

ETHIOPE JOURNAL OF ENGLISH, LITERARY AND
CULTURAL STUDIES: JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

Volume 1, No. 1, December 2023
ISSN: 0795-5413

Published by the Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta
State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria

© Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria, 2023

All rights reserved except as permitted under the Nigerian Copyright Act of 1999, no part of this publication should be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission the publisher.

ISSN: 0795-5413

Designed and printed by DEBBICHUKS Printing and Computer Services, Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria. Tel: +2348039580583

EDITORIAL NOTE

The *Ethiopia Journal of English, Literary, and Cultural Studies* (ISSN: 0795-5413) is an interdisciplinary journal that explores topical and generative issues in English linguistics and in literary and cultural studies. We recognise that African humanities research is both problem-based and knowledge oriented, and our aim is to provide a platform for scholars to analyse and theorise Africa in a way that is generative, conversational and decolonial. Specifically, the journal focuses on both the analytical and theoretical approaches to knowledge production in the context of Africa and the Global South. We want to curate papers that are hinged on African indigenous paradigms and approaches or that seek to extend, reimagine, or contextualise current theoretical or analytical approaches in English language studies and in literary and cultural studies.

We invite papers that dwell on all aspects of English language studies, including phonetics/phonology, semantics, syntax, discourse analysis, pragmatics, stylistics, ESL, ESP etc. We also welcome papers that theorise literary and cultural texts, including film, still and moving images, music and dance, photographs, cultural objects, spaces and places, society and social formations, and other relevant corpora. While we accept purely analytical essays, we encourage authors to focus on theorising the texts or data they engage with. In particular, we welcome theoretical conversations that implicate postcolonial subjecthood, ecocritical approaches (especially postcolonial ecocriticism), feminism and gender studies, new trends in linguistics, object-oriented criticism and approaches, and other generative approaches to knowledge production. Authors are encouraged to do original theorisation rather than adopt extant theoretical frameworks. They may also extend the scope of extant theories and approaches based on the material they present and discuss.

Furthermore, papers with interdisciplinary approaches are also welcomed. We recognise that knowledge production is an elastic phenomenon, and that bright ideas might implicate various fields. Interesting multi-modal, eclectic, or collaborative research is encouraged in this journal.

JOURNAL POLICY

The *Ethiopia Journal of English, Literary and Cultural Studies* is published biennially by the Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. All papers submitted to this maiden edition of the journal had undergone double-blind peer review and published papers are well researched, original and data-driven.

Contributors are to submit an e-copy of their manuscript for assessment and publication to ethiopejournal@delsu.edu.ng or ethiopejournal@gmail.com. Such manuscripts should be original and not under consideration for publication elsewhere and should not have been published in any other journal.

Submitted manuscript which should not exceed 7000 words should be typeset in MS Word Times New Roman Font 12, with double line spacing. The first page should include the title of the manuscript, name(s), and institutional affiliation/address, abstract (not more than 250 words and with not more than six keywords). Manuscripts should conform to the current APA or MLA style sheet. Author(s) of published papers will derive the benefits from peer-review of contributions by seasoned scholars, global visibility and receipt of hard copies as well as soft copies of their papers.

The twelve papers in this maiden edition of the journal cut across disciplines in cultural, media studies and sub-disciplines in English and literary studies. The contributors include seasoned and renowned scholars of international repute and young astute scholars with burning desire to excel in academics. The first article titled: “Folklore and African Poetry in the Age of Globalization” by Prof Ojaide is on cultural studies. Prof. Ojaide is a renowned poet and professor of international repute from the University of North Carolina, USA. It is pertinent to note that the contributors are from universities across the globe. We believe that the twelve articles will be of immense interest to researchers and students.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editors-In-Chief

Prof. Macaulay Mowarin

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Prof. Sunny Awhefeada

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Editorial Board Advisers

Prof. G. G. Darah

Denis Osadebey University, Asaba, Nigeria

Prof. Tanure Ojaide

African Studies Department, University of North Carolina
at Charlotte, USA

Prof. Nduka Otiono,

Institute of African Studies, Carleton University, Canada

Prof. Francis Egbokhare

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Prof. Moses O. Ayeomoni

Obafemi Awolówo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Prof. Enajite E. Ojaruega

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Prof. Akinmade T. Akande

Obafemi Awolówo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Editorial Secretary

Dr. Emmanuel O. Emama

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Tel: +234 815 954 3393

Managing Editor

Dr. Richard Oliseyenum Maledo

Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

Tel: +234 803 645 1234

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Tanure Ojaide, Ph.D.**, Africana Studies Department University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA
2. **Charles Terseer Akwen, Ph.D.**, Department of English, University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria
3. **Olivia Elakeche Idoko, Ph.D.**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Theatre and Film Studies unit, Taraba State University, Jalingo
4. **Omorovie Ikeke, Ph.D.**, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Delta State University, Abraka
5. **Toma Brume**, International Association for the Study of Intercultural Values and Indigenous Ecoethics, Effurun, Warri, Delta State
6. **Victor Onibere**, Department of Fine and Applied Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria
7. **Olubunmi I. Bukola**, Department of English, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State
8. **Macaulay Mowarin Ph.D.** Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria
9. **Emmanuel Avwarosuoghon Mede Ph.D.**, Department of English, Delta State College of Education, Mosogar, Delta State, Nigeria
10. **Uzezi Joyce Edhere**, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Delta State University of Science and Technology, Ozoro
11. **Martha Omotetobore Egbedi Ph.D.**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka
12. **Prince Oghenetega Ohwaworhwa**, Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka
13. **Richard Oliseyenum Maledo Ph.D.**, English and Literary Studies Department, Delta State University, Abraka
14. **Ogheneovo Priscilla Akalusi**, Postgraduate Student, Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka.
15. **Uche Enu**, Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City
16. **Francis Olabisi Jegede Ph.D.** Department of English, College of Languages and Communication Arts Education, Lagos State University of Education, (LASUED), Oto/Ijanikin, Lagos, Nigeria
17. **Olusegun Jegede Ph.D.** English Department, School of Languages, Federal College of Education, Osiele, Abeokuta, Nigeria

CONTENTS

Folklore and African Poetry in the Age of Globalization - Tanure Ojaide	1
By Choice or by Force: Yang Mu's Poetry of Home - Charles Terseer Akwen	21
The Challenges of Impact Evaluation in the Theatre for Development Methodology- Olivia Elakeche Idoko	42
Peace as an Eco-Humanistic Value in Achebe's <i>Things Fall Apart</i> - Omorovie Ikeke & Toma Brume	60
Reimagining African Identity and Space: Decolonizing Visual Representations- Victor Onibere	85
Depictions of the Power of Women and Betrayal in Kunle Afolayan's <i>Anikulapo</i> - Olubunmi I. Bukola	103
A Minimalist Investigation of Ambiguity in English and Urhobo Negative Sentences- Macaulay Mowarin & Emmanuel Avwarosuoghon Mede	116
An Error Analysis of <i>Young Moms</i> Discourse on Facebook- Uzezi Joyce Edhere & Richard Oliseyenum Maledo	131
Revolutionary Fervour in Selected Niger Delta Drama - Ogheneovo Priscilla Akalusi	150
Ideological Leaning and Social Meaning in The Selected Poems of Tanure Ojaide: A Critical Stylistic Analysis- Uche Enu	177

Conflict Resolution and Social Re-engineering in Femi Osofisan's <i>Morountodun</i> - Francis Olabisi Jegede & Olusegun Jegede	202
Father-Absenteeism and Displacement in Kaine Agary's <i>Yellow-Yellow</i> and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's <i>Zikora</i> - Egbedi, Martha Omotetobore & Ohwavworhua, Prince Oghenetega	218

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND SOCIAL RE-ENGINEERING IN FEMIOSOFISAN'S *MOROUNTODUN*

Francis Olabisi Jegede

Department of English, College of Languages and Communication Arts
Education, Lagos State University of Education, Oto/Ijanikin

Email: bisikemijegede@yahoo.com

&

Olusegun Jegede

English Department, School of Languages, Federal College of Education,
Osiele, Abeokuta

Abstract

This paper explores conflict resolution and social re-engineering in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*. The study employs a qualitative approach which involves analysis of Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* using Marxist theory as the tool of analysis to explore the nature of conflict, its resolution and how the political ideology of the downtrodden becomes an instrument of social reengineering in the play. The play is set in a social environment that depicts a conflict between the rich and the suffering rural masses as the underdogs. Findings reveal that the way society is organized has a lot to do with human relations, aspirations and the survival of members of the society. We also discover that class struggle is an intricate occurrence in any society where the rich are pitched against the poor masses in a game of survival. Again, the study discovers that class suicide such as committed by Titubi is a rare political phenomenon in the Nigerian political landscape given the fact that the rich have always been getting richer and the poor getting poorer since 1960 when Nigeria got her independence from British colonial masters. The paper, therefore, opines that Osofisan's sympathy for the poor for which he acts as spokesperson through his manner of characterization is the starting point of the responsibility of the artist. This he does in *Morountodun* by making Titubi to commit 'class suicide' by joining the struggle to free the economically emasculated peasant farmers. Finally, by giving victory to the masses whenever there is a conflict between the rich and the downtrodden, in what is termed collective heroism, Osofisan has challenged African playwrights to always protect the interests of the downtrodden in their creative enterprises.

Keywords: Class Struggle, Conflict, Collective heroism, Drama, and Osofisan.

Introduction

Osofisan is a polemist who uses his art form to advance his Marxist ideological conviction. The existence of what Marxist proponents called the base and the superstructure in any human society makes conflict inevitable in human relations. The tension generated between the owners of means of production and the workers is usually at the centre of conflict especially in a work place. Conflict can also result from differences in cultural persuasions, religious, ethnic or ideological beliefs. According to Igbekele Salawu (2019), “conflict is an umbrella term encapsulating disagreement, controversy, opposition, quarrel, struggle, clash, contention, confrontation, battle, war etc” (pp. 260-261). So in any human society where people interact as social beings, there are bound to be agreement, disagreement and struggle over scarce resources which if not “contained may take violent expressions, the pinnacle being killings and destruction of properties” (p. 261).

The creation of tension by any means, therefore, compels reconciliation or what is referred to in this study as conflict resolution. Looking at Yoruba juristic practices as inadequate to resolve conflict, Adebayo Aina 2020 opines that adjustment of personal interest and self-denial are germane to conflict prevention in the first place. According to him

It provokes the acceptance of responsibility to the point of willingness to be part of the search for a solution. It is not an alternative to conflict but a transformation of the conflict. Both parties to the conflicts would be able to define the stakes involved and relate them for the sake of the wider community, as well as for the future of the next generation (p. 395).

The paper explores the use of conflict in Osofisan's *Morountodun* as a kind of dramatic element deployed for social re-engineering. Hat an exploration of Marxists' interest in conflicts agrees with the conflict between the downtrodden masses and the bourgeoisie. In the Marxist analysis of material relations, the fundamental tenet of historical materialism considers socio- economic relations as the basis upon which the superstructure separating the ruling class from the oppressed masses is built. Hence, in Osofisan's *Morountodun*, our focus shall be the conflict between the rich and the poor, the oppressors and the oppressed as well as the ruler and the ruled. As an accomplished, leading second generation playwright, poet,

journalist, translator and an essayist, the choice of Osofisan and *Morountodun* for the exploration cannot be overemphasized. He is a virile socio-political crusader and a consummate defender of the downtrodden and these are evidenced in his character creation and his penchant for giving victory to the oppressed against their stressors. He has, to date, produced well over fifty-six plays and more than two-third of the plays are already published besides short stories and five volumes of published poems. His use of the myth of Moremi to create an archetype in Titubi is creatively ingenious and a pointer to the possibilities of diverse conflicts of different shades and magnitudes in the play.

Synopsis of *Morountodun*

Morountodun by Femi Osofisan explores the social and political situations of the Nigerian society and its implications for social cohesion. It is one of many political plays written by Osofisan and it represents social stratification which pitches the masses against the rich. *Morountodun* foregrounds the uprising of poor peasants up in arms in revolt against the oppressive government run by the rich who subject them to inhuman conditions. The playwright was obviously inspired by the bravery of Moremi, the mythical figure who was said to have liberated the Ife people from the oppression of the Ugbo warriors. Moremi's sacrifice compared with Titubi's determination to free the oppressed people from the strangulating hold of their oppressors underscores the role of women in nation-building and social cohesion.

In the play, there is a polarity between the rich represented by Alhaji Kabirat and Titubi in collaboration with Superintendent Salami, as the state agent and the oppressed masses represented by the peasant farmers otherwise called Agbekoya. The play opens with a play-within-a-play by a theatre company re-enacting the historic Agbekoya farmers' revolt. Titubi, acting true to type in defence of her class, makes herself a willing tool for the disruption of the planned stage play believed to be meant to criticize the ineptitude of the current government and further expose the evils of the bourgeois class. In the process of frustrating the farmers' revolt, Titubi surrenders herself as a mole to infiltrate the ranks of the peasant farmers in order to get their leader, Marshal, arrested and in the process quash the uprising. She chooses to be locked up in the same prison cell with some dissident peasants where she is expected to be taken along side others in an organized jail break. Meanwhile, she has been tutored on what her role will be as she plays along with the peasant farmers in their hiding places.

However, it turns out that rather than carry out the espionage assignment given by Superintendent Salami, Titubi becomes empathetic toward the peasant farmers' cause. She joins them having witnessed the suffering and destitute condition of the peasant farmers first hand. The ironic twist in the whole plan to arrest Marshal emboldens Titubi to finally align with the liberation of the masses as she follows Marshal back to the bush to continue the revolt. For her courage and loyalty, Marshal marries Titubi and changes her name to Morountodun meaning 'I have found something sweet.' Although Marshal does not consummate the marriage as a result of the ongoing revolt, it is clear that the marital bond has already been made as he returns to the battlefield despite the government's call for negotiation. The conflicts which are intra, that is among the ranks of the revolting farmers and inter, between the dissident farmers and the government, become resolved on a no victor no vanquished note. Given the government's might and superiority of forces, Osofisan confers on all the peasant farmers, male and female a collective heroism by not singling out anyone as hero or heroine in the whole conflagration. In the end, "after each side had burned itself out," peace returns through negotiation.

Theoretical Framework

Theories are principles that give the direction a discourse explores and the possibility of arriving at a proposed destination. A theory is, therefore, meant to create a pathway to the understanding of data in a logical manner. Marxism as a principle, therefore, is relevant to this study based on its argument that history is determined by economic conditions and the belief that there must be an end to private ownership of public utilities (public utilities are to be converted to the government in order to redistribute), transportation and means of production. It must be noted that the issue of class struggle is a major concern of Marxist theory because it believes that society is polarized along the class of the oppressed and the oppressor, the haves and the have nots and that the ensuing struggle for domination usually generates conflict. Dobie 2009 explains the notion of class struggle in reference to the Communist Manifesto (1848) thus:

These ideas were expounded in the Communist Manifesto (1848), in which they identified class struggle as the driving force behind history and anticipated that it would lead to a revolution in which the workers would overturn the capitalist, take control of economic production, and abolish private property by turning it over to the

government to be distributed fairly (p. 87).

No doubt, Marxism was not initially fashioned as a method of literary analysis, but its principles are relevant to literature, especially in the organization of human society and the character/nature of relationships that exist there. Dobie 2009 says “Even in Russia, where sometimes literature was accepted as a means of productive critical dialogue and at other times viewed as a threat if it did not promote party dialogue, literature was linked to the philosophical principles set down by Marx and Engel” (p. 87). As a philosophy, Marxism cannot be separated from politics. In fact, Ryan (2019) insists politics and philosophy are intertwined to a certain extent that “philosophy does not need to be politicized because, as it exists in the conceptual infrastructure of everyday life practices, it is already political” (p. 2).

These principles expose the conflicts arising from the fragmentation and alienation found in human society as both classes struggle for economic and political control. Where struggle exists, conflict is inevitable. How such conflict is also resolved is dependent on the understanding of the economic circumstances underlying human relations in the society. So because of the material circumstances which are the economic conditions underlying a society and the historical situation which is the ideological atmosphere they generate, social or political context of any society cannot be explained without a proper understanding of the circumstances in which they occur.

It stands to reason that social or political context can be objectively assessed and tackled only after a proper understanding of the material circumstances and historical situation in which they occur. The conflict generated occurs as the interface between the bourgeoisie, the owners of property who also control means of production and the proletariat, the labourers who produce the wealth and are controlled by the bourgeoisie.

These are the circumstances and historical situations underlying the society where Titubi is raised by Alhaja Kabirat as opposed to the peasant farmers who struggle for survival daily. Dobie 2009 says this situation is inevitable

“because those who control production have a power base, they have many ways to ensure that they will maintain their position. They can manipulate politics, government, education, the arts and entertainment, news media - all aspects of culture - to that end” (p. 89)

This manipulation is obvious in the role played by Superintendent Salami and Titubi's insistence on being locked up in the cell all in the bid to put an

end to the peasants' struggle. The arts and entertainment industry is also manipulated as Titubi mobilizes against the stage play meant to expose the oppressive tendencies of the rich and their government collaborators. "The conflict is sometimes realized as a clash of management and labour, sometimes simply as friction between socioeconomic classes" (p. 93). Marxist theory is apt for this study because it advocates a classless society where everyone has access to power and emphasizes the inevitability of conflict in a repressive society fragmented between classes.

Conflict, Its Resolution and Social Re-Engineering in Perspective

Conflict is a very important dramatic element because it propels the plot and in the process generates emotion in the audience through tension created especially in tragedy by the interplay of peripeteia, and anagnorisis on the road to catharsis (purgation of emotion). Seth Benardete, (2002) believes "Catharsis occurs through the resolution of an intense conflict" (p.76). Until the conflict is resolved, the plot does not end. Conflict is the driving force in any play. It is the singular dramatic strength that propels the plot of a play from the beginning to the end. It helps to sustain the interest of the audience who most of the time is enraptured as the plot aggregates to its cathartic end, especially in tragedies.

Lajos Egri (1946) in *The Art of Dramatic Writing* highlights conflict as the primary propeller of action and development in dramaturgy. Conflict has a special way of capturing the attention of the audience who are already literally initiated or co-opted into the emotional journey embarked upon by the characters in the play. In fact, Egri insists "Conflict, in one form or another, is the keynote of all successful drama" (p. 55).

Conflict can be of different dimensions and may also take different forms in dramatic literature. For instance, there can be conflict between characters (Character vs. Character). This type of conflict ensues between two or more characters with diverse opposing pursuits, goals, aspirations, orientations and values. As they interface in the play, there is bound to be clashes of interest which will inadvertently generate tension and cause emotional engagement for the audience. According to Spencer, (2002) "Conflict is the struggle between two or more characters who have incompatible objectives" (p. 13). For instance, the tension created by the clash between the oppressive rich represented by Titubi, Alhaja Kabirat, her mother and Superintendent Salami, on the one hand, and the peasant farmers represented by Marshal creates the conflict that propels the play from the beginning to the end. By the time Titubi gets a new political

orientation that forces her to join the peasant farmers, a new conflict emerges between her and her mother, Alhaja Kabirat whose insensitivity to the plight of the peasants further widens the gap between them. In drama, there can also be conflict between characters and the society (Character vs. Society). In this type of conflict, a character finds himself at odds with societal norms, traditions, or expectations, creating conflict as he navigates his way through these pressures. Titubi and the high and the mighty are in a world of their own living large in the face of the destitution of the peasant farmers. This insensitivity and oppressive lifestyle is what Marshal vows to stop.

There can also be internal conflict between a character and the 'self' (Character vs. Self). It is an internal conflict where two opposing opinions may be tearing an individual apart causing inexplicable tension. Usually, this type of tension is psychological and the soul usually craves an escape. Aristotle, (1987) in "Poetics", says "The best tragedies are conflicts within the individual, and not between him and someone else" (p. 3). A character in this type of conflict may struggle with internal desire or an ambition he determines to accomplish (Wetmore, 2012, p. 45). For instance, Shakespeare in *Macbeth* presents Macbeth as a character with internal conflict when he finds it difficult to kill King Duncan ostensibly because he is his benefactor and also a guest. In the same vein, Comrade Buraimoh struggles with his decision to be a mole among his comrades.

It must be noted that conflict in dramaturgy can come from different human experiences as characters interface in the play. Its resolution points the direction to how the problems are solved. According to Egri, (2004), "Conflict is resolved when the protagonist solves his problem or fails to solve it" (p. 90). Egri makes a case for conflict resolution by insisting that it appears at the level of climax when tension is at its peak. It is the point at which the fate of the protagonist is determined by his ability to successfully triumph over his challenges or is overwhelmed by them. It must be emphasized here that conflict transforms a character in a unique way. Corroborating this, Robert McKee (1997) says through:

Story: Substance, Structure, Style, and the Principles of Screenwriting, Character is revealed through choice under pressure, the greater the pressure, the deeper the revelation, the truer the choice to the character's essential nature (p. 121).

Conflict resolution can take different dimensions, but what is important is that problems are solved, emotions are spent and there is denouement. In the

words of Jeffrey Hatcher (2000) "Your play begins when a character has a problem, and it ends when the problem is resolved." p.10. In the same vein, until conflict is resolved, the plot cannot come to an end. So as long as the conflict remains unresolved the play cannot come to a meaningful conclusion and both the protagonist and the audience cannot dispel their pent-up emotion. No wonder, John Truby (2007) says "The hero's character arc is complete only when the main conflict is resolved" (p. 277).

Peasants' Struggle, Conflict of Interests and Resolution in *Morountodun*

Osofisan is known to foreground conflict and the issue of class struggle in his dramaturgy. His dramatic form can best be described as the theatre of the common man. That explains why he finds it so convenient to convert the never do-well in his plays to heroes and heroines. Osofisan is always unambiguous in his position and makes no pretension about the fact that his loyalty is always with the oppressed in any conflict. This he does in *Morountodun* where the struggle of the peasant farmers is enlarged to the level of arms struggle or what could be rightly regarded as revolutionary violence. Although, Osofisan never advocates physical or psychological violence as a weapon of social re-engineering, nevertheless, to liberate the downtrodden from their oppressors, the use of violence is inevitable.

As the maxim goes: "without war, there can't be peace." So, for the total liberation of the downtrodden from the strangulating grips of the insatiable bourgeoisie, the ideology of violence cannot be wished away. This is more so in a stratified and largely polarised Nigerian society between the extremely rich oppressors and poverty-stricken masses of the people.

In *Morountodun*, Osofisan clearly defines the course and pattern of the conflict. It begins with the semantic and sociological interpretation of the embodiment of the people's struggle-Agbekoya. Agbekoya literally means "farmers reject suffering". This has always been factored into those things that fan the embers of class conflicts in any human society. This rejection, the farmers pursue until they secure negotiation for a ceasefire. In such enterprise, Osofisan does not belabour the use of violence in the realisation of the noble cause. However, in this artistic creation, the method employed is such that it is devoid of looting, arson, rape and obstruction of a genuine revolution. Even though Marshal leads his comrades to attack a police station and sack institutions of government, their method is still

different from the anarchist's perspective. After all, saboteurs like Alhaji Buraimoh and Lawyer Isaac that play the moles are spared from being put to the sword.

By using the Moremi myth with the technique of play-within-a-play to advance the cause of the masses, Osofisan only demonstrates that he is alive to his responsibilities as an artist. Chinua Achebe in *Morning Yet on Creation Day* emphasizes the role of the artist in the political evolution of his society. He says:

It is clear to me that an African creative writer who tries to avoid a big social and political issues of the contemporary Africa will end up being completely irrelevant like the man in the proverb who leaves his house burning to pursue a rat fleeing the flame (p. 83).

Addressing social problems with art and political ideology is central to social re-engineering which is crucial to this study. Social re-engineering according to its dictionary meaning is "the attempt to change society and to deal with social problems according to particular political beliefs" (Oxford 2023). According to Shaji 2018, society is "re-engineered to love itself, to indulge in activities that please one's senses" or to be what others want us to be. The bottom line in social re-engineering is the quest for change in the way things are done to embrace activities that will take into account the greater good of the greater majority. This is the political ideology that informs the Director's insistence on re-enacting the Agbekoya uprising on stage. They may not call it Marxism but all their efforts at resolving the social contradictions in the society are defined in outlook and form by what Marx refers to as Dialectical Materialism. So, the effort of the Director in re-enacting the Agbekoya uprising and Osofisan's attempt at such re-enactment in Ile-Ife's conflict with the Ugbo warriors only confirms the playwright's commitment to using his theatre as an instrument of social re-engineering. No doubt, writers must reflect social realities, concern and commitment to society at all times. The Director's prologue sets the tone of the struggle and a long-standing conflict to come, taking the audience into confidence. The stratification of the society along class lines, suggests clearly enough that the conflict is going to be tense. The entrance of Titubi, the daughter of the wealthy business woman, Alhaja Kabirat in the prologue where she disrupts the planned stage theatre by the Director and his team, is a warning signal of the conflict to come. Titubi leaves no one in doubt as being representative of the bourgeoisie, the super rich who the farmers are up in arms against. Her attitude to the peasants' revolt is that of

affront and a lesson in raw haughtiness. She asks:

Is it a sin to be rich? Ahn! It's Disgusting! Night after night!
Day After day! Lies! In the newspaper! On the radio! On
the television nko! And here they come with a play!...This
is our country too, and we shall not run away (p. 7).

To the spoilt daughter of Alhaja Kabirat, Titubi, it is none of her business if some people cannot afford three square meals; after all, they work for their wealth. It is incomprehensible to her that a people can rise against the *status quo*. She cannot fathom the ideology that informs protest by the peasant farmers who 'nature' has ordained to be hewers of trees and drawers of water. As far as Titubi is concerned, the Director's planned drama is an effrontery against her class. About the plight of the masses that caused the protest by the farmers, she retorts:

So in what way are we responsible for the farmer's
uprising? Ehn?
What does our being rich have to do with it?
Or is it only when we wear rags that we qualify to breath
the air? (p. 9).

Characteristic of the oppressor, Titubi fails to realise that the frustration of an angry poor man cannot be assuaged by mere rhetoric and wit. So when she comes up to disrupt the planned play, with some rented crowd, the Director is more than convinced that she can only try but cannot re-write history. The Director puts it more succinctly:

History-or what some of you call chance or fortune has
taken over the stage and it will play itself out, whether we
like it or not.
All we can do is to quicken or slow down its progress (p.
16).

True to his words, Titubi in a vain attempt to prevent the play, only plays it out as she actually takes the centre stage, not as ruining the course of history, but as part of the making of history like a man who sets the machinery of an event in motion and unable to control its movement. Deeply entrenched in her class, coupled with the verbal tirade and vituperation from Superintendent Salami, Titubi makes herself available in the struggle of the state to douse the fire of the farmers' revolt. To her, it is a heroic venture, worthy of everything good to save her class and arrest Marshal, the ubiquitous and 'mysterious' leader of the farmers' uprising.

Marshal's status assumes the profile of Matigari in Ngugi Wa Thiong'O's *Matigari* who is perceived to appear and disappear. The Kenyan

government was reported to have gone out in search of the dissident fictitious character. So, to prove to police Superintendent Salami that she can do the impossible by handing Marshal over to the authority, Titubi finds inspiration in Moremi's act of heroism in saving the Ife people from the Ugbo warriors. Thus begins the journey of the spoilt child of a wealthy woman to martyrdom. She believes strongly that if Moremi could do it to save Ile-Ife from the Ugbo invaders, she will only be enacting history. At the point where she takes up the gauntlet, the Director and his production crew in the Agbekoya spectacle become spectators, while Salami who writes the script of Titubi's infiltration of the farmers' army also watches from the sideline.

Osofisan suffers nothing to be overlooked in the Moremi's script played out in Titubi's mission to the farmers' camp. For instance, while Alhaja Kabirat makes a desperate last minute effort to dissuade Titubi from "committing class suicide" by staying in the prison to be arrested by the farmers who plan to sack the station, Oranmiyan, Moremi's husband defies all royal procedures to take Moremi back home.

In Marxism, at the root of every social inequality and revolutionary struggle is the economic factor. Such is the case with *Morountodun*. It is the resolve of the rich to continue the hegemony and the **determination** of the peasants to cast off the yoke of oppression and poverty that define the class relationship. It is a struggle against what Marxists refer to as 'false consciousness' which makes people comfortable with unfavourable social system without protest. This class struggle helps the ideology of resistance that finds expression in Marxism wherein "conflict is sometimes realized as a clash of management and labour, sometimes simply as friction between socioeconomic classes" (Dobie, 2009, p. 93). Mama Kayode's account of Baba's speech to His Excellency lends credence to this bipolar relationship. She quotes Baba inter alia:

Your council officials and akodas harass us.

Then they go and build mansion in the city, your marketing board seizes our cocoa and pays us only one third of what it sells to the Oyibo. We have no electric, and we still drink tanwiji from the stream (p. 65).

The poor farmers who have tasted the bitter pill of oppression and destitution take up arms against the upper class responsible for their deplorable and beggarly condition. Osofisan is deliberately unambiguous in the presentation of the two classes. First, is the class of the poor peasant

farmers and the solidarity of the theatre company led by Director in the gallery of the people, and second, the state and its cohorts with, of course, some who attempt to prevent the play from being staged. So, at the heart of the conflict is the tendency to continue the exploitation of the poor by the rich and the poor's resolve to liberate themselves. Omofolabo (1996) opines:

Thus at the root of the unfolding conflict is economic imbalance which according to traditional Marxism is the single causative factor of all social inequalities and its successful elimination will produce an egalitarian society free of exploitative tendencies of a ruining few (p. 90).

The farmers, ably led by the trio of Marshal, Bogunde and Baba have signed a pact with destiny to either liberate the oppressed masses or die in the process. By putting their lives on the line they are out to advocate for control not only of their destiny but other mundane things like the production and distribution of their production. So, to first go is the obnoxious tax imposed on them and their animals and other yokes placed on them by the government and its agents. This, however, contrasts sharply with Titubi's iron determination, though with a vested interest in her, to bring Marshal to justice and sound the death-knell for the farmers' revolt. Therefore, when the farmers storm the prison to release their colleagues, Titubi elects to go with them to their hide-out as part of the police/state agenda. In each of the two classes, the playwright deliberately creates a passion with which they pursue their objectives. Such passion, raw emotion, as it were, can only be gauged in the representatives of each side. For Titubi, it is a matter of survival worth dying for. She takes time to explain to her mother, Alhaja Kabirat:

The peasants' revolt Mama! you talk about it everyday with your friends. I see all of you tremble. The peasants are upon us. They will eat everything up, all your wealth, the entire meaning of your life unless someone acts (p. 20).

In this case, it is the struggle of the bourgeois to maintain hegemony long enjoyed in a society that places the poor under heavy burden and deprivation. The socio-economic strata in which fate has placed them must be sustained even if it requires shedding the blood of the antagonists. No wonder, not even Alhaja Kabirat's seductive offer of sending Titubi to Mecca is enough to dissuade her from the hard stance of playing the messianic role of freeing her people.

The playwright, therefore, presents a go-between in Superintendent Salami

to heighten the hatred and animosity between the helpless poor and the exploitative rich. Superintendent Salami lays the basis of the conflict and in an unequivocal term, blamed the woes of the downtrodden on the rich. He says: "After all, these rebels are of your own creation, you are used to feeding on others" (p. 24).

The police officer himself, a victim of the system he swears to protect, is apparently protesting his plight in a subtle manner in the way he identifies with the deplorable state of affairs of the peasants. Even though by his commission and calling, it is seditious and treasonable for officer Salami to identify with the cause of the peasants, and as a government agent, he is expected to be apolitical; he is not exempted from the crisis of food and shelter. The superintendent almost betrays his emotion while speaking the mind of the peasants, and by extension, that of the author, when he says;

The peasants are strong and seemingly invincible because they are solidly united by the greatest force in the world-hunger. They are hungry, their children die of kwashiorkor and they have risen to say no, no more (p. 24).

To Alhaja Kabirat's consternation, Superintendent Salami speaks out the mind of the poor. Osofisan's art form is a clear departure from the class of creative artists Achebe describes as irrelevant, rather he demonstrates his commitment to art as propaganda and a latent instrument of mobilization and social re-engineering. So, when the playwright takes the audience to the peasants' enclave where suffering, squalor, deprivation and hunger walk tall, it becomes evident that the resolution of the conflict (victory) is a matter of time. Before long, Titubi who has been enlisted to infiltrate the ranks of the peasants becomes converted. At this stage of the conflict, it becomes obvious that Baba's political ideology that favours fairness and equality of all men is a potent weapon of social re-engineering. So potent that it gives Titubi a different perception of realities so much so that she begins to see the evil and oppressive tendencies sustained for so long by her mother. At the peasants' enclave, she shares the pains, the pangs and emotional trauma of the downtrodden masses. Above all, the commitment of the leadership of the peasants' struggle convinces Titubi that they can only be bent, but not broken. She goes through a process of refining and positive dysfunctional orientation.

The contradictions that play out in *Morountodun* only drive home the understanding of the underprivileged that oppression has a language only understood by violence and resistance. Marshal is no less a leader well schooled in class struggle. He says of Buraimoh:

It is true that my father and others enslaved themselves to death to make you rich and prosperous.
Yes, I know it has become such a habit that you are enraged when the slave stands up to claim his rights as human being (p. 6).

It is this brilliant presentation of the deprivation and destitution of the pauperised that creates the ironic twist in Titubi's perception of realities. This is the result of the tenacity of the leadership of the peasant farmers who sustained the struggle with their ideological belief as a weapon of social re-engineering. The table turns and there is a complete transformation of Titubi who turns round to denounce the establishment. She confesses before her return that "Before this...I could never have believed that life was so unkind to anybody" (p. 50).

However, when she eventually returns, she takes pain to educate her mother, Alhaja Kabirat to the utter surprise of Superintendent Salami whose script Titubi acts but antithetically. Undoubtedly, the victory of the peasant farmers over their oppressors is typical of Osofisan's style of resolution of conflict. After the victory, the traitors, Alhaji Buraimoh and Lawyer Isaac were tried in the people's court and put to judgment for betraying the noble cause.

Conclusion

The study explores conflict, its resolution and the class struggle that results from a complex relationship where oppression defines human interactions and the inevitability of a political ideology for social re-engineering in the society. Just like the creative artist, literature as an art form must be committed to the transformation and re-organization the society. That is first and foremost, the social responsibility of the artist if he must remain relevant in that social milieu.

What Osofisan achieves with *Morountodun* is a projection of his artistic vision of using drama as a weapon of mass mobilization and social re-engineering to wake the masses from their slumber. *Morountodun*, artistically and aesthetically, is a successful and brilliant platform through which the struggle of the masses against the exploitative tendencies of the bourgeoisies is exposed as a reminder that the proletariat can produce a revolution as an alternative to the hegemony of the dominant class. The issues of corruption, injustice and oppression (elements of conflict) are inexorably evident in *Morountodun*, while the concern for justice in society

(resolution) is deeply embedded in the playwright's consciousness which makes a political orientation for social re-engineering inevitable. The commitment, consistency and the tenacity of the leadership of the farmers' revolt which led to Titubi's class suicide are evidences of the potency of Marxist political ideology as a tool for social re-engineering. It is, therefore, suggested that African playwrights should strive to protect the interests of the downtrodden in their creative enterprises. So doing, they will not be seen as failing in their artistic responsibilities and commitment to their immediate environment.

References

Achebe, C. (1975): The African writer and the Biafran cause. *Morning Yet on Creation Day*. London, Heinemann.

Adebayo, A. (2020). Rethinking The Yoruba Legal Institution In Contemporary Adjudicatory

system. In T. Falola and D. Olubomehin (Ed.), *Yoruba nation and politics since the nineteenth century*. Austin. Pan-African University Press

Aristotle. (1987). *Poetics*. Translated by S. H. Butcher. Hill and Wang.

Benardete, S. (2002). The poetics of Aristotle: Translation and commentary for the arts. University of Chicago Press.

Egri, L. (1946). The art of dramatic writing. Simon & Schuster.

Egri, L. (2004). The art of dramatic writing: Its basis in the creative interpretation of human motives. Simon & Schuster.

Hatcher, J. (2000). The art and craft of playwriting. Story Press.

Hoffmann, S. (1960). Contemporary theory in international relations. Eaglewood Cliffs.

Igbekele, S. (2019). Historical roots of conflicts in Yoruba cities. In O. Albert and T. Taibat

Lawanson (Ed.), *Urban crisis and management in Africa*. Austin. Pan-

African University Press.

McKee, R. (1997). *Story: Substance, structure, style, and the principles of screenwriting*. HarperCollins. Fanon, F. (1963): *The wretched of the earth*. Great Britain: Penguin.

Omofolabo, A. (1996): Gender and the revolutionary ethos of class in *Morountodun* in Muyiwa Awodiya (ed.) 1996

Osofisan, F. (1982): *Morountodun in Morountodun and other plays*. Ibadan: Longman.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (10th ed.). (2021). Oxford University Press.

Ryan, M. (2019). *Marxism and deconstruction: A critical articulation*. Baltimore. John Hopkins University Press.

Spencer, S. (2002). *The playwright's guidebook: An insightful primer on the art of dramatic writing*. Faber & Faber.

Thomas, K. W., & Kilmann, R. H. (1974). *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict mode instrument*. Tuxedo, NY: Xicom.

Truby, J. (2007). *The anatomy of story: 22 steps to becoming a master storyteller*. Faber & Faber.

Wetmore Jr., K. J. (2012). *Elements of drama*. Routledge.

FATHER-ABSENTEEISM AND DISPLACEMENT IN KAINE AGARY'S *YELLOW-YELLOW* AND CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *ZIKORA*

Egbedi, Martha Omotetobore

Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria.

Email: megbedi@delsu.edu.ng

&

Ohwavworhua, Prince Oghenetega

Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University,
Abraka, Nigeria.

Email: ohwavworua.prince@delsu.edu.ng

Abstract

Single-parenthood is a global phenomenon that has been of interest to scholars from different disciplines. Literary scholars have also probed into the idea due to its impact on the lives of children and young adults. However, this theme has not been widely interrogated through the theoretical lens of feminism. This study takes a look at how the literary creation of some third-generation Nigerian female novelists has explored this social phenomenon. Through a radical feminist reading the article adopts the qualitative analytical methodology to interrogate Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* (2006) and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Zikora* (2020) and concludes that they explore the theme of father-absence and single-motherhood in ways that differ from that of previous-generation of female novelists. Here, the focus is on the development of the girl child and how the absence affects their life choices. By doing this, they use their characters as agency in espousing radical feminists' sensibilities that are slightly different from how previous generations engaged the concept in their works.

Keywords: Absent father, Single parenthood, Agary, Zikora, Adichie, Displacement.

Introduction

The Nigerian literary culture is a buzzing one, thematising a wide range of ideas and issues by both male and female writers. Of the plethora of ideas

thematised in their literary expressions, single motherhood, which is a result of father-absence, has not been properly examined. As much as themes of single-motherhood have featured generously in Nigerian literature, academic papers examining them are few across literary scholarship. This essay paves the way for a more intentional academic analysis of father-absence and single motherhood in Nigerian literature. From time immemorial, not only has the society been classified into economic structures, but it has also been organised on gender borders. These gender borders have resulted in structures that seem to dictate the role of a particular gender. These roles are expressed in what Judith Butler (1999) describes as the performativity of gender and argues that gender and gender roles are social performances that one puts on in day-to-day life, the hegemonic versions of which underlay popular conceptions of “man”/“masculine” and “woman”/“feminine”. The implication of roles being assigned to gender is that men's and women's participation in the development of their children is unique and crucial. The absence of any parent – male or female – in a heterosexual family creates a void that affects the lives of children in multiple ways. East et al. (2006) aver that each parent has a unique role in the psychological, social, educational, gender role and career development of his or her children.

According to Stephen and Udisi (2016, p.1), a single parent is a parent, not living with a spouse or partner, who has most of the day-to-day responsibilities in raising the child or children. Towing a similar line, Ali and Soomar, (2019, p.2) define single-parenthood as a parent either father or mother alone practising and taking responsibility for nurturing children in the absence of another parent. Evidently, single-parenthood can be either male-headed (single-fatherhood) or female-headed (single-motherhood). A female-headed single-parenthood leads to the idea of the absent father. Father-absence is a difficult term to conceptualise. Different scholars (Boothroyd and Perrett, 2006; Mancini, 2010; Nock and Einolf, 2008; Langa, 2014; McLanahan and Sandefur, 2009) among others have attempted to define the term. Boothroyd and Perrett (2006) describe father-absence as a concept used to refer to a situation where a child grows up in a household without his biological father. This may be the case where the father and the mother are separated or have not lived together from the start. Barber and Eccles (1992), Silverstein and Auerbach (1999), Spruijt et al. (2001), all postulate that father-absence is a nebulous term because all parents are absent or apart from their children sometimes. It is also a term that is seldom defined in the literary space. Jensen et al. (1989) and Phares

(1993) opine that because of the lack of definitional clarity, the term 'father-absence' can encompass a range of circumstances, including having a father who is non-existent in one's life, lost through death, divorced, absent through work commitments, absent from the family residence due to incarceration or institutionalisation, or physically present yet absent due to disinterest or neglect.

Furthermore, East et al. (2006) aver that the lack of clarity around the term 'father-absence' means that contact between a father and child could refer to contact being non-existent, weekly, monthly, and so forth. From the foregoing positions by different scholars, it is apparent that the ambiguity of the term is contingent on the unspecificity of the cause of absence. According to Richter et al. (2012), being raised in a father-absent home requires numerous adjustments on the part of the family. The absence of the father figure in the home creates a void in the structure of the home, requiring the mother to function in a dual capacity. The psychological effects of being raised without a father-figure are reportedly debilitating for children and young adults throughout their lifespan. Furthermore, girls may become promiscuous in an attempt to seek emotional attachment from different partners to compensate for the lack of, yet longed-for, experience from their absent parent with the hope that these men could provide them with the safety and assurance that they lacked from their fathers (Gladys, 2020). This essay examines how the absence of the father-figure affects the protagonists: Sikora in Adichie's *Zikora* and Zilayefa in Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*.

Radical Feminism at a Glance

This study is tailored after radical feminism, a social theory which interrogates the cause of the social imbalances and seeks to tackle them. Vukoičić (2013, p.35) defines radical feminism as "a feminist theory that starts from the idea of conflict between the sexes as a fundamental conflict, and oppression against women as a direct implication of patriarchy". Lorber (1997, p.16), avers that radical feminists theoretical watchword is patriarchy, or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found wherever women and men are in contact with each other. Patriarchy is most prominent in the family, while it also thrives in all spheres of society. Radical feminists identify marriage as a patriarchal institution since it treats women as the private property of men. This wave of feminism differs from other types in the way it sees and interprets the root cause of female subjugation in society. The theory is based on the fact that

gender inequality is the foundation of all other inequalities and oppression. To address this imbalance is to attack the system on which it is built – patriarchy. At its core, radical feminism is of the view that society should be reordered in a way that patriarchy is abolished. In Nigeria, patriarchal structures allow men to dominate women, leading to objectification of women. This creates an environment where men can leave homes without effects, resulting in father-absence and single-motherhood. Sikora (*Zikora*) and Zilayefa (*Yellow-Yellow*) not only challenge patriarchal standards by taking charge of their own empowerment but they also actively work to dismantle patriarchy. Radical feminists claim that by changing the gender structure as a whole, women's oppression will vanish.

Adichie and Agary have in their texts not merely explored themes related to gender and society but have, through the lens of radical feminism, emphasized the need for fundamental societal change to address gender-based oppression viz-a-viz characterisation and storytelling techniques. It is on the premise that the female protagonists in the novels are examined as their characterisation aligns with radical feminist objectives.

Empirical Review

Nadaswaran (2011) carries out an exegetical analysis of family relationships in third-generation female Nigerian writings, taking into focus Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), Unoma Azuah's *Sky High Flames* (2005), Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This* (2007) and Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005), which she juxtaposes with works of the previous generation female writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emencheta, Mariama Ba, et. al. It argues against the tradition of the previous generation(s) of female writers whose works, although espouse feminist sensibilities, portray their female characters as appendages attached to their male counterparts. While Nadaswaran engages family relations along the lines of female characters fighting against a patriarchal system, and simultaneously exploring the concept of the "absent-mother", Chukwumah (2011) explores the theme of father-displacement in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* along political, cultural, biological and environmental lines. The rationale for this is understandable as the novel is set in the Niger-Delta, a region in Nigeria that is almost synonymous with ecological issues. While Nadaswaran locates her research within the womanist theory, which is a trend of the feminist theory, Chukwumah, (2011) locates his within the Freudian psychoanalytical dream theory. Furthermore, Kekeghe (2014) reflects womanist characteristics of fluidity,

Self-definition and agency, in depicting the rise of the young Nigerian female character. He locates his study of Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This* (2007) within the womanist theory expounded by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi and Alice Walker. His study is crucial to this essay as it is one of the few essays that deal with the idea of a wounded mindscape in inter-gender relationships. However, his study leaves some questions unanswered as it does not adequately explain the effects which father-displacement and single-motherhood have on (female) children and young adults and how that void created by the absence of the father influences them even as they navigate their way in a patriarchal system. Other scholars, such as Egbedi (2020), interrogates Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* as a feminist bildungsroman. Egbedi (2020, p.1) argues that "Agary adopts the German Bildungsroman form to question the socio-political challenges of her time". Her study is unique in the sense that it explores the text from a perspective only a few scholars have viewed it.

The Absent Father in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Zikora*

Adichie's *Zikora* is a story that explores the development of the protagonist from a child to an adult faced with the challenges of heterosexual relationships. Adichie makes extensive use of the flashback technique as she presents Zikora's childhood and the wind of challenges that puts a strain on the relationship with her father that should have blossomed. Her mother, unable to give birth to a male child, is resigned to welcoming a second wife for her husband. The absent father first begins as a distant figure, with divided attention, considering that he has two wives and their children to satisfy. Then it gradually dissipates into an unfulfilled longing from Zikora. Adichie captures the event of the final exit of Zikora's father and the response of her mother, a response that reveals the fear of single parenting and foreshadows what is to come to her:

My father decided to move in with Aunt Nwanneka to set Ugonna right. "He needs to see me every morning when he wakes up. Boys can so easily go wrong, girls don't go wrong," he told my mother. I remembered that afternoon in drawnout, static images: my father blurting out the words... and my mother staring at him, her body so rigid and still. Later, she stood at the top of the stairs, in my father's way, as he tried to go downstairs.

She reached out and pushed him backward, and he, surprised, tottered. "This is not what we agreed!" she shouted. She was a different person, shaken, splintered, and she held on to the railings as though she might fall. My father left anyway (*Zikora*, pp.89-90).

What is striking from the excerpt above is the patriarchal ideology of the father and his unfounded conclusion that boys need more care, words that depict favouritism and preference. The devastating effect of such a conclusion surfaces in the person of Zikora as the story progresses. Adichie's radical feminist posture is first revealed at this point. The response of Zikora's mother is an expression of the resistance that the radical feminists who question the hegemony of institutionalized gender discrimination and segregation attempt to introduce. Zikora's mother, for the first time stands off against the man, with an understanding of the negative effects the absence of the man would have on herself and her only daughter. This reaction presents a dynamics that was not found in the feminist writings and concerns of earlier generations who were a more submissive group that represented their characters as women that accepted all that was thrown at them in the society without question. This is in spite of the fact that these first generation writers were also feminist authors, although they present feminism in a more liberal and accommodating manner.

Adichie establishes that father-displacement as a social condition of absenteeism is possible by a mere emotional distance between father and child that creates a void that is not filled by occasional physical presence alone. She describes the gradual disintegration that sets in and the inevitable absence that cuts through the bond that would have grown and existed between father and daughter: "Slowly, things thawed, and my mother accepted that he would no longer come home to us, that we were now the family who would merely be visited. She began to hang her newest dresses in his wardrobe, which was almost empty, a few of his unloved shirts hanging there" (*Zikora*, p.91).

It has been stated in the preceding paragraphs that girls who are made to contend with early absence of their father are prone to emotional challenges and an uncontrollable desire and longing for emotional safety, assurance and care from men who are not their fathers. Zikora, a victim of an absent father, whose absence although not absolute like death, finds solace in a Ghanaian man, Kwame who shows her love which she had lost in

her childhood. Like most girls, the absence of a father has a psychological effect on the protagonist as she struggles with building sustainable romantic relationships with the opposite sex. Zikora is a 39-year-old lady, who is still single. This revelation by Adichie is a clear indication of the negative impact of an absent father on the female child, one of which is the struggle to have a life partner as a result of the betrayal of trust that lingers from childhood to adulthood. What is most striking is that even at 39, Zikora is unable to find a love relationship that progresses into a lasting union. Kwame with whom she felt she enjoys all the expressions of perfection and true love in a man, abandons her as soon as he hears that she is pregnant. This experience of rejection and abandonment creates an unavoidable psychological effect on the single mothers. They are left overwhelmed with the prospects of having to beget and take care of a child without the aid of a partner and the act of abandonment that ensues:

Each time I called, I felt newly surprised at the burr-burr-burr of his phone ringing unanswered. How could he have turned, and so quickly? I knew him well, but I could not have known him well. He ignored my calls and texts, and sent back my apartment key in an envelope, the lone metal key wrapped in plain paper (p.40).

Zikora becomes a lady in dilemma who at her age, has not gone through the processes of learning and maturation necessary to understand a love that is genuine and differentiate it from one that is masked. However, Adichie throws a subtle shade at the system and structures of patriarchy that has normalized absenteeism and reveals a generation of women who are no longer bound by the desire to be defined by having husbands. The lack of proper training on abandoned daughters in turn produces a vicious circle, where absent fathers have become a norm in the society, passed on to children. Zikora's son is abandoned by his father even as a foetus yet to undergo the full biological processes of a baby. She is immediately confronted with the stark reality that her own son would have to be taken care of by herself alone as a single mother.

Adichie artfully describes the pain and frustration expressed in Zikora's thoughts, which embodies the pains of a woman, almost humiliated at the mere thoughts of abandonment of her supposed spouse and the father of her baby. She gets irritated and frustrated as she imagines the nurses mocking her within themselves. Every action of some of the nurses

infuriated her and she felt they were an affront directed towards her baby whose father is absent even before he is to be brought into the world:

Was she thinking that it should have been the father of my baby here with me? How dare she judge me? Was the father of her children in their life, what with her outlandish lashes and all? She probably had three children, each with a different father, and here she was judging me for having a cold mother instead of a husband by my side (p.15).

Mmiliaku opens up perhaps another dimension of single-motherhood, where the men are not completely out of their lives, and yet abandon their responsibilities to their spouses who now serve as single mothers even when their husbands are around and alive. Mmiliaku says, “Some of us have men and are still doing it alone” (p.40).

Adichie's *Zikora* is a novel that centres basically on the themes of abandonment, displacement and its negative effect on the girl child. The story of *Zikora* is one of a girl from a wealthy family, who still suffers nonetheless as a result of the emotional damages and the psychological effect of this abandonment on the girl child. This reveals that money and affluence alone cannot replace the needed love, care and bond that a father's presence can have on his daughter and the unavoidable consequences of his absence.

Father-Absenteeism and Displacement in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*

While Adichie's *Zikora* does not explore the challenges of single-motherhood in the area of child care, she gives a very clear description of single-motherhood during labour and at birth. *Yellow-Yellow* on the other hand is focused on the socio-economic struggles of a single mother and the challenges of providing the necessary education and moral training and basic needs of her child in the face of abject poverty. Agary explores absence and displacement from the perspective of a full absence and its devastating effect. The novel explores the diverse themes of displacement and the effect on a girl raised by a single mother. She delves into the economic, educational, social and psychological implications of the complete absence of a father on Zilayefa – the protagonist also known as “Yellow-Yellow” – because of her complexion as a child of both European and Nigerian parents.

Agary focuses on the challenges of finance, which is the most

common implication of single-motherhood in Nigeria wallowing in a palpable level of poverty and lack. The protagonist, Zilayefa is born outside wedlock to a woman who is abandoned by her European lover, a Greek sailor. Set in the Ijo community of the Niger Delta, this experience is further aggravated by the ubiquitous level of poverty in the society. Agary reveals the determination that is first birthed in every single mother and the inspiration towards achieving the best training for their children, the burden of doing it all by themselves notwithstanding. First, Zilayefa's mother vows to give her daughter the best in spite of her condition:

Disillusioned, my mother went back to her village to face the shame of being unwed with nothing but dreams about my future. She will make sure that I accomplished what she had not. She had inherited a small piece of land from her family which she farmed on and sometimes she will go fishing. With the proceeds, she was able to feed us and pay my school fees. She took care of all my needs and even went to make sure that I got an education. For instance, she expelled herself from the women's group so that she would not be forced to spend money on wrappers for their outings. (p.8)

The single mothers in Nigeria are known for their sacrifices for the child or children under their care. They deprive themselves of temporary pleasures to train and groom their children morally, and give them proper education. However, the poverty and lack soon catches up with her as she is unable to keep up with her plans for her daughter. She notes: "By the time I finished school, my mother did not have enough money for university. I could not even take the qualifying exam because she did not have the registration fee" (p.11).

The financial demands on a single parent particularly in a socio-cultural environment like the Ijo land where there is poverty and lack prove to be too great a task for her. Soon Binaebi begins to wane in her responsibilities without the needed presence and physical and emotional closeness to her daughter, because she works all day to provide, and yet struggles to get it done. This soon degenerates into helplessness as she realises that she would be unable to keep up with her goals and dreams for her daughter as a result of financial constraints. Consequently, she begins to loosen her discipline and

grip on the direction and path of her only daughter, Zilayefa. Zilayefa soon confronts her mother and categorically states her desire to leave the home for the city of Port Harcourt. The manner at which Zilayefa presents this reveals the inevitable; that Zilayefa's growth process has been affected negatively by the absence of a father-figure that would aid the process of instruction, correction and discipline:

My mother was in the kitchen one day when I told her I was going to Port Harcourt... just want to go and try my luck... Who do you have there? You want to go and become a prostitute in Port Harcourt?... Well, if prostitution will feed me, then I will prostitute no problem. This fear transported her back to her own experience eighteen years before. The same fear that made her ask "Where will you stay? (p.43)

As the responsibilities of single motherhood weighs heavily on Zilayefa's mother, she resigns to fate. One of the results of single parenting is that the child seeks outlets outside the home, in search of a feeling of closeness, bonding, and emotional assurance. The downside of this is that more often than not, when a child in her teens is thrown into the outside world to be trained by strangers outside her home, it often turns out bad. This is the case as Zilayefa's mother resigns to the hand of fate and soon releases her daughter to the world, where she learns the hard way.

Girls without the warmth and love of a loving father seek that warmth and love outside. This is also the case because from a psychoanalytic perspective, girls are usually drawn to their fathers and crave that love and acceptance. An absence of a fatherly bond creates a void which perhaps a single mother cannot fill. Zilayefa, like her mother, is attracted to a white man, Sergio, who she also expects a future with. She first expresses this dearth of male attention in her obsession with Sergio and her desire that he gives her his attention. The longing for love and affection is a recurrent theme in the novel as it best reflects the desires of most teenage girls in the stage where juvenile delinquency proliferates and there is a level of vulnerability to them. Zilayefa eventually gets pregnant for one of her sexual partners, (Admiral), who tells her that she would have to terminate it. This is the same story for Zikora who at a younger age had been careless in a relationship with a basketballer during her high school days in the US. She is eventually impregnated by the young man and she has to terminate the

pregnancy because she knew there was nothing serious in the relationship. However, while in another relationship where she misconstrues the nature of the love her new partner, who was so loving and caring, she is obliged to keep the pregnancy on her own accord. This decision to keep the baby is helped by the fact that she is almost passed the age for childbirth and so considers it her final chance to have a baby of her own, a situation she perhaps would not have found herself in if she had experienced earlier fatherly care and successes in her romantic relationship.

Conclusion

This study has explored the social, economic, and psychological effects of single-motherhood on the victims in both texts. Both novels are two parts of a whole as one chronicles single-motherhood and abandonment during childbirth, while the other examines the challenges of raising a child in Nigeria as a single mother. Above all, both novelists explore these extremes of loss and suffering to inspire radical feminists' sentiments and discontent for the status quo in Nigerian and African societies. Zikora and Zilayefa are victims of the monstrous society that gives no room for naivety, a society that is hostile to the female gender. They are made to grapple with the socio-cultural and economic challenges that they face and the fact that they cannot be permitted to be careless irrespective of the absence of the father in their lives. Both authors while revealing this, question the systemic patriarchy that is deep-rooted in society. However, Zikora and Zilayefa represent a more radical posture, embodying the notion of freedom to be who they are and do what is best for them, in spite of what society says or thinks. By the time both texts arrive at the denouement, readers are only faced with the lingering disadvantages and implications of an absent father in the life of a female child.

References

- Adichie, C. (2020). *Zikora*. Seattle: Amazon Original Stories.
- Agary, K. (2006). *Yellow-Yellow*. Lagos: Dtalkshop.
- Ali, S. & Soomar, S. (2019). Single Parenting: Understanding Reasons and Consequences. *JOJ Nursing & Health Care* 10(2). Pp.1-3.
- Barber, B.L. and Eccles, J. (1992). Long-Term Influence of Divorce and Single Parenting on Adolescent Family- and Work-Related Values,

Behaviours, and Aspirations. *Psychological Bulletin* 111(1). Pp.108-126.
Boothroyd, L.G. & Perrett, D.I. (2006). Facial and Bodily Correlates of Family Background. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 273(1599). Pp.2375–2380.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Chukwumah, I. (2011). The Displacement of the Father-Figure in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*. *IRWLE* 7(1). Pp.1-18.

East, L., Jackson, D. & O'Brien, L. (2007). Father Absence and Adolescent Development: A Review of the Literature. *Journal of Child Health Care* 10(9). Pp.283-295.

Egbedi, M.O. (2020). Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*: The Feminist Bildungsroman. *Interdisciplinary Journal of African and Asian Studies (IJAAAS)* 6(1).

Gladys, T. (2020). The Perceived Impact of Absent Fatherhood: An Exploration of Young Adults' Experiences of Father Absence. (Unpublished). University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Jensen, P.S., Grogan, D., Xenakis, S.N. and Bain, M.W. (1989). Father Absence: Effects on Child and Maternal Psychopathology. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 28(2). Pp.171–175.

Kekeghe, E.S. (2014). A Crashed Family and a Wounded Mindscape: A Womanist Reading of Sade Adeniran's *Imagine This*. *Wilberforce Island Review: Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Niger Delta University*, 12. Pp.112-119.

Langa, M. (2014). Meaning-Making in Growing Up Without a Father: Narratives of Young Adolescent Boys. *The Open Family Studies Journal*, 6(1). Pp.56–61.

Lorber, J. (1997). The Variety of Feminisms and their Contribution to Gender Equality. *Ausgabe 97 von Oldenburger Universitätsreden*. Pp. 7-

43.

Mancini, L. (2010). Father Absence and Its Effects on Daughters. *Ohio Family Rights, 1*. Pp.1-37.

Nock, S.L. & Einolf, C.J. (2008). The One Hundred Billion Dollar Man: The Annual Public Costs of Father Absence. *National Fatherhood Initiative*. Pp.1–16.

Phares, V. (1993). Father Absence, Mother Love and Other Family Issues that Need to Be Questioned: Comment on Silverstein. *Journal of Family Psychology* 7(3). Pp.293–300.

Richter, L., Desmond, C., Hosegood, V., Madhavan, S., Makiwane, M., Makusha, T., Morrell, R., & Swartz, S. (2012). Fathers and Other Men in the Lives of Children and Families. *Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality: Towards Carnegie III*. University of Cape Town, South Africa. September 3–7, 2012.

Silverstein, L.B. and Auerbach, C.F. (1999). Deconstructing the Essential Father. *American Psychologist, 54*(6). Pp.397-407.

Spruijt, E., Degoele, M. and Vandervalk, I. (2001). The Well-being of Youngsters Coming from Six Different Family Types. *Patient Education and Counselling* 45(4). Pp.285-294.

Stephen, E. & Udisi, L. (2016). Single-Parent Families and their Impact on Children: A Study of Amassoma Community in Bayelsa State. *European Journal of Research in the Social Sciences, 4*(9). Pp.1-24.

Vukoičić, J. (2013). Radical Feminism as a Discourse in the Theory of Conflict. *Sociological Discourse* 3(5). Pp.33-49).