

**MARXIST AESTHETICS IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S *MOROUNTODUN* AND
*FAREWELL TO A CANNIBAL RAGE***

BY

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CERTIFICATION

**This is to certify that this research was carried out by OJO PAUL OLUWATIMILEHIN
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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty, the author and finisher of my faith and to those who have gone through oppression of any form.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This study examines Marxist aesthetics in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* by exploring the society's intricacies and the imbalance apparent. It is a common misconception that art is merely a means of expressing emotion. While this is not totally untrue, it is important to remember that art allows us to comment on a wide range of political and social events as well as to record history and represent societal values. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that literature is a product of society, as it is a form of art. As Aristotle says, literature is mimesis. Plato and Aristotle spoke of mimesis as the re-presentation of nature. This idea is what bolsters Tyson's opinion that "Literature is a product of the socio-economic and hence ideological conditions of the time and place in which it was written, whether or not the author intended it or not" (63). This notion guides one to acknowledge the fact that literary works echo the milieu in which they were written. The society, as portrayed in literature, reveals the different facets of the common man's life. It reveals what people thought during a particular time and how they thought about it. It allows the individual to understand how a society functions and why it functions that way. With an individual reading of literary texts, we can detect the representation of the struggle of poor masses against the oppression of the rich. Thus, this project will attempt to study the Marxist concept of revolution as an expression of political and social consciousness in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*.

Background of Study

In the discipline of arts and cultural approaches, Marxist aesthetics has emerged as a prominent framework for understanding the relationship between artistic production and

societal and class structures. The Marxist theory postulates a method of socioeconomic analysis that makes use of materialist work of historical essence to portray the essence of class relations, social conflicts, and dialectical perspectives to view social transformations. According to Marxism, capitalism is exploitative and inimical to human society because it often creates a bipolar division such as rich versus poor, oppressor versus oppressed, bourgeoisie versus proletariat, and leader versus the led, to name a few.

In terms of socioeconomic and political issues, revolution is one of the most important phases of the historical evolution of nations. The concept of the Marxist theory of revolution is rooted deeply in any capitalist society where class structure exists. Karl Marx acknowledged that for human society to advance, revolution was both inescapably necessary and fundamentally critical. This can be drawn from the actions of the masses in *Morountodun*, whereby the poor masses march forward for a change in the mode of production. Scholars such as Louis Tyson posit that “few Marxists today believe, as Marx did, that the proletariat will one day spontaneously develop the class consciousness needed to rise in violent revolution against their oppressors and create a classless society” (54).

As Lenin points out in his left-wing communism-An Infantile Disorder, he asserts, “It is not enough for revolution that the exploited and oppressed masses should understand the impossibility of living in the old way and demand changes; it is essential for revolution that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. Only when the “lower classes” do not want the old way and when the “upper classes” cannot carry on in the old ways - only then can revolution triumph.” This suggests that for any significant change in society to take place, there must be a movement for human freedom. To fully apprehend the Marxist theory of revolution, it is of utmost importance to study it more in-depth. The last paragraph of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* states: “The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that ends can be attained only by the

forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at the Communist revolution. The proletariats have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.” However, distinctions were drawn between a peaceful revolution — that is, one achieved through class struggle — and a violent revolution, thanks to the ampler understanding of the subject provided by the founders, Karl Marx and Engels, and later reinforced by Lenin.

Throughout many decades, Marxist aesthetics has emerged as a crucial tool in evaluating the role of culture and society in challenging the power structure and the prevailing class dynamics. However, the 21st century comes with a number of developments, such as digital and technological advancement, the evolution of capitalism, the postmodern shift, globalisation, etc., and this brings about the limitations of Marxism and its applicability. This has also posed a great deal for the relevance, adaptability, and applicability of the Marxist theory of revolution. However, despite these challenges, Marxist aesthetics remains a vital tool for analysing how culture both reflects and influences social structures. The works of Osofisan, with their focus on class struggle, revolution, and the critique of power, demonstrate the continued relevance of Marxist theory in understanding the complexities of post-colonial and contemporary societies. Therefore, this study will focus on contributing to the existing discourse on Marxism aesthetics and its relevance in contemporary cultural production using Femi Osofisan’s *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*.

Definitions of Terms

To capture the essence of the study, it is paramount that we succinctly establish the definitions of some keywords in this study in relation to the literature.

Marxist Aesthetics: Simply put, it is a theory of aesthetics based on or derived from the theories of Karl Marx. It entails applying dialectical materialism, also known as dialectical and materialist, to the cultural realm, with a focus on areas that are associated with taste, such as beauty, and the arts.

Marxism: Defining what Marxism is looks simple; however, it is not as straightforward as it appears. There are a number of ways of answering it, each with its own problem. Generally, we can agree that Marxism is a social, economic, and political theory that examines how the labourers are affected by the ruling class, which results in an unequal distribution of privileges and income within society. The Marxist theory believes that the motivating factor behind every political or social action is material gain.

Statement of Research Problem

Many scholarly works have been carried out on Osofisan and his application of Marxist elements. Such works include *Once Upon Four Robbers*, *No More the Wasted Breed*, *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* and the like. In these works, the issues of political and social consciousness have enjoyed a rich academic audience over the years. In the field of Marxism, many publications have addressed the problem of class stratification and how its resultant struggle has become prevalent. In fact, many literary works have been published on the concept of Marxist class theory; however, little regard has been paid to the outcome of the class struggle within capitalist societies — The revolution. Also, to the best of my knowledge, little interest has been shown in how this revolutionary tool can be employed in addressing and expressing political and social consciousness in literary texts. Thus, this study aims to critically examine how revolution can be used as a tool to eliminate capitalist society

and achieve common ground in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine Marxist aesthetics application and how the application can be used to address the issue of social inequality and the exploitation ingrained in capitalist systems. The objective of this study is:

1. To define Marxist aesthetics as used in Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*.
2. To examine how the historical context of the primary texts influences the portrayal of class struggle.
3. To investigate the themes of alienation, exploitation, injustices, and unequal allotment of wealth and power within capitalist societies as depicted in the selected texts.
4. To explore revolution as a solution to the existing problem of class stratification in the texts.

Research Questions

Throughout the research process, the researcher will be guided by the following important questions:

1. What is Marxist aesthetics in the primary texts?
2. How does the historical context of the primary texts influence the portrayal of class struggle?
3. What is the purpose of investigating the themes of alienation, injustices, and exploitation within capitalist societies?
4. How can the gap between class structures be bridged?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, focusing on an in-depth textual analysis that engages closely with primary texts while drawing on secondary sources, including existing scholarly work relevant to the research topic. The research methodology centres on carefully examining extracts from these texts to explore and critique the complexities of capitalist societies, including the solutions proposed within the texts. By using qualitative analysis, the study aims to offer subtle interpretations of these extracts, facilitating a thorough discussion of the research questions. This method allows the researcher to delve deeply into the themes and issues presented in the primary texts, enabling a comprehensive analysis that is both reflective and critical. The qualitative nature of this study ensures that the findings are rooted in a careful, contextual understanding of the texts, supported by existing literature, thereby providing a robust framework for addressing the central concerns of the research.

Theoretical Framework

This research focuses on revolution as a means to dismantle class stratification, making Marxist revolution theory an ideal framework for analysis. Marxism provides a comprehensive socio-economic critique of society, grounded in the materialist interpretation of history, often referred to as historical materialism. This approach emphasizes that the economic base of society shapes its superstructure, including culture, politics, and ideology, and that historical development is driven by material forces, particularly the relations of production. Central to Marxism is the concept of class struggle, which posits that social conflicts arise from the inherent antagonism between different classes, particularly between the bourgeoisie, who control the means of production, and the proletariat, who are exploited for their labour. This study will delve into key Marxist concepts such as class structure, which refers to the hierarchical organization of society based on economic power, and ideological

conditioning, which explores how dominant ideologies serve to perpetuate the status quo by shaping the beliefs and values of individuals in a way that benefits the ruling class. Additionally, the concepts of exploitation, where the proletariat's labour is used to generate profit for the bourgeoisie, and commodification, where human relationships and cultural expressions are reduced to market values, will be examined. Alienation, another critical concept, will also be discussed, highlighting how workers are estranged from the products of their labour, their own humanity, and each other under capitalist systems. By applying these Marxist ideas, the research will critically analyze the theme of revolution in the texts *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, exploring how the characters and narratives reflect the struggle against class oppression and the pursuit of a more equitable society.

Significance of the Study

The study is important because it explores the concept of revolution, and it will serve as an educational and informative tool for the masses. The widening gap between the existing class structures in capitalist societies calls for an assessment. The Marxist approach starts, then, by pointing out the contradictory and conflicting ways in which forces of production, base and superstructure, and material reality develop. However, none of these contradictions simply solve themselves. Oftentimes, the resolution is based on human struggles. Thus, arguments were made stating that “Marxism itself can only be finally resolved in the course of the revolutionary working-class struggle..”

Therefore, the findings of this study, based on the works of Femi Osofisan, will benefit the society, considering that the concept of revolution is one that has yet to be totally embraced. Through the instances that will be evinced in the chosen texts, an awareness of this reality will be created in the minds of individuals, enabling them to recognise instances of capitalists who covertly controlled their lives and the need for a new world within the society.

Scope of the Study

Being that revolution is the only essential tool to ensure working-class liberties, the proposed study will center on this concept and its representation in literary works to achieve this. Arendt interprets the revolutionary experience as a “restoration, whereby insurgents attempt to restore liberties and privileges, which were lost because of government’s temporary lapse into despotism.” In that regard, *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* by Femi Osofisan will serve as perfect examples of accomplishing the concept from a literary perspective.

Biography of Femi Osofisan

Femi Osofisan, universally acknowledged as one of Nigeria’s foremost authors, is a poet, novelist, playwright, journalist, translator, and essayist. Babatunde Adeyemi Osofisan was born on June 16th, 1946, in Erunwon, near Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria. Femi Osofisan was born into the embrace of grief. He was born into a household of struggling men and women, into a sweat of early rising and late, weary retiring; into frequent, premature deaths of immediate family members. As a result of the early death of his father, Osofisan went through many challenges during his educational journey owing to the injustice in the sharing of his father’s properties.

He entered the University of Ibadan in 1966 to study French and Literature. His training in this subject area at the Universities of Ibadan, Dakar, and Paris between 1966 and 1974 brought him into contact with French literary writers like Molière, Sartre, Giraudoux, Racine, etc. Thus, his former education exposed him to both foreign and African cultures. His experience as a journalist later on and as a teacher helped sharpen his perception and evaluation of his society and its problems.

Osofisan's literary career has been largely, indeed overwhelming, devoted to the expression of African tradition through the medium of the English language, aided by his communicative skills derived from his combined experiences as a journalist and a teacher. A virile sociopolitical crusader, gadfly, and a consummate defender of the downtrodden, Osofisan is a playwright with a progressive and humanistic worldview. In his dramaturgy, Osofisan espouses the icon of the underdogs and enervates that of the status quo. As a loud-voiced frontman for the oppressed and the subjugated, Osofisan is unbridled and unapologetic in his challenge of social injustice. And this has identified Osofisan as one of the notable second-generation writers after Wole Soyinka. He came to relevance in Nigeria in 1976 when he produced *The Chattering and the Song*. He became known as a political dramatist. For over three decades, Osofisan's plays have enjoyed maximum production patronage from the Nigerian theatres.

Synopsis of the primary texts

Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* reimagines the 1969 farmers' revolt in Nigeria's Western Region, highlighting the alienation of the masses from their labour and the resulting economic disparity. The play critiques class divisions, exploring themes of exploitation, societal conflict, and moral decay. Central to the narrative is Titubi, the privileged daughter of a business tycoon, who initially attempts to sabotage a play about the farmers' uprising but eventually aligns herself with the oppressed peasants. By embracing their cause, Titubi rejects her elite status, symbolizing a "class suicide" that contrasts with the legendary Moremi's loyalty to the ruling class. Osofisan adapts the Moremi myth to address contemporary injustices, using the past to combat modern exploitation and oppression.

Farewell to a Cannibal Rage by Femi Osofisan delves into the complexities of reconciliation amid a deeply rooted family feud fuelled by vengeance. The play centres on the relationship

between Akanbi and Olabisi, two young lovers who are unaware of the violent history that exists between their families. Osofisan presents love as a powerful antidote to the cycle of violence and hatred that has consumed both families.

The story begins with Akanbi and Olabisi being sent away to Lagos to protect them from becoming casualties of their families' ongoing feud. Ironically, in the city, the two fall in love without knowledge of their families' bitter past. Unbeknownst to them, Olabisi's father, Atanda, had murdered Akanbi's father, Folabi. In retaliation, Akanbi's uncle killed Atanda, perpetuating the cycle of violence between the two families.

The young lovers return home to seek their parents' approval for marriage, only to discover the tragic history that binds their families in enmity. This revelation forces them to confront the painful past and the challenge of overcoming deep-seated animosity.

Conclusion

This chapter has succinctly provided elements such as the background of the study, aims and objectives, statement of the problem, research methodology and question, significance, and scope of the study in carrying out the proposed project. With a proper dive into the depiction of society in Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, the research will be able to explore the various struggles of the "have-nots" and establish the need for a change – revolution.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is expedient in academic scholarship to refer to the existing arguments of other researchers in the process of investigating a given study. The previous or existing contributions provide a guide for the course of the current research. Based on this, this chapter examines the views and contributions to the study of Marxism and literature and the adoption of the theory in the study of works by Femi Osofisan. With the growth of Marxist work in academic fields, it is hardly surprising that the relationship between history and drama has attracted considerable attention in recent years. History and drama perform similar basic functions: they record human experiences to educate the living as well as posterity. Rex Daniel defines history as the “memory of human group experience” (17). Obaro Ikime stresses that if such a memory of human experience is forgotten or ignored, then people will cease in that measure to be human. History does not only deal with the memory of the past; it also has a link with the present. In this regard, Fadeiye sees history as an attempt to rethink the past (2). It inquires into the past in terms of what happened, when it happened, and how it happened. It equally examines the developments and changes that have occurred in different human societies in the past and how such changes affect, influence, and determine the present conditions of life in the society. Drama is a product of social life, like the other genres of literature. It is truthful that the dramatist selects material for his or her creative output from happenings in real life, which is the hallmark of history. Victoria Adeniyi comments on the interrelatedness of history and drama when she opines that history that is written in the form of drama is on a higher plane, more intense, more universal, and more philosophical than history, is written chronologically, and is more important. While some researchers have focused only on

describing the differences, other works have sought to show the affinity. However, the review focuses on related works on the Marxist ideology of social conflicts in the society in literary texts. The associated issues and conceptual thinking entail Marxist theory and aesthetics, the social implications of Marxism in African works of literature, and Osofisan and revolutionary aesthetics. The theoretical framework for this study is built on the Marxist revolution.

Marxist Theory and Aesthetics

A thorough framework for comprehending society, economics, and culture is provided by Marxist theory, which has its roots in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The idea that class struggle is the primary force behind historical development and that the ruling class uses the labour of the working class for its own financial gain is fundamental to Marxist thought. Marxist theory not only analyses political economy but also provides insights into aesthetics, positing that art and culture are inextricably linked to the material conditions of society rather than existing in isolation from them. Marxist aesthetics emerges from the broader framework of Marxist theory, which analyses society through the lens of class struggle and historical materialism. The Marxist view is based on societal structure, which is determined by the economic forces of production. Ola Balogun adds that Marxism is fundamentally anchored in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' works. Marxism is a dominant critical theory that started in the middle of the 19th century and flourished tremendously throughout the twentieth century. It is concerned with historical and cultural issues. Marxism explores social and economic factors as crucial denominators of relationships in the society. Karl Marx envisions a capitalist society as basically a class society where one class oppresses the other. He was an avowed adversary of oppression in whatever form. Thus, he joined the proletariat (working class) to advocate for the abolition of class oppression.

Marxist aesthetics is especially concerned with comprehending culture and the arts in light of the dominant social and economic structures. Fundamentally, Marxist aesthetics sees art as a creation of the material circumstances of society, molded by the prevailing production modalities and the class interests they uphold. Marxist theory sees art as an essential component of the superstructure that both reflects and reinforces the underlying economic foundation rather than as existing in a vacuum. It is believed that artists are both products of their social environment and agents with the power to change and challenge it. Thus, Marxist aesthetics aims to reveal the class relations that are present in the creation, circulation, and consumption of art, emphasising the ways in which art can either uphold or subvert established hierarchies of power.

The notion that art reflects social relations is one of the main tenets of Marxist aesthetics. Artistic representations are not neutral; rather, they are influenced by material conditions and societal power structures. For example, literary works often use characters and conflicts to reflect the struggles that exist between different social classes. Marxist aesthetics reveals the social tensions and underlying class contradictions by analysing these representations.

Marxism, Drama and African Playwrights

The idea of freeing Africa from the shackles of imperialism, integrating the continent into the process of modernization and giving its people an identity of their own, thereby leading the continent to the path of glory, started a long time ago. African communalism was proposed to integrate African people into the communal living of the past for its survival. Marxism preaches a classless society through dialectical materialism. These ideological leanings are coterminous in nature, when assessed keenly. In essence, they all reflect that the aim of some post-African leaders, like that of some contemporary writers, has always been to gear the

continent into rigorous re-definition, re-invigoration and revolutionary ethos in order to regain its lost glory.

“African drama is a creative endeavour that is aimed at recreating the African experience for entertainment, instruction, re-awakening, re-orientation and social reengineering ... serves as a compendium of the worries, success, dilemmas and aspirations of African people - a total African experience for the procurement of a better society” (Adeseke). The experience incorporates both past and present experiences but places more emphasis on the prevalent realities of modern Africa “for the procurement of a better society.”

Marxism is one of the major frameworks that playwrights use to critique societal structures and imagine alternative futures. It is part of the long-standing intertwining of African drama with socio-political movements and ideologies. During the decolonization era, Marxism gained popularity in Africa as newly independent nations struggled with issues of political oppression, social inequality, and economic exploitation left over from colonial rule. Aware of these injustices, African playwrights like Kole Omotoso, Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Tunde Fatunde, and others used Marxist theory as a tool to comprehend and question the status quo.

However, there have been some criticisms levelled against the application of Marxist theory to diverse cultural contexts. While Marxist theories provide useful insights into class conflict and economic exploitation, some scholars argue that they may not fully capture the complexity of African societies. Critics emphasise the importance of conducting comprehensive analyses that take into account indigenous belief systems, cultural practices, and historical trajectories, cautioning against essentialising African experiences within a Western Marxist framework.

Marxist criticism in Africa has frequently been associated with two critics: the Tanzanian literary critic, Grant Kamenju and the Nigerian sociologist, Omafume F. Onoge. Onoge notes

in "The Crisis of Consciousness in Modern African Literature: A Survey" that the colonial environment had a sociological influence on African literature and how African critics viewed it. This did not allow it to develop progressively but forced it to be "reactive," resulting in a sense of "reactionary." African societies are characterised by intersecting forms of oppression based on factors like race, gender, ethnicity, and religion, while Marxist theory emphasises class struggle as the main axis of social conflict. According to some academics, Marxist analyses run the risk of ignoring these intersecting dynamics, which would hinder their ability to completely understand the subtleties of power relations in Africa. Indebted to the Austrian Marxist, Ernst Fischer, Onoge points out that a progressive African literary criticism would have to be based on writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Sembene Oussmane and on thinkers such as Fanon and Rodney. Onoge comes to terms firmly with the illusions of "African socialism." He criticises the concept of ethnicity and pleads for a proper class analysis.

In Nigerian literary works, one of the many responsibilities of Nigerian playwrights is to expose the oppressor class and its oppressive mechanisms. Marxist critics can display their "craftsmanship" on this platform, which takes the shape of interwoven settings, themes, characters, and events. Despite the rejection of being labelled as "Marxists" by other playwrights such as Rotimi and Soyinka, their plays are socially relevant because they question the oppression and cruel servitude of the masses by the ruling class, which characterises Nigerian society. Due to this, Marxists believe that class conflict and the enmity that characterises capitalist societies are the main themes of society's history. Based on a thorough analysis, the majority of Nigerian plays that have been published have thematic contexts that heavily emphasise the contrast between the "haves" and the "have-nots." As a result, plays like *If... A Tragedy of the Ruled, Hopes of the Living Deads, and Rotimi's The Gods Are Not to Blame* highlight the stark divide between the upper and lower classes. For

instance, even though Soyinka's scapegoating tendencies are apparent in *The Strong Breed*, the play confirms what Marxists refer to as the bourgeois manipulation of the proletariat. Likewise, in *Morountodun*, Osofisan adapts the myth of Queen Moremi of Ile-Ife who sacrificed her honour and freedom to save the city of Ile-Ife from the incessant raids of a neighbouring community. Osofisan, while acknowledging the sacrifice of Moremi, interprets her actions as those of a royal who did not want to lose her privileges and is therefore willing to do anything to maintain the status quo, even while depriving the public of their rights. Thus, it makes sense to concur with Asein's assessment that a recurring theme in black literature is alienation and exile. It is a recurring theme in the writings of numerous black writers who have either chosen to embark on an epic quest to discover their ancestry or have at some point been forced to submit to the sociopolitical conditions that prevail in their nations. When it comes to "the development of human personality, human values, emotions, communication and relations, equity, justice, fair play, and other humanistic ethics and ethos," African dramatists are known for their devotion to the humanistic mission, which Asein's option initially seems to explain (Uji 6).

Undoubtedly, this will bring us to the intra-text's socio-political consciousness, which appears to demonstrate what Gbileeka called "the coercive machinery which the colonial powers set up propelled a protest tradition in the theatrical idiom, which ultimately paved the way for the development of a radical theatrical tradition." (11). Theatrical experiences in Nigeria are naturally more closely associated with politics and the divisive nature of poor leadership. Nigerian drama, since its inception, has served as a medium for evaluating the performance of the ruling class. Ever since, it has continued to be a means of praising or criticising the class. Additionally, it can be used to organise public opinion in favour of or against a specific administration.

Critical Review of Femi Osofisan's Aesthetics and Language

Irrespective of the critique on the degree of Femi Osofisan's Marxist ideals, he is the most productive of the second generation of Nigerian dramatists. He is a radical writer and critic with an articulated commitment to a materialist, socialist, and class perspective. Osofisan's dramaturgy often draws inspiration from traditional culture but is distinguished by his aestheticism for a far more radical purpose than any other Nigerian playwright. The aesthetics of Femi Osofisan's language lie in the beauty that characterises the medium through which the content is realised and the form defined in his drama. One of the most important aesthetic components of Femi Osofisan's dramatic works is his deft use of language. His unique style seamlessly blends the poetic and the colloquial. This linguistic duality serves a twofold purpose: firstly, it enhances the relatability of his plays to a diverse audience, transcending social and educational barriers. Secondly, it subtly reflects the very class distinctions that Marxist theory critiques. Osofisan also includes songs, chants, and proverbs that have their roots in the regional culture. This enrichment adds a deep sense of poignancy and cultural resonance to the Marxist themes of class struggle and resistance, while also fortifying the narrative structure of his plays.

Aristotle defined diction as a technique used to convey to the audience the characters' thoughts and, ultimately, the playwright's overall meaning. In his plays, Osofisan makes use of compressed syntax and creative diction. For example, creative diction and simplified syntax are used to convey the scene in *The Chattering and the Song* where Leje and Mokan play Whot card. The scene also uses poetic conceit and subtleties. Similarly, elliptical syntax, condensed forms, and one-word or brief dialogues are common in drama. For example, Alhaja goes straight into action, without wasting words on preambles by advertising vacant positions for servants to work for the rich in *Once Upon Four Robbers*.

Alhaja: “Vacancy. Fast-growing company. Excellent opportunities for ambitious young men willing to work with their hands. Positions-”

Angola: “Cleaner”

Hasan: “Cook” (pp. 15-16)

As a result, Osofisan introduces his themes and characters through the meticulous compactness and conciseness of his language, precisely establishing the play's location and setting and delicately evoking the right mood. He dramatises, in the play, the plight of the robbers as that of the “wretched of the earth” in the hands of their glib state oppressors. Osofisan dynamically develops the story and distinguishes the characters through language. The dialogues show the characters, revealing their suffering, sadness or happiness, their growth or decline. It serves as a vehicle for expressing the antagonists' and protagonists' competing interests and conflicts of will.

In order to create a visually striking play, Olu Obafemi affirms that Osofisan appropriated traditional theater's elements: “Osofisan appreciably succeeds in employing theatrical mechanics to harmonise the related arts of music, dance, mime, and verbal arts, achieving an impressive aesthetic quality...” The language of Osofisan's drama takes after the simplicity of the folktale. The dialogue is captivating despite its accessibility and economy. In *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels*, the scene in which the banned musicians discuss the possibility of the new government de-prescribing them is interesting. The musicians' opinions about the government — particularly its impermanence, carelessness, corruption, and wickedness — are made clear in this brief scene by the sparing use of words. The wickedness in government is an apparent criticism of the public execution of hard drug traffickers, which occurred against the consensus of public opinion during General Mohammed Buhari's regime in 1984. The aesthetics of Osofisan are evident in his use of imagery, consciously or instinctively. He uses this powerful device to embody the very essence of dramatic action in the language of

the plays and to make a strong sensory appeal to the audience. For example, in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, the dominant imagery is of animals of prey like hyenas, serpents, leopards, panthers, and others engaged in rapacious acts of devouring, tearing, biting, clawing, and rending their victims. This imagery clearly underscores the violent and forceful behaviour of the parents (Titi and Adigun) against the marriage of their helpless offspring (Olabisi and Akanbi). The imagery is employed to paint a picture of the two classes in the society and their patterns of behaviour. Images of the poor and poverty, as seen in *Morountodun*, are all present in all of Osofisan's plays. It is a deliberate act by the playwright to draw the attention of the audience to the act of exploitation, injustice, and oppression being experienced by the poor and the downtrodden in the hands of the ruling class, who are insensitive to the plight of the masses in Nigeria. The acute poverty of the peasant farmers, who are exploited and oppressed by the government, is graphically depicted by Titubi in *Morountodun*.

Titubi: ... farmers cannot eat their own products, for they need the money from the market. They tend the yams but dare not taste. They raise chickens but must be content with wind in their stomach. And then, when they return wary from the market, the tax man is waiting with his bill ... (p. 66).

This is also similar to the experience of the poor in *The Chattering and the Song* during the reign of the tyrannical ruler, Alafin Abiodun.

The subtle phraseology and straightforward sentence structure of Osofisan's writing are what make his language beautiful. Truly, Osofisan conforms with Lamborn's definition of a great artist. That he can "move the hearts of men and feel them most deeply and can touch the most hearts with sympathy. According to Osofisan, plays can, in the words of Latin American author Mario Vergas Llosa, "become a meaningful and positive activity, which depicts the scars of reality and prescribes remedies, frustrating official lies so that the truth shines through" (29), even though they lack the ability to overthrow governments.

Oral Traditions: A Critical Tool for Reconstructing History and Myth

Certainly, the most dominant trend in contemporary African literature is for writers to return to their traditional roots in order to enrich their works with oral literature. The literature of present-day Africa emerged from the cross-fertilisation of conservative and innovative trends, and the precolonial tradition has influenced the orientation of modern writing (Albert Gerard). In this regard, Osofisan stands out because he has consistently used oral literature techniques in his drama. These devices were used dialectically to reflect the new sociopolitical realities of the time. According to Awodiya, he achieves this by radically revising and reshaping familiar history, myth, and legend in light of contemporary realities, emphasising their dialectical dynamism, and imbuing them with fresher meanings. Furthermore, he exposes the ills of society and presents the audience with his vision of a new social order (57).

In *Morountodun*, as well as, *The Chattering and the Song*, Osofisan employs the elements of oral history, myth, and legend in a subversive way by exploiting the considerable potential of tradition with a positive impact on contemporary Nigerian life. Using these elements, he exposes the ills of the society and provides the audience with his vision of a new social order.

In *The Chattering and the Song*, Osofisan uses the “Iwori-Otida” riddle to describe Sonri and Yajin's amorous relationship. This Ifa motif is used dialectically in order to reveal the class system and its effects on people. Osofisan uses the history of the Oyo people during the reign of Alafin Abiodun to tell a story of oppressor versus oppressed.

Afolayan Bosede noted in her work how Osofisan reconstructs myth and history (139). She asserts:

Significantly also, in *Morountodun*, Osofisan reconstructs the Moremi myth and dialectically positions Titubi, who is supposed to present our modern-day

Moremi, to commit what has been called “class suicide” by advocating the cause of the poor people unlike the mystical Moremi whose exploits served the state.

This can be related to what Osofisan had earlier stated:

We must begin to confront history at its empirical points. We must move our people away from superstition, and help them to analyse objectively, and hence master their immediate material condition. We must look at the immediate situation, at the problems that concern us here and now.

Osofisan draws creative inspiration for his completely unique and revolutionary dramatic art from the traditional Yoruba community's complex cosmology and belief system. Plays like *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* provide an absolute representation of this. The same adherence to tradition applies to the interpretation of the role of the deity Orunmila in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*. The play demonstrates the people's belief in Orunmila as the god of wisdom and guidance, whom they must consult when making important decisions that affect their lives. The same can be seen in his play, *Many Colours Make the Thunder King*. The play reveals the activities of gods and goddesses. The play delves into various deities and their super or suprahuman exploits. The central story is based on the Sango myth.

Commenting on *Many Colours Make the Thunder King*, Olu Obafemi and Abdullahi S Abubakar's essay: “Fabulous Theatre: A Reassessment of Osofisan's Revolutionary Dialectics” draws similarities between the tale of Sango and the contemporary Nigerian politics. These critics are more concerned with the political intrigues of Sango and Oya. They state:

Osofisan uses an abridged myth, culled from the myth of the Shango-King and the Shango-god, an anthropomorphic essence, to express his concern for the political blunder and the desecration of humanity, which permeate the Nigeria

polity ... The similarities in the characteristics of Shango, the King, and civilian/military leadership in Nigeria, since independence, empower Osofisan to explore the legendary/mythical figures of Shango, Oya, Osun and Alagemo (esu's messenger) to draw attention to the unhealthy political development that threatens the country ... (157-158)

As Soyinka emphasised, artists must infuse their works with individuality and imagination rather than simply transposing a communal pool of African folklore, myths, and proverbs. Osofisan has incorporated this viewpoint into many of his artistic endeavours, contributing to the overall development of his plays.

A Critical Review of Osofisan's *Morountodun*

According to Wumi Raji, Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* is arguably the most ambitious and most accomplished play to date. "Morountodun" of the title is the name Marshall, the leader of the peasant fighters, gives to Titubi, the heroine of the play, the two having fallen in love with each other. As translated by the playwright himself, the word means "I have found a sweet thing." In giving her the name, Marshall seems to have openly articulated what Titubi represents to him. The play sees about the transformation and change of cause through a peasant revolt in the former Western region of Nigeria, home to the majority of the Yoruba population. This unforgettable peasant-driven revolt continues to be referenced by grassroots organisations as a successful example of collective action against unpopular government policies. Adeniran asserts that the revolt was predominantly aimed at agitating for a reduction in taxes, though some believed it had political undertones to it. Samuel O. Chukwu-Okoronkwo likewise agrees that *Morountodun* re-enacts the socio-political and economic realities of our time. It presents "reality from ... class position" (12 p.35), and emphasises an inequitable society where the masses that produce the wealth starve and are

deprived only to maintain an oppressive government. Osofisan's advocacy for collectivism in this social revolution is symbolised in Titubi's handing over the gun to Marshal with the hope of establishing a new alliance for the betterment of the masses for which cause they are fighting. This may have been borne out of her conviction that the government cannot, "win a war against a people whose cause is just" (p.70).

Scholars have noted how Osofisan employs these cultural motifs to legitimize the peasants' struggle and to challenge the hegemony of Western cultural imperialism. One such academic study is by Femi Euba, who addresses Osofisan's dedication to utilising his plays as vehicles for social change in his 1996 book *Poetics of the Creative Process: An African Writer's Reflections*. Euba draws attention to the Marxist perspective that underpins Osofisan's works, such as *Morountodun*, which frequently depict revolution as an inevitable reaction to repressive class institutions. According to Euba, Osofisan's characters have profound metamorphoses, such as Titubi's, as they transition from a position of luxury to one of sympathy with the disadvantaged, reflecting the possibility of class consciousness that is at the heart of Marxist doctrine.

Furthermore, in his book *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision*, Olu Obafemi uses *Morountodun* as an example of Osofisan's Marxist inclinations. Obafemi describes the play as a call to action, highlighting the role of revolution in destroying postcolonial Nigeria's entrenched social and economic systems. He contends that through the character of Titubi, Osofisan depicts the possibility of cross-class solidarity, in which members of the bourgeoisie might band together in the battle against exploitation.

The legend of Moremi is one of the two primary archives transformed in *Morountodun*. While the one is a mythico-legendary event, the other, the peasants' uprising that occurred in the Western region of Nigeria in the late 1960s, represents a concrete historical experience.

Lekan Balogun in his own version of Moremi portrays Moremi Ajasoro as a legendary heroine rather than a mythical figure. Moremi is presented as a war captive from Ofa who lives in Ile-Ife and grows to love and admire the Ife people. Lekan Balogun presents Moremi as hailing from Ofa, a town in the present Kwara state. He gives her son's name as Omolarere. The play talks more about the themes of heroism and selflessness. The price of success is giving one's best and doing it with absolute commitment, determination and focus. Moremi symbolises patriotism, loyalty, determination, love for humanity, selflessness and courage. The play wishes not to only entertain but also stimulate people's intellect. At the end, Chukwu-Okoronkwo asserts that Osofisan favours a compromise agreement, a round table negotiation between the revolting farmers and the government. This is an advocacy for social revolution or perhaps resolution, than total revolution – the effecting of certain changes in an inequitable system that does not favour the masses that produce the wealth of the society. In Morountodun, therefore, the theme of revolution as *sine qua non* in an inequitable society runs through the play.

A Critical Review of *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*

The play is often regarded as a response to the 1970s Biafran-Nigerian war. Osofisan characterizes his play as “a plea for forgiveness, and for reconciliation, and particularly for a renewal among the young.” In Osofisan’s *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* (1986), there is a strong metaphor relevant to the postcolonial state on the efficacy of a true reconciliation as a strategy to be adopted. The consolidation of contrasting opinions within society is necessary for the establishment of both sociopolitical and economic progress. Ademeso believes that the import of metaphor inherent in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* goes beyond the love story between Akanbi and Olabisi; it reflects the universality of true reconciliation as a panacea to the growing social, political, economic and religious problems which permeate a postcolonial

state. In *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare mirrors the essentials of true love against the backdrop of hatred and war. This is in tune with the philosophical stand-point of Osofisan that collective struggle can win freedom for a society. Collective struggle, therefore, works well when love emerges through true reconciliation. The future of every nation depends, largely, on the existence of love and peace that are true reflections of a genuine reconciliation. The appropriateness of this play, at the visit of President Babangida, is motivated by the problems associated with the Nigerian political and social landscape, especially the effects of marginalisation by some ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. The questions raised by Osofisan in 1991 may also be relevant today as the Nigerian landscape is bedevilled with hostage-taking in Niger Delta, Oil Spillage, and Inflation, resulting from unfriendly government policies.

Well, it is now twenty-one years after the Civil War, and all the time, I have never ceased to ask myself – have all those aspirations been fulfilled? Do we have a better, healthier nation now? Are we all united behind a genuinely solidifying and creative vision? (Osofisan, p. 5).

In addition, Werbner acknowledges the play as a move towards the realisation of Pan-Africanism in the post-colonial atmosphere with a conscious effort at preserving the cultural and historical heritage of the past.

Limitation in the Marxist Ideals of Osofisan's Plays

This study dispels the popular belief that Femi Osofisan is not a total Marxist, despite the claims of some academics that he is. It also reveals that some of his writings considerably lack the Marxist spirit. Some academics agree, such as Dapo Adelugba, who contends that although Femi Osofisan adheres to Marxian doctrines, this does not mean that he is a Marxist, despite the assertions of many detractors who cannot provide evidence to support such claims (39). Rather, he categorises his works as proto-Marxian. Adelugba claims that

Osofisan is not a pure Marxist but rather demonstrates Marxist tendencies through his appropriation of literary borrowings and intertexts. According to Tess Onwueme, these kinds of borrowings “connote multiplicity of meanings and forms that oscillate between old and new theatricalities, between radical and liberal ideologues, and between retrogressive and progressive world-views.”

Similarly, Osofisan's dramatic theory of aesthetics can occasionally be undermined by actuality. It is surprising to learn that even Muyiwa P. Awodiya, a staunch supporter of Osofisan's Marxist principles, agrees with Osundare that “although Osofisan's plays advocate social change, they do not have a clear-cut ideological leaning” (38). The inference is that because his works encompass a broad spectrum of doctrines, critics' opinions on how to classify them vary significantly.

Osofisan's plays frequently identify issues without offering solutions, instead handing the equations back to the audience so they can figure out the answers on their own. For example, Osofisan makes the case that society is actually criminal-minded in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, a play that revolves around the discussion of public executions of armed robbers in Nigeria. He argues that there is no justification for killing armed robbers while ignoring dishonest law enforcement officials, politicians, profiteers, and civil servants who are dishonest, but he does not offer a substitute course of action.

One of Osofisan's most evaluative critics, Victor Ukaegbu, criticises him for producing fiction. In his plays, women are continuously relegated to the periphery of society due to culturally constructed patriarchal myths and stereotypes. For example, Osofisan used Morountodun to create the character of Moremi, a woman who is incapable of transcending the human weaknesses she criticises in others, even though these flaws arise whenever self-preservation and unproven polemics collide (184-185). As a result, Morountodun claims that Moremi's action was crippling and did not really strengthen her revolutionary credentials.

Perhaps there is no doubt that Femi Osofisan could be classified as a Marxist writer who demands social change in favour of the oppressed and downtrodden masses in the society as the theme of his plays expresses. Contrary to the opinions of his many readers and critics who consider him to be the epitome of a Marxist, this ideology is somewhat limited. On that point, it is widely held that this work tends to deviate from and challenge these claims as disputed. The reason being that difference, departure, and even superiority are often hastily read into his works.

CHAPTER 3

MARXIST AESTHETICS IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S *MOROUNTODUN*

This chapter will examine Osofisan's *Morountodun*'s multifaceted examination of revolutionary consciousness in this introduction, looking at how the play's characters deal with oppression, face their own complicity, and eventually set out on a path towards social and political awakening. A landmark piece of Nigerian theatre, *Morountodun* by Femi Osofisan, captivates audiences with its potent depiction of social unrest and the pursuit of liberation. *Morountodun* creates a tapestry of political intrigue, individual transformation, and group struggle against the backdrop of a rural Nigerian village. The concept of revolutionary consciousness – the realisation of social injustices and the ensuing resolve to bring about revolutionary change – lies at the core of the book. With its complex storyline, deep character development, and moving thematic examination, *Morountodun* challenges viewers to think critically about the difficulties of revolutionary struggle and the enduring strength of group resistance against oppression. In this section, we will examine Osofisan's moving story and explore the various levels of meaning that are present in *Morountodun*, highlighting its significance in today's fights for justice and liberation.

Synopsis of *Morountodun*

Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* serves as a historical reimagining of the 1969 farmers' revolt in Nigeria's former Western Region. The play dissects the alienation of the masses from the fruits of their labour, exposing the stark economic disparity. At its core lies a potent critique of class division, further amplified by the exploration of themes such as the social structure's inherent exploitation breeding societal conflict, the pervasive moral decay inflicted upon both

rural and urban populations, and the unwavering courage, hope, and determination of the masses to transcend the limitations imposed by their circumstances.

The play opens with a theatre group trying to put up a play about the farmers' uprising. While on stage, the director informs the audience of the play's subject and provides last-minute instructions to the crew and actors. In the course of this, Titubi, the spoiled daughter of a business tycoon, makes an appearance on stage. She is exquisitely attired in an abundance of jewellery and makeup, and she is wearing the prominently fashionable Moremi necklace – a small gold dagger encircled by nuggets – at the time. Bravely, she enters the room and confronts the playwright. In fact, she attempts to sabotage the play by demanding that it end because it denigrates her class. She ignores the director's explanations that they are merely acting out a play and are not insulting anyone.

Eventually, police arrive at the scene. Confronting Titubi, the superintendent challenges her to use her courage and wealth to advance her social status rather than upsetting uninvolved parties. The Superintendent is then forewarned by Titubi, who discloses her ancestry as the daughter of market woman royalty, Alhaja Kabirat. Salami makes an effort to dispel Titubi's exaggerated sense of self-importance after discovering her lineage. He draws attention to the fact that her actions are interfering with those who want to put on a play on stage. Salami offers a more positive course of action: offering to help repel the rebellious farmers who are advancing on the city.

Later on, Titubi offers her assistance in apprehending Marshal, the peasant leader. She is jailed after conspiring with the police superintendent to plan this. When her mother, Alhaja, visits her in prison, she is coerced into going along with the plan. In the prison, Titubi imagines herself as Moremi and decides to apprehend Marshal. Titubi is released with the prisoners and goes back to their camp with them after the peasants, Bogunde, and Marshal arrive in the city to free the prisoners. Titubi gives up her rich class identity to identify with

and join the peasant farmers after witnessing their suffering in the camp, thereby committing class suicide. This is not the case with the legendary Moremi, who fought alongside the government forces in the ancient Ile-Ife Kingdom to protect her ruling class from the onslaught of Igbo warriors. In order to meet the needs of modern Nigeria, Osofisan crafts the Moremi myth in *Morountodun*. He uses the energies of the past to combat the forces of injustice, exploitation, and oppression that exist in modern society.

Interrogating Class Hierarchies

Examining the various works done about Osofisan's *Morountodun*, it can be quite gathered that the works focused mainly on political ideologies, the representation of females or myth. No study focuses entirely on the aesthetic aspects of the play that are used to raise awareness among the audience and effect social change. *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* states that "the study of aesthetics is concerned with the understanding and appraisal of beauty, especially as it is expressed in art." Derived from the Greek word "aisthesis," aesthetics refers to the philosophical analysis of all artistic creations as well as instances of natural beauty. It goes on to say that aesthetics encompasses the nature of style and its aesthetic significance, as well as how content is communicated through the senses. It can even incite them to take action or effect some change, whether that change is social, economic, political, or cultural. There are even claims that early Nigerian drama contains traces of that method. One of the most famous Nigerian dramatists known for his use of aesthetics as a dramatic or theatrical technique is Femi Osofisan.

Morountodun is an apparent presentation of his use of Marxist aesthetics to change the society. Osofisan asserts that it "demonstrates a process of class suicide in which a member of the middle class is mobilised into an alliance with the peasantry in order to perform the catalytic role necessary in our undeveloped economies for the drama of social

transformation.” In this play, Osofisan endeavours to mobilise the impoverished populace “to take a unified stand and resist against widespread poverty, the exploitation of the poor, and any forces of opposition that seek to maintain the infertile status quo” (Iji 399).

One way Osofisan is able to employ the technique to create the class structure is by addressing the audience with the prologue, epilogue, and throughout the action of the play. In the play, the Director’s prologue immediately sets the theme of class conflict embedded in the play as well as in the social consciousness of the audience. The playwright directly addresses the audience, providing context for the societal issues at hand, such as the entrenched class divisions within the community.

Director: ... The play, as you will soon see, starts in the year 1969, the month of September...It deals with another war, the one that was later to be popularly known as the Agbekoya uprising, in which ordinary farmers, in the west of the country, rose up and confronted the state...If we could not speak about the war in the east, because of the stiff decree, would we be silent about the one in the west?...Well, we decided not to be silent. We decided to go and rouse people up by doing a play about it, and take it round to all open places. (1-2).

As revealed by Hutchison, Osofisan does that to incite “the audience to choose positions for themselves personally and potentially for the nation too” (41). In many other instances, the Director and other characters are also seen addressing the audience. Titubi addresses the audience to defend her people, saying:

Look at me. Go on, feast your eyes. Am I not good to look at? Ehn? So what is wrong with being rich? So there is a peasant rebellion. And then? What have we got to do with it? Is it a sin to be rich? Night after night! Day after day! Lies! Insults! In the newspapers! On the radio. On the television...And then here they

come with a play. But it's got to stop! This is our country too, and we shall not run away! I, Titubi, daughter of Alhaja Kabirat, I am stopping this play tonight! And if you're wise, you will go and return your tickets now and collect your money back (7-8).

Osofisan is able to depict the social class structure in society by using this. The speech by Titubi demonstrates the hegemonic class's oppressive character and their desire to undermine any kind of reform. Class issues are presented to the audience and spectators early in the play and are categorised along economic lines. In Titubi's portrayal, the wealthy haughtily display their wealth and abuse the power it grants them. Through her economic class's corrupting influence and power, she turns the various people in the theatre into an anonymous group of poor peasants vying for the small amounts of money she tosses around; eventually, even the Director joins in. She affirms her belief that the peasants are as greedy as the upper class; they decry and are eager to get their hands on their property, no matter how it is obtained, with a measured impudence. Capable of standing in for her class, Titubi shows little regard for the law and the officials who really work for them. When Salami, a law enforcement official, caught her breaking the law, Titubi made fun of him, saying: "Dare it, you smelling pig. You offspring of some teak-laden litter at the back of a latrine! Dare to put your filthy hands on me and all of your wretched family will never finish paying for it." (13).

By employing this method to illustrate the class system, he brings up the subject of power dynamics between the lower and upper classes. Because of the disproportionate profits they receive from the labour of the workers (lower class), the exploiting class (upper class) enjoys incredible wealth and comfort. This group can indulge in a hedonistic lifestyle of opulence that is far beyond the wildest dreams of the exploited poor due to their extreme wealth. One can infer this from the exchange between Alhaja Kabirat and the superintendent.

Superintendent: You should know, Alhaja. After all, these rebels are of your own creation, you who are used to feeding on others.

Alhaja: Look here –

Superintendent: I'll tell you. 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!

Alhaja: It's a lie! No one has ever died of hunger in this country! I am surprised at you, a police officer, carrying this kind of baseless propaganda...

Superintendent: They claim that you and your politicians have been taking off the profits of their farms to feed your cities, to feed your own throats and buy more jewels and flippery. And so, at last, they are coming for the reckoning. (p. 24).

This scene attempts to depict the capitalism that is prevalent in the community. Consider also the callous exploitation of the labour of the disadvantaged class, embodied by the peasant farmers. Titubi's statement to the authorities during his confrontation demonstrates yet another example of class injustice: "I saw myself growing up, knowing no such sufferings as these. With always so much to eat, even servants feed their dogs... Yet here, farmers cannot eat their own products, for they need the money from the market. They tend the yam but dare not taste..." (p. 66). Her confrontation reveals the deep-seated class resentment and the demand for an end to exploitation.

In summary, Osofisan employs this specific technique to encourage audience reflection and active participation in society. Osofisan holds the opinion that it is the citizens' responsibility to improve their living conditions, not that of God. Osofisan thus effectively employs the

play's organisation to further his goal of creating a layered and thought-provoking exploration of class dynamics and motivating the populace to act and bring about socioeconomic change. He compels audiences to see the play not just as entertainment but as a tool for social critique and potential transformation. To sum up, Osofisan states that "the theatre can contribute to the process of social transformation through the dialectic between the real and imaginary, between the forces of tradition and the modernist consciousness" ("Ritual and Revolutionary Ethos" 78).

Revolutionary Aesthetics: Social Change

The second half of the nineteenth century was dominated by the ideas of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. With his ideas, systematically codified as Marxism, Marx sought an alternative philosophical and ideological approach to socio-economic development. The point of the concept is to change from the dominion of capitalism to a socialist and more egalitarian society. The Marxist concept postulates a revolutionary philosophy that places the destiny of the proletarian in their hands. Thus, unless they put up a formidable fight to effect a necessary change in their condition, they will continue to languish under the bondage of the capitalist oppression and tyranny. Change is the bedrock of Marxist ideas. No wonder Marx described capitalism as evil and called for its change while resorting to socialism. As Karl Marx himself has said, and which Marxists are fond of repeating, the philosopher has only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, however, to change it (2).

On the basis of Marxist philosophy and the recognition of the class structure, some writers, such as Femi Osofisan, have come to align to fight against the oppressive nature of the capitalists. Emeka Nwabueze has drawn attention to Osofisan's enlistment in the struggle when he observes that with his works, he "has consistently attempted to arouse revolutionary consciousness in his readers and audience" alike, as one who is "spontaneously drawn to

social injustice and its victims." The picture that Osofisan paints of his society with his works, therefore, portrays him as a dramatist with a concern for the problems of his society.

According to Muyiwa Awodiya, many of Osofisan's plays depict the persistent vices of oppression, injustice, and corruption. Osofisan continually considers the evils in society, highlights social injustices, and, as a result, makes people realise how urgent it is to take action to improve their lives. The sympathetic circumstances of the masses are not acknowledged by our dramatists as being predetermined by God. He laments the disorderly state of society and the reality that a small percentage of people live in constant luxury while the majority endure extreme poverty. These themes in Osofisan's drama are referred to by Charles Uji as revolutionary romanticism and the dramatisation of revolution (105). Osofisan stated in a 1993 interview with Muyiwa Awodiya:

Corruption, injustice and oppression do not come from heaven, but from the man-made god on earth. It is not a divine order that some people should suffer or enjoy forever. Although our leaders tell us that it has been ordained like that by fate or by God so that we can accept what is happening around us as destiny (139-140).

The masses are not exempt from Osofisan. He slams them hard, calling their state of complacency the main cause of their status as "the wretched of the earth." Osofisan states once more in Awodiya's Excursions: "We ourselves are also responsible for whatever our society may become. What we have in the society is what we have ourselves created." (139-140).

Morountodun is a play that reflects colonialism, neocolonialism, and the struggle for independence in Africa. According to some critics, the play doesn't explicitly depict a revolutionary movement, but it can be derived from the themes and instances interpreted as revolutionary. Osofisan adapts the Moremi myth of injustice and struggles to suit the needs of

modern Nigerian society; as a result, the play's central conflict revolves around peasant struggle. The author weaves together revolution on two fronts: retelling a myth of revolution and echoing the Agbekoya uprising. An oppressive state authority is being opposed by a peasant community in this conflict. The peasants are struggling to overcome the forces of injustice and exploitation that this ruling class has imposed upon them. The authority is becoming more and more concerned about this conflict as it becomes harder to handle. In order to illustrate how such cultural heritage could be used to meet current social needs, Osofisan has recreated the myth of Moremi in this play.

Representing Moremi on stage gives life to a figure that had previously only existed in people's imaginations. The myth of Moremi is used to transplant the story to a contemporary setting, aligning Moremi's fight with the struggles of Nigerian peasants and also establishing the need for a fight against injustice. This contributes to the narrative's continued preservation and highlights the significance of continuity in people's lives. It also depicts a part of the sequence of events that culminated in Moremi's deification for risking her life to save her people. The play centres on the lives of farmers who are denied full access to the fruits of their labour despite working so hard. Osofisan uses the play-within-a-play device to dramatise the revolt of poor farmers against oppression. Despite the greedy nature of the governmental bodies in embezzling public funds, no mercy is shown to the peasants as more levies are being imposed on them. The farmers resist this and protest with the local authorities for justice. All their efforts are ignored.

To add to the complexity, Alhaji Buraimoh, the recently appointed chairman, tries to buy off the farmers to pay their taxes, which sparks even more problems. They flee and turn to violence against oppressive bodies after the government orders that any farmer who does not pay his dues will lose his produce: "They dine on our sweat, they thrive on our misery! But we shall rise, and we shall reclaim what is ours!". In a bid to offer a solution to the current

situation, Osofisan uses the character of Titubi, the daughter of Alhaja Kabirat, the leader of the market women, to burn the bridge between the oppressors and the oppressed. Remembering the legacy of Moremi, Titubi agrees with the superintendent to be locked up in the guise of being a peasant and rescued by the Marshal. Titubi goes with them and discovers the trials that the peasants (poor farmers) face. She becomes the catalyst that brings about the end of the war. Therefore, she earns the new name 'Morountodun' given to her by her love. Her experience in the world of the peasants allows her to witness the harsh realities of their lives. This experience transforms her understanding and aligns her with their cause. The author uses the character of Titubi to reflect her awakening to the class struggles and her commitment to joining the peasants' fight. With this, Osofisan aims to create a sense of unity among the peasants. The unity among the peasants is a powerful force in the play, symbolising their collective strength against the oppressors. Their solidarity is crucial for challenging the existing class structure: "Together, we are strong. Together, we will break these chains and build a new world!". This captures the spirit of unity and collective action that drives the peasants' revolution.

Also worthy of note is the way in which Osofisan, by delving into the metatheatrical scenario with his plot structure, singularly established the revolutionary movement. Instead of following a linear structure, the play is presented in episodes. The play does not have one line of action, even until the end of the play. Through a succession of episodes, we are transported from one scene to another, or from the present to the past and back again. For example, one can observe how each scene is unique from the others by investigating the locations of acts three through five. Act three takes place in a market square and shows Marshal and Bogunde discussing strategies to attack a prison. Act four introduces us to Titubi and Alhaja Kabirat, where Titubi tells her mother about the plan to capture the rebel leader. Act five then transports us to the past and tells the legend of Moremi.

As Muyiwa Awodiya put it, “to engage the interest and belief of the audience and then to break the spell on them by urging them to evaluate the meaning and implications of what they see in the episodes” (in Anwar, 165), these episodes are significant. This technique encourages the audience to reflect on what they have seen and use their minds rather than linger on feelings. They step back from the play and become more aware of the issues at hand. This encourages the audience to rebel against their reality and become conscious of it. In Act 12, Titubi illustrates this by walking the audience through the struggles that the peasants endure:

Titubi: That was when I began to ask questions. Questions... In our house, mama, we wake up to the chorus of jingling coins. And when we sleep, coiled springs soft foam and felt receive our bodies gently. But I have lived in the forest among simple folks, sharing their pain and anguish...

Alhaja: What do you mean?

Titubi: Wait! I haven't finished. Listen to the rest. For without knowing it, the shame of my past had come flooding into my eyes. (p. 66).

This exchange highlights Titubi's shift from a life of luxury to a deep understanding of the suffering experienced by the peasantry. Her personal revolution is beginning as she begins to question the injustices and inequalities she has witnessed. The purpose of Titubi's transformation is to evoke strong feelings in the audience, encouraging them to reflect on their own social roles and the injustices they come across. Osofisan dares the audience to consider the story's broader ramifications in addition to its emotional impact by presenting Titubi's journey. This reflective process aims to inspire the audience to recognise the need for change and act, as Titubi does.

Conclusion

As this section has clearly demonstrated, a theatrical play can serve as a vehicle for raising awareness of the importance of having selfless leaders and a well-functioning government that prioritises the welfare of the people. Realising the author's primary objective has also been aided by the play. Osofisan promotes the need for improved governance, a society devoid of classes and marked by order, where the rights of the people and the state are enshrined in the same lofty ideals.

CHAPTER 4

MARXIST AESTHETICS IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S *FAREWELL TO A CANNIBAL RAGE*

This chapter will solely focus on how the author employs Marxist ideas in his book, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, to bring about the creation of a new world. Significantly, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* is one of the few plays Femi Osofisan wrote using a different approach to projecting history, heroic deeds, the sociocultural environment, and the perception of the worldview. In his play, Osofisan seeks to create and celebrate a new nation, Nigeria, with the knowledge that true reconciliation begets a renewed hope for progress and unity. Beyond the romance between Akanbi and Olabisi, the metaphorical significance of *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* reflects the universality of true reconciliation as a solution to the escalating social, political, economic, and religious issues that plague a postcolonial state. Love and reconciliation are critical issues for society to achieve progress and unity. This aligns with Osofisan's philosophical stance that a society can achieve freedom through collective struggle. Therefore, when love arises through genuine reconciliation, collective struggle functions well. For any nation to succeed in the future, authentic signs of reconciliation, such as love and peace, must exist. To raise important questions about the post-Biafran War era, particularly regarding the future of a nation transitioning from a state of war to peace, Osofisan wrote *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* soon after the Nigerian Civil War, which was brought on by the Biafran Army's vigorous agitation for secession between 1967 and 1970. His advocacy rested solely on the idea that a nation plagued by the legacies of colonialism could attain its desired objective through a collective struggle. Beyond the Biafran War, Osofisan was concerned with Nigeria's future as a postcolonial state.

Synopsis of *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*

Farewell to a Cannibal Rage is a play of reconciliation arising from the bitter family feud between the relatives of both Akanbi and Olabisi in which vengeance becomes the force in human relationships. Osofisan prescribes love as a solution to the feud. Akanbi and Olabisi were sent out to Lagos to avoid being victims of the bitter feud between their two families. Ironically, the subjects fell in love while in the city, not knowing of their families' existing feud. Olabisi's father (Atanda) murdered Folabi (Akanbi's father), while Akanbi's uncle, in retaliation, slayed Olabisi's father. The bitter experience is later revealed when the young lovers return home to seek their parents' consent for their proposed marriage.

Class Dynamics in Osofisan's *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*

Femi Osofisan's *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* is a profound exploration of social and political issues in post-colonial Nigeria, and it heavily draws on Marxist aesthetics to critique the lingering effects of colonialism, capitalism, and class oppression. By weaving together instances of class struggle, the critique of ideological manipulation, and oral tradition techniques, Osofisan creates a narrative that resonates deeply with Marxist thought.

The use of multimedia aesthetic forms such as songs, chants, music, dance, proverbs, story-telling, and riddles by many contemporary African playwrights are derived from oral traditional aesthetics for the projection of their sociocultural backgrounds, visions and ideas in their literary works. The use of songs and chants as multimedia aesthetics creates the audience's participation and prevents any form of possible distraction on the part of the audience from the happenings on the stage. A significant popular trend among contemporary African playwrights is to seek out and use cultural, indigenous expressions, and localised language that can forcefully and succinctly convey the thought, philosophy and culture of the people. Familiar oral literature stimulates and provokes the spirit of inquiry and ultimately

leads the audience to debate and analyse issues in the play and society at large. Femi Osofisan makes imaginative and pragmatic uses of oral literature in order to express or explain certain profound ideas. To avoid any form of contradiction, it should be noted that Osofisan's use of oral literature is pragmatic and innovative. This form has aided Osofisan as a tool in attacking corruption and social injustices, challenging contemporary Nigerians, and drawing their attention to their socio-political conditions.

Farewell to a Cannibal Rage is one of Osofisan's plays in which he employs radical story-telling techniques, subverting and incorporating familiar narratives into his strategy. Osofisan's use of storytelling for critical and ideological purposes is commendable, as it showcases his creative ingenuity and subversion of traditional storytelling. His sharp critiques are aimed at women, artists, imperialists, and other authority figures. The Baale, who symbolises authority, intrigue, and deceit, is roundly criticised and condemned by the playwright. This is due to the fact that the Baale deviates from the norms of Yoruba society by failing to protect his subjects as his position, a symbol of power and authority, demands. It is rather shameful that this chief is used by a stronger person to instigate a quarrel between Folabi and Atanda, whose intimacy had been foretold from their childhood.

One of the preoccupations of the Marxist critic is to reveal the issue of class stratification in society. Taking a historical study of human relations, Marxists have pointed out that there is usually a bipolar division between the people, whereby some fall into the category of haves and others are regarded as the have-nots, or in capitalist's terms – bourgeoisie and proletariat. The play vividly depicts the tension between the ruling elite and the oppressed masses. One key instance is the portrayal of the characters who represent the working class, struggling under the weight of socio-economic injustices. Osofisan exposes and ridicules the Baale for fomenting the trouble that precipitated the deaths of the two friends. Titi exposes the cordial relationship between the two friends before the intervention of the upper class in their

activities: Titi: It is a long story. A sad story. Your father and Akanbi's had long been friends. It became even proverbial, their intimacy. Then one day, a stranger came to the village. Pg. 65.

The playwright utilises this narrative to make clear the tense relationships that the upper class creates with the general populace. Osofisan analyses the use of force and false promises as means of brainwashing the populace using colonial tools: "I tell you, his tongue was rich, rich! All who heard him. Including the Baale, drank his words to giddiness." pg. 66. The playwright exposes the Baale for accepting to be the sole agent of fertiliser distribution in his domain (67), and the one who employs the twin evils of money and women to ensnare and ruin his subjects. The playwright criticises the platitude, rhetorical, and empty promises of politicians. For example, Osofisan taunts and mocks the man with the swagger stick, who is most likely a military officer or a neocolonialist agent, for using and intimidating the underprivileged. True patriots should be ashamed and condemn such an imperialist lackey and anti-hero as the Baale. The strife and conflicts are apparent features the upper class employed to enrich themselves. Chief Owombe, a business magnate from Lagos, has also come under fire. He is known for "organising expensive parties where ill-gotten wealth is displayed." Such ostentatious displays of wealth lead easy-going women to leave their husbands in favour of the wealthy business magnates.

Thus, the author's disclosure of the upper class's corruption and graft is made public. Following the suggestions of Michael Johnson, Victor T. Levine, and Arnold J. Heidenheimer, corruption will be analysed from three angles: the public-interest, market, and public-office perspectives. Mushtaq H. Khan bases his definition of corruption on those parameters and gives an all-encompassing definition: "Corruption is an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority because of personal motives such as wealth, power, or status" (12). His definition is

important because it identifies and corrects corruption in the political and economic systems that serve as the foundation for society as a whole. Baale is a typical example of this. His personal greed drives his motive, empowered by his position of authority.

Stranger: All I'll say is this: This is a huge project. Many of your people will become very rich, You especially, chief, who has been chosen to be the sole agent of the fertilizers...

Baale: What shall I do? What can I do? Both are violent, stubborn men. And money cannot buy them.

Stranger: And woman?

Baale: What do you mean?

Stranger: Drive a woman between them!

Baale: Ah! Why didn't I think of that?

Stranger: You see? Send for me when you are ready and the task is accomplished. Pg. 67

Drawing from the dialogue presented above, it is clear that Baale stands for the authorities who succeeded the colonial rulers and are still responsible for maintaining the same repressive systems. This is consistent with the theory presented by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he contends that the persistence of mass exploitation results from the post-colonial bourgeoisie's inability to successfully challenge colonial power structures. This criticism is reflected in Osofisan's artwork, which portrays a society in which the ruling class has violated the promise of independence, calling for a new revolution. Osofisan also takes aim at the minister rich, who serves as both the head of the ministry and a patron of the arts and enjoys it when impoverished artists are praised. Without a doubt, the artists are exploited. Then, Osofisan exposes and criticises the rich men and those who are similar to them, who use their illicit money to buy off people's property, marry their sisters,

and “still” their tongues. Criticising the structure of the society, Osofisan uses the character of Folawe to explicate the class complexities:

Folawe: ...Why do you compose songs to thrill them,
You who come from the poor?
Why do you hail chiefs and landowners
And forget those who work the land? Why
Praise the Big Industrialist alone?... we sing
For those whose purses are heavy,
Who, at the sound of their names,
Open their bulging pockets like a floodgate. Pg. 39.

The concerns raised by Osofisan in this essay are pertinent to the current state of affairs in Nigeria, where everyone, particularly the artistic community, believes that immediate action must be taken before it's too late. "In recent times, corruption and economic crimes have reached such an epidemic proportion that something urgent and drastic needs to be done before the entire fabric of the society collapses through their combined weight," J. Akin-George said in 1991, lamenting the embarrassing state of corruption in Nigeria. His remarks are still relevant today. Newspapers abound with tales of bank fraud, drug sales, currency faking, corruption, and other crimes that have never before occurred in this nation. Our reputation for dishonest and deceitful behaviour has gotten so bad that outsiders are wary of any ordinary Nigerian, especially those who want to conduct business with them. Sincere and honest individuals suffer as a result of the terrible reputation we foster for ourselves among ourselves and among prospective foreign business partners. (52). According to the same perspective, Osofisan undoubtedly has a soft spot for his fellow musicians who are underpaid and abused by the wealthy, the government, and other artists for writing songs that glorify “parasite, tycoon, rogue, swindlers, and politicians.” Osofisan discusses the place of

the artist in society by using the story of Fatai's separation from his wife Folawe as a subtly alienating example. The play's main subject is not directly related to the plot. Osofisan, however, is able to expose the artists as traitors who have betrayed them in order to benefit financially via the narrative. He views them as classic praise singers or sycophants who prey on the wealthy, who in turn are parasites on society as a whole. Osofisan questions other artists:

Why do you
And your husband drum and dance
For the parasites of our society?
... Why do you compose songs to thrill them?

Osofisan disapproves of oppression, injustice, and corruption in society. If we do not make every effort to oppose them, the country's life will continue to be in jeopardy. "This is a vast and ruthless battlefield, filled with corrupt and murderous officials, bribe-hunting policemen, reckless drivers, con-men and touts, thugs, and various other violent men living beyond the law," is how Osofisan portrays Nigeria in the Sunday Times on 22 October 1985. (5). This represents Osofisan's position on the disillusionment problem in Nigeria and throughout Africa. He constantly reflects on the ills of the society, reveals social inequalities, and then rouses the people's awareness to the urgent need to do something about the way the society is disorganised and the way that some people are perpetually affluent while the majority wallow in abject poverty. In *Excursions in Drama and Literature*, Osofisan asserts that:

Corruption, injustice and oppression, do not come from heaven but from the man-made god on earth. It is not a divine order that some people should suffer or enjoy forever. Although our leaders tell us that it has been ordained like that by fate or by God so that we can accept what is happening around us as destiny.

However, Osofisan argues that

We ourselves are also responsible for whatever our society may become. What we have in the society is what we have ourselves created. (pp. 139-140).

Through the storytelling technique, Osofisan is able to narrate the social relationship between people and their community, and the complex role of women in society, particularly in relation to class stratification in the text. Femi Osofisan's criticism is applied to all women in the book without exception. *In Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, Femi Osofisan's storytelling skill deftly ties together the community's social dynamics, illuminating the interactions between people and their broader social setting. The importance that women have in both creating societies and class structures is one of the main themes of this story, which Osofisan addresses via Folawe, the lady with two faces.

In the play, women are not merely passive participants in the societal structure but active agents who navigate the complexities of class stratification. Folawe is a formidable character whose choices and actions have a big influence on how things work out. She stands for women who juggle several roles and identities. She personifies the contradiction that arises from women's dual roles as carers and participants in the class struggle in a patriarchal society. Folawe is a complex figure who is shown as both a victim of cultural expectations and a cunning tactician who is aware of the subtleties of power relations in her culture. This paradox represents the contradictory roles that women frequently play in a society that marginalises them while also depending on their tenacity and fortitude to maintain its systems. No wonder, Fatai, her former lover, demands complete segregation between the sexes: "So that's it. A woman's love, just a mere speck of dust. Between the sexes, there should be complete segregation." p. 41.

Gbadamosi is able to maintain his "harem" owing to the fact that he is a big business tycoon. As a result, women are made fun of, exposed, and condemned for their dishonesty and love of material prosperity, and flirting. Osofisan's depiction of women offers a potent critique of

the ways in which gender and class interact, highlighting the complexity of women's contributions to society and the continuous fight for social justice. The significance that women play in dividing the community's classes is further highlighted by the character Fatai. Women are frequently portrayed as leaving their existing community in search of a "greener pasture." Fatai says:

Fatai: Enough! That boy, I can see,
Has corrupted your mind beyond repair.
When a woman finds a new love, they say,
The past becomes a blackened mirror
And all the memories recede.

Exploitation in Femi Osofisan's *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*

The premise of exploitation, which works in hand with the conditioning of the poor's mind, is a component of the Marxist theoretical approach to deciphering the innermost concerns of literature with the class struggle that stratifies a human society. By further explication of the fact, this situation is the framework in not only the division of the society into the bourgeoisie and proletariat classes but also the education of the latter into his role as a piece of machinery in bringing to reality the socio-economic privileges of the former, by which he is completely alienated. The base remains the base and the superstructure maintains its position by orientation. Narrowed down to this, we will properly situate the underhand economics behind the beastly war that serves as the background of Osofisan's *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*. The play depicts how subjects, mainly the poor, are conditioned to believe certain principles and beliefs in a way that suits the purpose and objective of the rich.

The significant case study of this is the major exploitation between Baale and his two subjects. In an attempt to maintain his economic status, Baale forcefully acquires the land of

Akanbi's and Olabisi's fathers. The Baale subjugates the masses, taking their lands and making themselves "extremely wealthy" (67). As claimed by Titi, he makes plans to secure the lands by pushing a woman between friends, not caring about the consequences of his actions.

Titi: And the Baale laid his plan well. He used all his cunning, all his evil, and when he was ready, he sent his agents. The first went to your father, one evening. p.67

Osofisan also highlights the ways in which the wealthy take advantage of artists, who are comparable to common men. Individuals with affluent status and similar backgrounds utilise their illicitly acquired wealth to purchase land, wed their sisters, and "still" their mouths. Chief Owombe, for example, proudly displays his ill-gotten wealth throughout society. Osofisan criticises politicians by mocking Chief Owombe's exploitative nature.

Folawe: But the boy replied: Chief Owombe
Has bought the lands around, the lands
That were our fathers' farms!

Another such can be drawn from the use of religious mode incorporated by Osofisan. Osofisan also satirises religious hypocrisy in the society. Baba Soye, the Ifa priest in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, is a man who divines for people through manipulation and craftiness using the Orunmila deity. Since he is a priest, his behaviour is expected to be morally above board, but their dealings with their subjects portray him as a worshipper of mammon rather than God. In the text, Titi tries to use Baba Soye to condition Olabisi and prevent her from taking the right steps towards social change. It is believed that only Orunmila can show the true line of action in such a deal. Trying to take away the free will of

Labisi can be categorised as a form of exploitation. Baba Soye tries to condition the mind of Olabisi into believing their intents using the oracle.

Baba Soye: You see, my daughter, when Ifa speaks to the young, he discards incantations. Only, be careful. A story in the voice of the oracle is still as wisdom-laden as the entangled maze of Odu.

Likewise, the same is seen from Titi and Adigun. Both parties believe the young lovers should not get married due to the existing family feud. The opposition is a way of obstructing the movement of peace and revolution.

Titi: For my sake. For every one of those dreadful moments on Iloto. For his sake, for your dead father, for his murder still unavenged! P. 69.

Social Transformation in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*

Almost all of Femi Osofisan's plays deal with the issue of revolution. The plays are revolutionary in both form and topic. Osofisan explores a range of comedic, realistic, compressionist, absurdist, epic, traditional African theatre, and narrative techniques in order to find the forms that best serve as vehicles for his ideas to be understood by the audience. As demonstrated by Akanbi's treatment of Adigun in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, Osofisan contends that drastic rejection of some offensive and antiquated ideals is necessary for societal development. Osofisan did not provide a definitive answer to the issues addressed in his plays, in contrast to other mediaeval authors who made a point of stating the themes of their plays.

The primary reference point of *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* is the Nigerian civil war, emphasised by the play's dedication, 'to the memory of Biafra, for those who survived'. *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* is loosely based on the plot of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, particularly the 'ancient grudge' between two families whose children fall in love against the

wishes of their parents. The play serves as a metaphor for the legacy of bitterness and recrimination inherited from the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. This legacy is usually marked by the dictum, “no victor, no vanquished”. *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* is the first play in which Osofisan pursues an open discourse on the flag independence of African countries, highlighting the shared heritage of colonialism by African countries, the kind of legacy that led to the civil war in Nigeria. The actors come on stage singing about being descendants of slaves who have the hope of deciding their future destinies.

Osofisan used the love story between Akanbi and Olabisi as a metaphor for the potential for healing and reconciliation in a community torn apart by retaliation and violence. He makes the argument that compassion and love may unite people who are on different sides of an argument and provide a means of breaking the harmful cycle of revenge. The play challenges the characters and the audience to think about the transforming power of love in the face of ingrained animosity. It pushes for a settlement via forgiveness and mutual respect. Through centring the story on the journey of the young lovers, Osofisan emphasises the significance of letting go of the past and embracing a future based on empathy and compassion. The play's message is a poignant reminder of the human capacity for forgiveness and the possibility of redemption, even in the face of the most bitter of conflicts.

The lovers consult friends and Orunmila, the Yoruba deity of knowledge, for marital advice as they strive to make love win over hatred. Ultimately, love and peace triumph over violence and death, in contrast to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, where hate triumphs over love because the lover's death results from animosity between two families – the live children's will being subdued by the deceased fathers' will. The will of the surviving children cannot be subjugated by the will of the deceased fathers or the furious relatives, but *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* transcends such hatred as love conquers hate.

Titi: For my sake. For every one of those dreadful moments on Iloto. For his sake, for your father, for his murder still unavenged!

Olabisi: ... Mother came out, I walked

Straight towards her. I said:

Mother, forgive me, I can't!...

No, I cannot live by the hatred

Which poisoned your life. p.70-71.

Olabisi's moral bravery and will to marry Akanbi in spite of all obstacles reveal Osofisan's visionary outlook and revolutionary stance.

I knew at last where I belonged

Not to the blood of the past

But the world of the present,

No, my life could not be lived

For this one's sake or that one's

But for myself, for my happiness...

Akanbi is not guilty of the sins

His parents committed. He is not like them

He is different... pg. 70-71

Even though Osofisan's play *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* was composed with the intention of promoting reconciliation, he uses the drama to criticise the neo-colonial attitudes of his people. In addition, he promotes a revolutionary rhetoric that calls for communication among regular people. *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* represents the competition, struggle, and lack of tranquillity that the underprivileged constantly endure at the hands of the society's Adiguns. Osofisan uses the story to caution the nation against falling in love with foreign concepts that might not be appropriate for Nigerian conditions. The handsome man leads Simbi to a

cemetery where “tombstones” should prominently display the colours of the national flags of European nations that have occupied colonies in Africa. (p. 49). Osofisan reiterates the significance of historical consciousness, a preoccupation apparent in his dramaturgy, as he challenges the myths of complacency and rewrites the received history to elicit a new understanding of the people’s heritage. Similar to *Another Raft*, Osofisan’s revolutionary goal minimises the role of artists and educated elites, except for the musical couple Folawe and Fatai. It appears that he is paying greater attention to politics and the legacy of the postcolonial era. As he uses his tragic background to highlight the tyranny, injustice, and exploitation that the affluent ruling class inflicts on the regular people, his gaze grows steadier and more piercing. As he renews his Marxist mission in the same effective style that he has honed to fight the ruling class – surreptitiously – his writing becomes increasingly materialistic.

It's also important to notice that Osofisan employs love – a rare instrument for change – in his book. In various settings, the term “love” can indicate several things that are linked but different nonetheless. Leading authority on the subject of love, Fisher (2004), splits the feeling of love into three phases that partially overlap: desire, attraction, and attachment. According to her, lust is the sensation of sexual desire, romantic attraction is the process of deciding what a partner finds appealing and pursues, saving time and energy; attachment, on the other hand, is the sharing of a home, parental responsibilities, mutual defence, and, in humans, emotions of safety and security. Fromm, a psychologist in his book, *The Art of Loving* says: Love is not merely a feeling but is also actions, and that in fact, the ‘feeling’ of love is superficial in comparison to ones committed to love via a series of living actions over time. Osofisan incorporates this ideology in the primary text by using the actions of two young lovers to ensure a drastic change in the society. Femi Osofisan focuses his attention on three types of love: authentic, radical and spurious love.

Akanbi: Bisi, your father killed my father

Olabisi: Akanbi, your uncle killed my father

Akanbi: The link is broken ...

Olabisi: The link can be rewoven.

Akanbi: And the scars, the tears That are sirens on the memory ...

Olabisi: They will be silenced with love

Akanbi: And the barrier of hate Which our fathers built between us?

Olabisi: We shall crumble it with laughter

With weapons fashioned out of Tenderness.

There is no war yet so hard That men cannot forget.

And then We shall reach each other again.

From the dialogue above, it is clear that both partners genuinely love one another, even when traditional events appear to somewhat gag them. Despite this, they remain hopeful that their love will be solidified once they leave the “old order” behind and start a new life together. In Akanbi's words, “We are going away together, and this time, for ever Farewell to you, farewell to Iloto Farewell to hate and warring,” the lovers took control of their own destiny by resisting the antiquated traditional beliefs of their parents and rebelling against their families (p. 62). Osofisan exhibits in the text that true love triumphs over family feud and it can overcome any prevalence of social division between subjects and classes. He is of the note that love can earn social justice, and use love or martial relationships to fight the squalid conditions in their society. He uses the principles, ideologies, methods and practices to bring revolutionary changes in their communities' social, economic, and political structures.

Conclusion

It can be inferred how Osofisan uses the love between Akanbi and Olabisi in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* as a metaphor for the possibility of reconciliation and healing in a society fractured by violence and vengeance. He makes the argument that compassion and love may unite people who are on different sides of an argument and provide a means of breaking the harmful cycle of revenge. The play challenges the characters and the audience to think about the transforming power of love in the face of ingrained animosity. It pushes for a settlement via forgiveness and mutual respect.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion and Summary of Findings

This chapter will delve into the key findings and summaries of the Marxist concepts explored in the primary texts, *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*. The research has carefully examined how class stratification is not just a background but also a driving force that significantly affects and impacts people's lives within society, drawing on the Marxist theoretical framework. This chapter attempts to distil the manner in which Osofisan depicts the conflict between the oppressed and the oppressors, highlighting the widespread influence of class differences by looking at the characters, tales, and social dynamics shown in these texts. The study's extensive assessment of topics like exploitation, alienation, and ideological enslavement revealed how the economic and social hierarchy represented in literary works parallel real-world class conflicts. This final chapter provides critical insight into the research's overarching argument, shedding light on how the division between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as depicted in the plays, leads to a variety of societal consequences, including the perpetuation of inequality, the stifling of individual potential, and the inevitable push towards revolution as a means of redressing these imbalances. By focussing on these findings, this chapter not only captures the essence of Marxist theory as applied to these writings but also highlights the larger sociopolitical commentary implicit in Osofisan's work, emphasising the themes' relevance to modern social challenges.

Summaries of Findings

Farewell to a Cannibal Rage and *Morountodun* both vividly depict the social and political dynamics within their respective Nigerian locales, making them both exemplary instances of

Marxist theatre. In addition to reflecting the innate class battles in their societies, these plays actively explore the ideas of resistance and revolution against repressive structures.

The main characters in both works are presented as advocates of change who challenge the persistent injustices that marginalise the working class and other oppressed groups while benefiting the ruling class. By doing thus, they promote equality, justice, and a more just society, emulating the Marxist notion that unjust regimes may be overthrown by collective action.

The oppression of political minorities and the harsh methods used by the government to quell opposition are recurrent themes in both plays. This is especially important when considering Nigeria's post-colonial past, when corruption, authoritarian leadership, and the silence of dissenting voices have frequently characterised the political environment. *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* expose the Nigerian political system's inadequacy in defending the rights and dignity of the people by drawing attention to these problems. This is demonstrated in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*, where the Baale, seduced by the "stranger," fails to protect his subjects' rights.

Furthermore, both plays heavily rely on oral tradition, expressing their ideas through proverbs, folklore, and customary storytelling. The plays' socio-political criticisms are made more approachable and relevant for local audiences by including oral tradition, which also helps to ground the works in African cultural legacy. These plays use oral tradition as a potent weapon to subvert the existing quo, engrossing the audience with well-known cultural allusions that provoke thought about current societal challenges.

For instance, Titubi's involvement in the peasant insurrection in *Morountodun*, a plot that relies on the extensive oral history of resistance in Yoruba culture, changes Titubi as a person. Similar to this, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* bases the conflicts of its protagonists in a larger

cultural framework that emphasises the eternal nature of their struggle against tyranny. This is accomplished by framing the story through oral tradition.

By utilising these elements, both plays serve as platforms for Marxist doctrine, criticising social injustices and promoting revolutionary change via the mediums of theatre and oral history. Marxist philosophy, which stresses the need for struggle and activity to create a more equitable society, is in line with these works because they feature characters who oppose and confront the political and social structures of their day.

The plays emphasise how crucial history is as a framework for comprehending and resolving modern issues. Osofisan extensively references historical occurrences in *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* to demonstrate how historical lessons may offer understanding and answers for contemporary problems. This method emphasises the idea that the past and the future are closely related, with historical narratives providing a blueprint for future social development in addition to reflecting previous social developments.

The Agbekoya peasant revolt in *Morountodun* provides a historical context for the characters' hardships in the drama. Osofisan suggests that the struggles of the past are still relevant now by using this historical event to examine themes of resistance, class struggle, and revolution. Through a revisit of this historical period, Osofisan makes the case that in order to handle the socio-political difficulties facing modern Nigeria, we must learn from the accomplishments and errors of past generations. This link between the past and present serves as a tool for actively influencing present and future actions as well as solutions, going beyond simple historical contemplation.

Similar to this, Osofisan highlights the importance of history once more in *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* by referencing the effects of post-colonial reality on modern society as well as the remnants of colonialism. The play explores the psychological and cultural fallout from these historical causes, arguing that post-colonial Africa's ongoing problems with identity,

oppression, and resistance must be addressed by first comprehending the complex realities of the past. Osofisan's use of narrative technique in both plays shows that history is a dynamic force that continuously affects and modifies the present and the future rather than a static, remote entity.

Osofisan highlights the interdependence of the past and the future and promotes a critical analysis of history as a way to provide applicable and practical answers to contemporary issues by incorporating historical events into his plays. This approach is in line with his greater objective of utilising theatre as a forum for social and political criticism and inspiring viewers to interact with history as a dynamic, living part of their continuous fight for equality and justice.

Comparative Analysis of Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage*

Although Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* both tackle the social injustice systems apparent in the society, two distinct approaches to exploring the themes of history, revolution, and social justice can be examined.

Morountodun approaches revolution and historical consciousness directly and actively. The Agbekoya peasant uprising serves as the play's historical setting, which it employs to powerfully illustrate the need for resistance against oppressive class structures. This narrative has a strong feeling of urgency, showing the protagonists' revolutionary deeds as a proactive way to shape the future as well as a reaction to injustices from the past. Titubi, the main character, has a profound metamorphosis as she travels from a position of privilege to one of sympathy with the poor, emulating Osofisan's appeal for class awareness and group action. The historical perspective of the play serves as both a reflection and an inspiration for the

characters' revolutionary fervour, transforming history into a dynamic force in the fight for social change.

On the other hand, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* takes a more psychological and philosophical stance when examining the relationship between social justice and history. It addresses colonialism's legacy and the ongoing effects of these historical forces on modern society, but it places more emphasis on the internal and cultural effects of these legacies than on taking active action. The story explores the cultural dissonance and psychological wounds left by past oppression, providing a deeper awareness of how people and groups deal with post-colonial circumstances. The play highlights the inner tensions and identity crises brought on by the dissolution of former identities and demonstrates how challenging it is to make sense of the traumas of the past in light of the circumstances of the present.

Therefore, *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* takes a more refined stance, emphasising the psychological and cultural effects of history on the individual and communal psyche, whereas *Morountodun* is more overt in its revolutionary fervour and uses history as a stirring call for action. The variation in methodology showcases Osofisan's adaptability as a dramatist, employing distinct narrative techniques to delve into the intricate connection between and social justice.

Contribution to Knowledge

The plays *Morountodun* and *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* by Femi Osofisan have made significant progress in our understanding of African literature, postcolonial studies, and political theatre. It draws attention to the important interactions with postcolonial Africa's sociopolitical reality. For instance, in *Morountodun*, the play highlights how historical consciousness shapes revolutionary movements and how oppressed people can leverage historical events as inspiration and guidance to struggle against injustices that they face now.

While resistance is a topic covered in *Farewell to a Cannibal rage* as well, its main contribution is a psychological and cultural analysis of the effects of colonialism and its aftermath.

The characters of Titubi and Olabisi in the play demonstrate that women can be key actors in the fight against oppression, enriching feminist discourse within the context of African revolutionary literature. They both provided the structure and opportunity for women to take part in and be active participants in the societal transformation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has distilled Osofisan's depiction of the conflict between oppressors and the oppressed. Likewise, the incorporation of Marxist aesthetics provides an effective framework for comprehending how culture, society, and the arts are related. The research has carefully examined how class stratification is not only a background but also a driving force that significantly affects and impacts people's lives within society, using the Marxist theoretical framework. Marxism allows us to view works such as Femi Osofisan's *Farewell to a Cannibal Rage* and *Morountodun* as critical commentary on the socio-economic realities of their period, in addition to being creative expressions.

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