Ubi was wrongfully judged. I mean in a society, you brought her to come and marry a king that she didn't want and of course she saw that all the Kings wife were so subservient, why should they be so subservient, all they wanted was their husband, can't they do something else?

Can't they do this? Can't they do that? and so she wanted to shock the society to show that she was different and so the society drove her away. In that play, I depicted my Christian values because evil must be punished. But in Sweet Revenge, even though evil were to be punished the person who did it asked for forgiveness, he should be forgiven but in Sweet Revenge that didn't happen.

Interviewer: So what can we say, if we want to bring this plays to the society I mean the political relevance of this plays in terms of politics and the social aspect, whats your intention?

Professor: Well, I don't quite understand what you mean?

Interviewer: In those plays that you have written, you have written them and put them in the society, so you said you want the society to realise that women must be placed side by side with men, even in the political domain and all that. For example, in *Sweet Revenge*, Aisosa emerges as the senate leader, and in the other plays too, we see that Emotan, achieves her aim, though she pays for it with her life but the point is she achieves her aim. What message do you think this has for the society, especially the political environment in this country today? What message do you want to pass to them?

Professor: What I'm trying to say is that women can also play their own game, when I was writing *More than Dancing*, then I was the President of the Association of Women in Academics (AWA), but I had finished my term but anyway my experiences there were the things I brought to play. When I was President of Women in Academics, I happened to have interacted with some of these female members of the National Assembly, and other politicians, particularly Chuba Okadigbo's wife. She was junior minister of FCT and she told me a lot of things. So it was actually her life or her experiences I was sharing in *Sweet Revenge* and *More than Dancing*, particularly *Sweet Revenge.* She said it, men have thugs, I have my own thugs; I have my own followership. She said that she learnt a lot of things from her husband but she became even worse than her husband, because she had to be twice as good, being a woman. That means, if a man just wants to be the good one, she has to be twice better. So, what I'm trying to say is that women are not lazy, women can do most of these things we talk about, if given the right space, the right opportunity.

Interviewer: Among these plays, is there anyone that is really a product of your own personal experience?

Professor: As a writer, a little bit of your life will appear in all of them. A lot of people have said that *Sweet Revenge* is my life, not fully so.

Interviewer: But partially so?

Prof. fessor: Not really part of it. Yes, there are aspects of my life in many of my plays. like *Emotan*, some of the personalities I depicted in *Emotan* are also mine. Then there is a little bit of it here and there but many people have said that ah, *Sweet Revenge* is my story, but it's not really so.

I have had a little bit of experience like that but really not in that manner, you know many people different things. Infact, eighty percent of the readers will tell you that's my life story. It's not fully. There is some pieces of my life in all the plays like *More Than Dancing*, part of Nona's life, my experience with my father like my senior sister who wanted to become a politician and we know that she's a very good politician was checked by her husband who now went into politics and is using my father's name as leverage and didn't allow my sister to do so, that was it. So most of the words I used are what her husband had told her, so people around me, not just myself, plus my sister and friends, their experiences are what are included in most of my stories.

Interviewer: Okay ma, in politics, the interactions that happened in politics are between both genders. Looking at main characters that you created in your works, for instance if we look at Emotan, in *Emotan,* if we look at Ògún, Orobiru and Irughe, these are main characters, belonging to the royal family who are struggling over the throne. Now, if we bring this over to the terrain of politics, I'm sure that it has a lot of relevance, even you too will agree with me that it does. A lot of political struggle takes place in the play, even life is lost and all that. Now when you bring it to the socio-political terrain of today and we see elections conducted, violence here and there, how do you see your characters that you have created in the context of the socio-political environment of today?

Professor: Well, most of the things there, maybe when I wrote them, they weren't happening but now they are happening, look at the characters in *Emotan*, most of the politicians there are just trying to tell the Oba, all is well, just because of what they can gain. People will just be praising the Oba and the rest because they have something to gain. When they see evil, for instance, it is only Emotan that rises to tell the king, what you are doing is bad. The, others do not, because of what they want to gain. That's what happens today. There are so many things that are relevant from all those plays. Look at even the Sota in *Sweet Revenge,* Sota becomes a politician and abandons the people that voted him to power. This happens today, and so the women now say okay, you think you are very strong, you think you got there by yourself, we are going to pull the carpet from under your feet and they do exactly that. So, I just want to say that the electorate should be very careful, no politician should think that he is invisible, the electorate can always deal with him.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you very much for your time ma.

Professor: We thank God.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH EMMY IKANABA UNUJA IDEGU, CONDUCTED BY MICHAEL OLANREWAJU AGBOOLA ON 18TH AUGAUST, 2018

Interviewer: Good evening sir. I am Lanre Agboola, a Ph.D. student from the Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The title of my thesis is "The Politics of Space in the Selected Plays of Irene Salami-Agunloye and Emmy Unuja Idegu", and I am interviewing you in order to enrich my work.

Prof: Good morning Mr. Agboola, how are you?

Interviewer: I'm fine sir, may we please know you sir?

Prof: I am Emmy Ikanaba Unuja Idegwu.

Interviewer: You're a professor of theatre Arts?

Prof: Yes, specialising in playwriting and African theatre

Interviewer: Okay sir, about how many plays have you written?

Prof: I have written a minimum of twenty plays, I can't start counting now, I've published a minimum of twenty plays, when I send my CV you will get the accurate figure.

Interviewer: That is quite a lot.

Prof: I'll send you an abridged version of my CV.

Interviewer: Yes sir, so I'm looking at politics in your works. And particularly, I'm looking at *Attah Igala the Great* and also *Beloved Odolu Kingdom.*

Prof: Wonderful!

Talking about what inspires me in my writing**;** so many things. From the very beginning of my writing I got seriously challenged by the fact that my little understanding of theatre history from the ancient till the present, I discovered that a number of plays were written about people, about people's history, about people's festivals, about people's tradition, the culture of the people, the events that happen around and about people, and a lot of such events happened around and about my own people. That fundamentally prompted me into writing to project and promote first and foremost my own people's culture, art and tradition, because if you don't do it, if you don't blow your own trumpet, others will be busy blowing their own. Then secondly my father was a great entertainer, in fact this should even come first, he was an entertainer and you know theatre is about entertaining. Fundamentally, the messages you convey through entertainment is now at the beck and call of the entertainer himself. My father was a great entertainer so I can say that it's generic. He told us stories; he even had his own local speaker. In Igala we call it Umolo. He'll gather us, tell us stories and beat his Umolo. So from there, you know in secondary school we were involved in Christmas carols and all that, and when we come back home, we replicated the carols we did in

school, and on and on. Eventually I found myself, decidedly studying theatre arts which I am still a student of. Then the other thing that prompts me to write is when I see some abnormalities, some things that shouldn't be happening, and as a trained theatre artist I am prompted to contribute to the national discours, to the global discours through the instrumentality of playwriting, that's how I play my own politics.

Interviewer; Okay sir, please what is Umolo?

Prof: It's an Igala name for guitar, Tube guitar.

Interviewer: What you have said now brings me to the question of competitive struggle for power by our politicians over the years. The issue of struggling for power and employing different kinds of strategies that are injurious to the health of the nation, how do you see all this?

Prof: Well, like I said before, I'm a Christian, I'll quote the word. My Bible says that righteousness exhorteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. You cannot have good politicians, in any society, you cannot have sane politicians, you cannot have selfless politicians if from the beginning, if from the home unit, if from the religious belief systems, they do not fear God and respect man. That's where the problem starts from. At the home unit level, if children do not respect their parents and those children become councilors or chairmen tomorrow, they will amplify what they were used to doing as children at the home unit levels. If those people in churches and mosques do not have the fear of God to replicate godliness in the society, when you give them political offices, when they have an opportunity for political positions, they will do anything including killing human beings to be there because they are doing that for selfish reasons, they are doing that without the fear of God, they are doing that without considerations for the society. Our problem is multiplicity of hegemony. They are doing that thinking only about their pockets and all their generations and generations after them. So selfishness now becomes the goal post. Even what is happening now, all these decamping from one party to another is not in the interest of the people they represent, they should stop deceiving themselves, thinking they want to deceive us. So fundamentally the insatiability of man, man is an insatiable being. Man, we are never satisfied, if people go into politics with the main reason of service to the people, they will not do what they are doing. They go there to boost their ego, they go there to boost their bank account, and they go there to boost whatever self interest. Quite a number of them, not all, quite a number of them, and that's why we are where we are today. Several years after independence we are yet to have a proper focus.

Interviewer: Okay, Sir please can you give an explanation about the multiplicity of hegemony as causing the problem in the nation?

Prof: Hegemony, simply put, is a situation where a group of people and ideologies stand supreme to others and others are subject to it. So, if I'm coming from the hegemonic structure of the area that I represent, then you're coming from the hegemonic structure that you represent and we are talking about a circular hegemony. That means in the nation, we'll have crisis, because in an attempt, the person who is the President represents a hegemony, the Vice President himself is representing a hegemony from his background, so we will continue to have hegemonic clashes and crisis because each person is not ready to reduce the efficacy of the hegemony he represents for the interest of the principal national hegemony. That's why in my latest work, *Great Odolu Kingdom*, I'm advocating a return to the status quo, to the basics, where each region stood on its own. We have the northern region, we have the eastern region, we have the western region. Each region was not having crisis because each region was not standing and propagating and promoting the hegemony of the area, they remained independent of other zones, that way by the time we meet at the centre, it was just ceremonial. The centre was ceremonial; the power blocks were principally at the regional levels. The Premier of the northern region was to move issues concerning the northern region, Awolowo was concerned with issues that concerned the western region, and because the western region had understanding of promoting western education for instance, education was free and that's why we find more professors sometimes from a state in the west than you have from other states from the north. So, if we go back to that life of proper federalism, classical federalism where each region is now dependent on what it produces, we then take some percentage of what you produce to the centre. That is when we now begin to think about the acceleration of this nation, if not everything will continue to be a mirage. That's my position.

Interviewer: Sir, but some people think this might further polarize us, what do you think?

Prof: We are polarised already. Are we a nation? or a group of ungroupable people. Are we united?, We are united and the Fulani people are killing people all over the place and the president has not come out to openly condemn them, are we united? When people will go to church and slaughter priests and so on and the president and the vice have not come out openly, clearly to condemn that act. We talked about the Fulani herdsmen and all the president said was "no, they are the people that Gadaffi trained". At a point the Defence minister was saying this crisis is going on because people are blocking the route for herdsmen to pass and graze. The president said they are people trained from Lybia and also said we should create cattle colonies so we should have cattle colonies for foreigners? So what is the unity we are talking about, Nigeria is not United in any way. This is some ephemeral mirage, that unity is very hypocritical. Nigeria has enough resources for us to be well to do. Some states still owe twenty months salaries, fifteen months salaries, where is the unity when we have a section of the country producing the revenue. If you travel to the northern

part of the country, I have lived in the north all my life, I'm now in the University of Calabar, I stayed in the north all my life, if Kogi is part of the north, if Benue is part of the north I have stayed there, the kind of horrible road networks you have in the South-South, you don't have in the north, so where is the unity, The other time, some United Nations development bodies came to Nigeria, the president told them to concentrate on one part of the north, where is the unity. Where is the unity when your president right now does not want the legislators to operate independently as it were of the system we are practicing? Which unity are we then talking about? Until we go back to when we were more united, we cannot have any unity.

About the *Beloved Odolu Kingdom*, it was published while I was in Zaria and I had a barrage of attacks from colleagues who I termed theatre illiterates, they said I was holding a section of the country responsible for the woes of the country, and I said yes. If for instance we have had fifty years and a section of the country is in charge of lets say thirty five years or thirty eight years, forty years out of fifty, ninety, eighty years out of a hundred and we still have these problems, who should we hold responsible? The animosity was so great that four thousand, seven hundred copies of the books that were bought for general studies, were ordered to be returned, while I should return the money. The same play was performed in your university there (University of Ilorin), the same thing was done in the University of Calabar. In fact, University of Benin sent money before I sent copies, Nsukka did the same and all over. You know why? Because the play was seen to be antagonising the hegemony of the area. Do you know how I paid? Do you know Felix Akinsipe?

Interviewer: Yes

Prof: I called him, I said do you have copies of Never and Never he said yes, so he supplied the copies, as they were returning my own they were taking his own that the university agreed with. I had to pay Felix from my salary for months. It was Felix God used to bail me out, they gave me one week. That is why there are another two in one play that I did after that time, titled *The conspiracy* and *Truth on Trial*. In these two plays I now used again the instrument of theatre to answer them because I did not argue with one person, that's how I left Zaria. I've never heard that happen in any University in the World. That is how that section of the country, once they are in power then it's nobody else, because of their belief system, once they are in power nobody else matters. If you are doing anything contrary to the hegemony, to the oligarchy, to the monarchy, you're a rebel, and you should be crushed. Even in the university set up where ordinarily people should understand the difference between a creative enterprise and reality on display.

Interviewer: Ah.

Prof: Are you shocked?

Interviewer: Yes, I am.

Prof: Oh, you're shocked because you don't belong to that hegemony.

Interviewer: The playwright always faces persecution, though.

Prof: In fact, that one led me, within eight months, I wrote about four plays, I did *The Humans are not to blame*, I did *The Conspiracy*, I did *Truth on Trial* , I did *Another Odolu kingdom*, within eight months and I followed it up. I came to University of Calabar in September 2016 for an international conference, I did my paper, presented my paper and proposed a theory on this issues, "Experiential, Testimonial, Creativity Theory" which as far as I'm concerned are on two levels. One is when a playwright is speaking the mind of the people, representing the people, the second one is when the playwright is talking about himself, something like in books, autobiography. So the persecution has promoted me up to the level of having published four plays within eight months and having propounded the theory that is being studied right now.

Interviewer: In *The Legendary Inikpi* and *Ata Igala*, you approached you story from historical perspective. Please what motivated you into doing this, even Omodoko?

Prof: Like I said before, I want to be loaded, I want to be pragmatically, dynamically loaded. I don't know anybody of Igala extraction that has promoted Igala culture and history, through play writing than Emmy Idegu yet, I don't know. Why did I decide to do all these, Like I told you from the beginning of the interview, the Greek society promoted theatre so much that they tell us theatre started from Greece which as far as I'm concerned is an academic lie, because whatever constitutes theatre, you have it in your village, the Greek community just promoted it first, before us. So the way those plays were written in honour of God in honour of the society's relationship with themselves and the vicinity, I found out a true life story of a princess Inkipi who had to be buried alive to save the Igala nation from annihilation by imbibing the new force, I saw a lot of entertainment, I saw a lot of ritual, I saw a lot of narration, I saw a lot of lining , I saw a lot of dramatic elements in that theatrical element, in that occurrence, in that wonderful ritual sacrifice and I decided to promote it by writing about it. *The Legendary Inikpi* which has gone wide, at least it's the most bought of all my plays, I have produced thousands and thousands of copies more than any other one. In 2012 it was performed in Israel to mark twenty years of renewed diplomatic ties between Nigeria and the State of Israel. It was translated to Hebrew and Hebrew is heavenly language believe it or not, so my play was translated to heavenly language and was performed in the state of Israel, to mark twenty years that Nigeria and Israel now came together diplomatically. So by quoting that story into a play format I am doing some level of cultural and ambassadorial explanation to my people, so the story now goes beyond the confines, beyond the owners of the History, beyond Igala, you read it, you may never have been to Ida, many other people have read it. University of Jos performed it about a week ago, that's the second time they are doing it in a few

years and a number of other universities have put it on stage. So, when a playwright takes the History of the immediate people into the format of a play, he is boosting, he is promoting the culture of the people, so fundamentally that was what I went for and I will continue to go for. And for me, unlike the real life burial of Inikpi, because history tells us that when the Attah Igala heard that the oracle was demanding sacrifice of the precious, priceless, and most beloved child of his, Inikpi, the man hesitated naturally, but when Inikpi heard it, she went to her father and said, "my death will give you life, if my death will save the entire land I should go". So beyond the immediate audience, what is the playwright saying by that, selfless sacrifice, the playwright is saying, if you are a spiritual leader, let there be a selfless sacrifice, If you are a political leader, let there be selfless service, let the people come first, just like Inikpi thought about the Igala people first, if we have that in our party politics, Agboola we will not be where we are. If the president will think about Nigeria first and not tell us his concern is ninety five percent who voted him and not the five percent that did not vote for him, if the governor of a state will think about the entire state by offering selfless, selfless sacrificial services, politics will be enviable, politicians will be emulatable and people will be interested in aspiring for leadership positions because, if you know you have gone there to serve the people why do you need to kill the people again to go and serve them**?**

Interview: Some playwrights criticised some of your plays, because, if we look at Omodoko and Inikpi, we see the sacrifice, now we are talking of the literal sacrifice of two women for the sake of their communities. Some critics say why do we want to sacrifice, why do we still use the issues of sacrifice of human beings, why do we still project it these days? Some people condemn such things and just like, you remember Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, when Eleshin Oba is to kill himself and he foot drags, takes on a new wife and then the white man (Pilkins) stops that suicide and all that, people say well from that perspective, that why do we still use human sacrifice in playwriting? What is your own reaction to it?

Prof: Those people are talking from two levels of ignorance. *Death and the King's Horseman* represents which people? who are the owners of that history? the Yorùbá, yes. So, if you use that one to measure the culture of my own people, they would have spoken out of ignorance, out of cultural ignorance and an attempt to promote indigenous colonialism.

Interviewer: But you also need to know that the story of Móremí too is part of what they make reference to.

Prof: Móremí, from which Ethnic group?

Interviewer: Also, Yorùbá.

Prof: So that's what I'm saying, you don't use Yorùbá cosmology to judge Igala cosmology. You know Soyinka wrote his own *Myth, Literature and the African Worldview* and I did a paper

contesting that. The paper is titled beyond the Yorùbá cosmology, a contestation of the Africanist of Soyinka's submission in *Myth Literature and the African Worldview*. He does not have what it takes to speak for my people because the cosmology of the Yorùbá man is different from that of the Igala man, though they have meeting points. For instance, the Soyinka's Yorùbá cosmology casts the land of the living, the dead and the unborn. Let me ask you, where does the Supreme Being inhabit out of the three worlds?

Interviewer: None.

Prof: The Igala cosmology has three worlds, the world of the dead, Incontrovertible *Etile*, the world of the living incontrovertible *Ikojifu*, then there is a space inhabited by the Supreme Being, Soyinka does not have it, you know why he doesn't have it?

Interviewer: No. Why?

Prof: Soyinka does not believe in God, Ògún is his god, I hope you know that? That's why I was telling you that our backgrounds, diversified backgrounds, when we take a political position it reflects, when we play politics by literary application, it will reflect, because Soyinka does not believe in God, Ògún is his god, he set out to promote Ògún in his submission and in the three worlds, the land of the living and the dead and the unborn. Where is the Supreme Being setting?

Well let's come back to *The Legendary Inikpi*. Nobody should say why the play is promoting human sacrifice until you come to the owners of the history and understand the logic behind the essence of that human sacrifice, for crying out loud. The Oracle defined that one person should be sacrificed to save hundreds of thousands of people. So, what are we talking about and that's why I'm saying if your President, your Governor or your local government Chairman, will think about the people, not himself, Nigeria would have gone beyond where we are. That play is re-enacting what actually happened as it were, It, actually, happened and I had a leverage of turning it if I accept critics who have just said I should not have allowed people to die. If I did that, the owners of the history will reject it, because Inkipi died. But, after making that human burial sacrifice in the play, I did something else, through daughter as a character. She comes up to question the

contemporary relevance of that death in the play. We are saying that Inikpi died for unity of Igala, where is the unity? They are saying she should die to solve the problem, but why is the problem not yet solved? That is putting history where it belongs and interpreting that history within the confines of the condemnability of our recent happenings.

Interviewer: Now in Ata Igala, I could see from that play, two contending forces. We go back to the issue of hegemony, sir. The white blocks, that is the foreigners, the colonisers, then I could see the indigenous block and I could see that there is the effort by the foreign block to impose their cultural belief through their own hegemony on the indigenous and I could see a resistance and eventually I see that Ata has to commit suicide, how do you explain the interface of these forces and the eventual commitment of suicide by Ata?

Prof: Well, like we said before, I said the problem we have in Nigeria is multiplicity of hegemony in contrast with a central hegemony and that when the representatives of these multiple hegemonies come together and all or most of them are not ready to relinquish the ethics to relinquish the tenets of the hegemony they represent at the expense of the national, things will not work. That's why things are not working as they ought to work in Nigeria. The colonialists came trying to impose their own hegemony on the cultural hegemony of the people, ninety-eight percent of that play that you read happened real life. That Ata in that play hanged himself in 1956. If you have read Ahmed Yerima's *Ameh Oboni the Great*, this can be seen as a response to Ahmed Yerima's *Ameh Oboni the Ggreat*. It was after I read his own that I did my own. The things that made that king kick were not replicated in his play.

Interviewer: So, it means that your play is a meta-text to *Ameh Oboni, the Great*

Prof: Exactly, and you can see that the playwright carefully does not mention Ame Oboni in that play but anybody who is from Igalaland, who has access to the first two pages of that play, even from the title, *Atah Igala the Great*, they know. It happened, the issue of counter choices, clash of civilization, the man intentionally committed suicide, so what about it, we are sure that historically he committed suicide and in the play he commits suicide. Agboola, what's your take on that, the

man committed suicide historically and the people are calling him the great, how great is somebody that historically committed suicide?

Interviewer: That's my question.

Prof: Fine, I'll answer the same way I answered about Soyinka's *Death and The King's Horseman* and Femi Osofisan's Móremí story that they got from the Yorùbá culture. *The Legendary Inikpi*, and *Attah Igala the Great* evolved from Igala culture. I was in an MA (Master of Arts) in Literature class in Zaria, I sat down to listen and there was this Hausa lady that raised her hand, and asked, how can you say this man is great, somebody that historically committed suicide? In Igboland they will even put the corpse into the evil forest. Then a creative anger erupted in my system. I said young lady, you are talking out of stack cultural ignorance. Who are the owners of the history from where this play has emerged, is it the Igbo people? Its not, how can you use the canons of a typical Greek play to measure the canons of a typical Nigerian play, you'll fall into trouble.

Interviewer: Okay, so we should believe *Ata Igala* is a typical canon of typical Greek culture?

Prof: No, no, no, no, Typical Igala culture. There are four ruling houses in Igala land that produce Ata. If any Ata representing any of these four ruling houses, if you are dethroned, that lineage is cancelled, you can never produce Ata in your life again. For you to produce Ata, your father ought to have been an Ata, he must be a King, its not political, its monarchical, its traditional, its aristocratic if you want to have it that way. So when the colonial hegemony was threatening the cultural hegemony of the Igala people represented by the Attah Igala, he said rather than wait and be dethroned I will commit suicide, I will join my ancestors because in joining my ancestors I'm joining them as Ata Igala, because the moment you are dethroned, you cease to be an Attah, so for doing that heroic sacrifice, again selfless sacrifice, he thought about his generation, he thought about his linage, he said if I wait for this people to dethrone me, my people my linage, Igala land will be one ruling house left, I will not allow that to happen I will give my life, do you understand. Now from that sacrifice he was now buried as an Attah and because of what he did, the Current Attah Igala is his son Michael Amei Borno II, the current Attah Igala who came in three or four

years ago is a son to this Attah Igala the Great and there is no way he would have been Attah now if his father did not commit suicide In Igala rather than wait and be disgraced with due respect to history and culture and be disgraced like the colonial forces did to Ovonramwen who was chased into the bush and died in exile right in Calabar where I'm speaking from. The Ata Igala said no, no, no, I am Ata Igala, the white people did not make me Ata Igala, they cannot come and remove me, I'd rather join my ancestors, so it was a heroic deed, not an act of cowardice but of bravery, so like I said, thinking about the people. The current emir of Kano, his grandfather Sanusi, I hope you know he was deposed, He died in exile, if Sanusi was an Igala man I'm telling you he will not be there as Emir now because that linage would have been canceled. So, we have cultural diversities so any play we take and we are analysing we should try to understand the culture that produce that play if not we will do our analysis ultraviolently.

Interviewer: I'm very grateful for your time sir, thank you very much sir.

Prof.: Thank you.