

The Other Face of Apartheid: Ifeoma Okoye's *The Fourth World* and Festus Iyayi's *Violence*

by

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Abstract

This paper opines that apartheid, though abolished, was not peculiar to South Africa, but prevalent in many post-independence African states in form of social injustice wherein the politics of allocation of amenities has entrenched the system of segregation, discrimination exploitation and oppression against a majority group of people by a minority group as captured by Ifeoma Okoye in *The Fourth World* and Festus Iyayi in *Violence*. The conclusion is that it is not yet *Uhuru* (freedom) for African states, because apartheid is still very much present in form of gross social injustice, and that meaningful progress in society can only be achieved through its eradication.

Introduction

Apartheid is a political system that existed in South Africa in which only white people had absolute control in all aspects of life. It was designed by these white people to “maintain economic monopoly over lands, minerals, jobs and social services and to repress African competition and nationalism” (Chnaiwa 251). Basically, apartheid was characterized by the “politics of inequality, racism, exploitation and oppression: by mass poverty in the midst of minority affluence and supremacy” (Chnaiwa 255). The enactment of the apartheid law therefore led to the institutionalization of racial discrimination, segregation, oppression and dehumanization of the Black majority, citizens, by the whites. This essay opines that if these are the characteristics of apartheid, then apartheid is not limited to the then South Africa, but it also exists in all the societies of the world, especially in Nigeria as captured in two novels, Ifeoma Okoye's *Fourth World* and Festus Iyayi's *Violence* concludes that the writers' peculiar perceptions of politics link social injustice to bad leadership and the misuse of power.

In the novels, the writers, in service to their societies, present efforts to challenge injustice in line with Chinua Achebe's view that the writer must accept the duty to challenge injustice wherever he/she sees it, even if it is injustice committed by Africans against Africans. He insists "...we must never agree to bargain away the right to be treated like full members of the human family. We must seek freedom to absolutely express ourselves, without the anxiety that we might be taken as evidence against our race" (Achebe 138-9).

This is why the writer has been variously described as a guide, a teacher, a moral barometer, the conscience of the society who examines and recommends a way to higher ideals for a better society. In apartheid South Africa, the injustice was perpetrated by the Whites against the Blacks, but in these two novels, the injustice is committed by Nigerians against fellow Nigerians. The two writers go beyond mere depiction of social injustice to present protagonists, Chira in *The Fourth Wall* and Idemudia in *Violence*, who challenges the perpetrators of injustice. They emerge triumphant though at a price of intense physical, emotional and psychological traumatic experiences caused by this other face of apartheid.

The Fourth World

Generally, developing societies of the world like Asia, Africa, and sometimes, South America are referred to as third world countries. Ifeoma Okoye insists in *The Fourth World* that apart from this recognized third world, there is another unrecognized world which she names the fourth world. This fourth world is not located in a specific region or continent, so it has no specific name. It is "...a world whose citizenship is not defined by race, color, geographical location, tongue or creed...the universal world of the poor found everywhere on earth... a world of voiceless humanity, the ignored and despised found in rich as in poor countries....poverty is their unmistakable identity" (Emenyonu, in the foreword). Kasanga Avenue in the novel is a representative of this fourth world found in Nigeria.

In this novel, Ifeoma Okoye presents vivid experiences of people in this world as they suffer gross social injustice in form of segregation, oppression, and exploitation as a result of the political system that empowers the affluent few and dis-empowers the majority poor. The inhabitants of this fourth world struggle for survival in penury and misery amidst overwhelming obstacles to their continued existence. In Kasanga Avenue, sickness, and preventable deaths are daily occurrences so people hardly experience joy or laughter, only misfortunes, sadness and sorrows. Kasanga Avenue destroys people so much that they are deprived of "dignity and honour" (104). This could be likened to the situation in South Africa during the apartheid regime as captured by Peter Abrahams in *Mine Boy*, Athol Fugard in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and in other literary outputs from the region during the period. The atmosphere of gloom and deprivation loom so large in the novel that the only joyous activities recorded are Ogom's marriage which incidentally ends disastrously and the governor's party which exposes the selfishness and insensitivity of the leaders.

However both celebrations take place outside Kasanga Avenue. Kasanga Avenue presents only misfortunes like Akalaka's sickness and death; the death of Egodi and Donatus who are run down by a truck while hawking banana for their mother; the death of two youths killed by police during a protest march for the death of a girl and a woman in a dreadful flood that ravaged the Avenue and others. The residents also contend with police brutality just like the Black people did during the now defunct apartheid South Africa.

Kasanga Avenue represents the slums and the ghettos of this world where countless residents like Akalaka and his wife die because they cannot afford medication. It is a place where some residents have become "mentally unbalanced because of their hard lives". Kasanga Avenue is seen as a destroyer of people's bodies and minds. Living there meant not being able to see a doctor because there was no money. ...not having a good job at all because of a lack of education or skill. ... losing children to illness because of dearth of clean water, a filthy environment, and insufficient proper food. ... a maximum security prison for people who committed the crime of allowing themselves to be born into poverty" (95).

This reality of their existence is presented through Chira's travails, sorrows and pains. She lives with her parents in a "tiny room with its minimal ventilation and perpetually leaking roof... no conveniences" (29) in Kasanga Avenue located in the most neglected and filthiest part of town where flood rampage has created deep gutters that have merged with the road in a way that it is difficult to differentiate the road from the gutters. Consequently, residents wade through dangerous expanse of surging muddy water which causes many deaths as they are continuously being carried away by flood. During the rainy seasons, residents stay in their precarious hovels to avoid being drowned like those who died in one of the floods named the 'Great Floods'. It was a tragedy that would have been averted if, according to a journalist, the "government was alive to its responsibilities" (147). The journalist indicts the government and attributes the deplorable living condition in Kasanga Avenue to bad and insensitive leadership. The government does not repair the roads and build drainages to check the frequent flooding and erosion that claim the lives of residents yearly, and when they protest, they are killed by police. The journalist insists that government should provide them with basic amenities as they pay their taxes dutifully. They are marginalized and neglected because they live in a segregated area like the Black people in apartheid South Africa.

The members of this 'fourth world' belong to it not because they are lazy or unintelligent, but because of the type of politics that is practiced which produces bad leaders who places them in that condition. However, the writer condemns their complacency and insists that injustice should be challenged so the neglected residents should not see their pitiable situation as their destiny like Kodili and Nebolise who become despondent and shattered physically and emotionally after losing their loved ones. Mama Egodi and Mama Bebe should not be content to continue with life despite the death of their children, instead they should, like Chira, rebel against oppression and injustice and strive to improve their lives. With that, the writer fulfils the "role of a precursor to make straight the way" (Carroll, 1990, 179).

Like in the apartheid regime, there is a wide disparity between the affluent minority rich and the deprived indigent majority. The minority rich lives in a different part of the city and the government takes care of their needs, while the majority poor are subjected to a dehumanized state of living that is akin to the position of Black people in the then apartheid South Africa. Government officials and their cronies accumulate and appropriate the wealth meant for the well-being of everybody, for themselves which is squandered on frivolous ceremonies like the governor's wife's birthday party where Chira, shocked by the level of waste, observes: "The food on the long stretch of tables would feed all the residents of Kasanga Avenue for two months" (272). She also learns from conversations at the party that the Governor owns houses and investments in foreign countries and in all the state capitals of Nigeria. He spent millions of naira to bury his father who died the previous year and presented his wife with "a-state-of-the-art car as a birthday present" (272) with state resources dedicated to the well-being of the people, but which is diverted to personal use while the people suffer.

Thus the writer calls attention to the plight of these derelict members of the society living in the fourth world from the opening pages of the novel, showing a vast gulf between the rich and the poor, leading to intense class stratification. In her dedication, she refers to them as "the deprived people who are victims of greed, injustice, corruption, exploitation, discrimination and bad government". These people are alienated from the rest of the world, not because of official segregation law like in South Africa, but because of an unofficial segregation and discrimination against them. According to Mirror Head, the Nigerian government has "...enough money from oil revenue to give her citizens free education at every level and free medical treatment" (251), yet Chira's father finds it difficult to pay her school fees or feed his family. When he falls sick, his wife could not feed herself or even buy the required drugs for him in the government hospital where basic facilities are non-existent so "...The patients provide everything they need... tablets, injections, plasters...even cotton wool..." (43). If these things are not bought, the patient is left to die and because these people are illiterates, they are exploited by the drug dealers who "sometimes try to sell to us what they have and not what we want..." (43). In addition to buying medication for their sick ones on admission, the relations of the patients are forced to wash their bedclothes and hospital gowns in addition to undertaking the nurses' duties of feeding, bathing and turning patients in bed. Unfortunately, "...the hospital authorities look the other way when the patients' relations were carrying out this unofficial care-giving" (46). The situation in the hospital is so bad that even the mortuary is not functional, so Chira is asked to transfer her father's corpse to another mortuary as the one in the hospital is not "working properly". If she does not comply, the corpse "...will turn to rotten meat in twenty four hours..." if left in their own mortuary (63). The writer concludes that it is clear that the hospitals "are more concerned with making money than with saving lives" (62).

The residents are therefore unable to take their sick ones to the hospital because of financial incapacity. Consequently, the sick ignore their symptoms of illness and when it deteriorates they are forced to patronize a local drugstore owned by Jude who is also a member of the community.

He understands their plight, so he takes pity on them, and treats them on credit, though some never offset the debt, and he refers very desperate cases to hospital. This means that these residents go to the hospital only when their illness is beyond Jude and sometimes beyond the doctors. Preventable death therefore becomes a regular occurrence in hospitals where people watch helplessly as their loved ones die. They borrow to pay for drugs, but sometimes it is difficult to see who to borrow from, consequently, the drugs come too late to aid the patient's recovery, like in the case of Chira's father. Sometimes too, they buy the wrong drugs due to the unjust political system that deny them an education.

The writer highlights the insensitivity of the nurses when Chira visits her father who is hospitalized. Ironically, nurses who are trained to save lives place undue emphasis on materialism, so they deny Chira access to her dying father, but allow another rich man to see his relative. Chira defies the nurse and succeeds in seeing his father before he is thrown out while the rich man is allowed to stay. She confronts the nurse: "It is unfair to send me away and allow that man over there to stay...I'm sure you know he's there" (19). Thus, Ifeoma Okoye empowers the oppressed not to be complacent, but to challenge their oppressors. She insists that the "desire to change comes from within and people change when they want to change and if they want to change" (311). Chira's action does not guarantee her re-entry to the ward, but her message against discrimination and the need for each individual to adopt the right attitudes for a better society is clear.

Chira's precarious situation is highlighted more with her father's death, and her family's effort to bury him. In the process, she encounters a high level of selfishness and insensitivity displayed by the privileged few, like the president of their town union who refuses to assist her because Akalaka did not pay all his dues. Also the priest in her village refuses to accord him Christian burial rites because he was not a 'current financial member' of the church before his death. His name was struck out of the church register because he did not pay his church dues for the last three years, and the priest concludes: "he ceased to be one of us when he was alive so we'll have nothing to do with his dead body" (78). Chira's pleas that her father was a very poor who borrowed money and mortgaged his family land to pay her fees, is not heeded. The priest is adamant and insists that paying her school fees is not more important than saving his soul. Thus, the author indicts the church also in segregating against the poor as the emphasis on saving souls shifts from good deeds, as we find in *Everyman* to financial capability. Chira confronts the priest with his earlier action of accepting a bribe of huge sums of money from Obaego to bury his son whose name was not in the register. The priest is embattled, but resorts to banter and lame defense which end with his accusing Chira of being possessed by evil spirit. Religious leaders are therefore accused of complicity in the perpetration of segregation and social injustice in the country.

Government and religious organizations are not the only guilty ones, as individuals are also guilty of perpetrating injustice in the society. Akakala for instance was maltreated by his wealthy master who refused to pay him the agreed sum of money after an apprenticeship to enable him start his own business. Akalaka had no one to speak for him or force his master “to honour the contract” (27). In the same, Akalaka’s brother, Amos appropriates Akalaka’s land after his death and refuses to help Chira with her school fees. Chira is forced out of school, so she has to work to take care of her mother who becomes very demanding and uncompromising because of Chira’s refusal to marry a rich man, Maks. The conclusion is that inasmuch as the leaders neglect the people, some privileged individuals also oppress the poor, and invariably heighten the other face of apartheid in the society.

The novelist is disheartened that the political class at various levels “...in the country behaved as if they were above the law and got away with it” (18). They break the law with impunity and deprive the poor of their means of livelihood through an enforcement of oppressive laws like the destruction of shops of the poor to create space for a rich man to build a hotel. In the novel, four bulldozers are used to raze down the market in Kassanga Avenue without any arrangement for their relocation. The government, without prior notice to them destroyed “...everything, stalls, kiosks, mechanic workshops and even the tree where her mother stays to plait hair, have been razed to the ground” (144). This action worsens the already unstable life of the residents, as the affected people are sent back to homelessness and a market of unemployment.

It is clear therefore that the government is not interested in the developmental projects for the people’s well being, but in siphoning national wealth into private pockets while the people whose lives would have been improved by the fund are left to languish in misery and poverty. This is highlighted by the writer with the governor’s lavish party where the surplus food and drinks could feed the residents of Kassanga Avenue for two months. The party presents the intrigues, alignments and realignments by politicians as they source for or ward contracts and seek for various favours for their enrichment. She contrasts the insensitivity and selfishness of the political class with the compassion and kind considerations of some characters whose selfless contributions in the novel offers a glimpse hope for a more egalitarian society. Such characters like Chira, Akalaka, Jude, Arrow Head, Dr. Bosa, Dr. Ajali and Ogom “...affirm those values that give fullness to the quality of life as perceived in time and space and by the same necessity to attack those negative values that undermine the sense of fullness of life and the realization of man’s full potential.”(Obiechina 2). Akalaka embodies some of these values as highlighted in Jude’s speech as residents gather to pay him their last respect:

Akalaka had no money, but he had integrity. He had no house of his own... but had room in his heart for everyone. His words were few but full of wisdom. Akalaka was a great man...not because of what he had but because of what he gave; not because of where he lived, but because of how much he cared about people he lived with....not because of how much education he had but because of how much he cherished education. (61-2)

Ifeoma Okoye counters the selfishness, treachery and betrayal of the rich seen at the birthday party with the sincerity and communality in Kasanga Avenue. Despite the high level of impoverishment and penury, Kasanga residents assist one another in times of need; their collective good supersedes the individual greed of the politicians; the provision of health care in Jude's clinic for all even when they cannot pay supersedes the discriminatory acts and favoritism nurses demonstrated at the government hospital; progressive interdependence on one another becomes a superior value to the selfish independence of Maks and his cohorts. For instance, Ozoka begs Maks, his friend, fervently to introduce him to the governor to enable him secure at least one contract. He pleads:

One contract from him will be enough to lift me up. I'll make enough money to use as capital for a new venture. Live and let live ...Help your friend to get a wee bit from the Governor. Just a tiny bit of what you're getting from him...The Governor can't deny you anything. He owes a lot to you" (270).

Maks promises to help his friend, but he deliberately refuses to do so in the end. This attitude is contrasted with the attitude of Kasanga Avenue residents who though from different ethnic groups in Nigeria bond together. They may have learnt from their "...sad and enduring experience" that "... their survival depended on their solidarity and so they had fused into one indivisible community" (59). When someone dies, they come together to commiserate with the bereaved and also to contribute from their meager resources to help the family as much as they could. Sometimes, a woman who runs out of pepper or salt, asks her neighbor who willingly shares the little she has, or sometimes gives all.

Violence

In *Violence*, Festus Iyayi also explores issue of social justice as a group of people are exploited, oppressed and marginalized by the political system. This group suffers segregation, not on an account of an official law, but because of the corrupt political system that empowers and enriches few individuals, but dis-empowers and impoverishes the majority of the people. A representative of the disempowered group in front of Ogbe hospital comprise of people who like residents of Kasanga Avenue are presented as Haggard, with distraught faces as if worry had eaten deep into the faces of majority of them. Wrinkles and cracks were in abundance. It is evident that these were people who had been engaged by life in a terrible and fierce struggle and that they had come out of each bout worse and still more badly battered, with hopelessness and helplessness that invoked the onlooker to tears, and there is no point in seeking recourse from death, the abundant evidence of life about was frustrating enough, and there was in each pair of eyes, a stubborn determination not to let go of life, no matter how filthy and degrading it was. (56-57)

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Iyayi is blunt in his assessment of this social injustice and refers to it as violence against the victims. Like Ifeoma Okoye's Chira, Festus Iyayi uses Idemudia to challenge the forces of exploitation and social injustice.

Idemudia, like Akalaka, is a victim of an unjust society that makes it impossible for him to acquire basic education. He drops out of school because of poverty and is unable to overcome this early set back because of the political system that ensures unequal distribution of wealth and makes the creation of equal opportunity for every citizen impossible. Consequently, the majority of the people do not have access to basic human needs like food, shelter and clothing. Hunger leads to starvation which invariably leads the poverty to frustration. And those who are not strong-willed succumb to dehumanizing treatments from their oppressors, but both writers disapprove of this passivity, so they create protagonists who challenge their oppressors, like was done in apartheid South Africa.

This other face of apartheid in *Violence* like in *The Fourth World* is highlighted through the protagonist's acute suffering and pains, occasioned by deprivations, hunger, poverty, sickness and near-loss of his life. Idemudia's house is under the threat of flood and his room is bare, with just a bed on one side while in another corner of the room "...the cooking pots stood empty. The kerosene was finished in the kerosene stove. There was no food in the house" (22). This image of abject poverty is clear, and lack of food becomes the cause of constant quarrel between him and his wife. He could not feed his family and is forced to leave his only son with his mother. Meanwhile, food is wasted at Freedom Hotel where "unfinished jollof rice, dodo, meat, and beans are being emptied into the dust bin" (20). His travail started early as his father's inability to pay his fees truncated his educational pursuit. He also started early to challenge oppressive forces in the society as he defies the police and tax collectors who come to arrest his father for failure to pay tax. He refuses to take them to his father's farm and insists that he was sent out of school because his father had no money to pay his fees. He is arrested, detained for three days and later released for want of evidence. Policemen are said to terrify those who acted on "behalf of government and not on behalf of the people" (6). Idemudia also challenges his father for battering his mother constantly. His father stopped beating her, but sends her and her children away from his house, thus, Idemudia leaves with his mother.

Social injustice is presented by Iyayi from the perspective of acute exploitation manifested in the relationship and interaction between Chief and Queen Obofun's family and Idemudia's family. Queen engages the services of Idemudia and his three friends to unload three big trailers filled with one thousand five hundred bags of cement at a mere pittance of five naira each, under the rain!. Shortly after that, she accuses them of stealing some bags of her cement. Fortunately, the thieves are discovered later and the three poor men, Idemudia, Osaro and Omoifo are exonerated. Idemudia searches for a job daily with little luck.

He goes to Iyaro with other labourers to wait under the sun and rain, besides gutters filled with refuse and if any one comes up to hire labourers, they all cluster around him, “struggling, fighting, cursing and sweating and anxious” (153) as each labourer tries to outsmart the other and be hired. Sometimes despite the “overpowering heat of the sun...the numbness of hunger” he is not hired, so in despair he returns home each evening after a long wait.

This unemployment problem recurs in the play-within-the-play as the judge insists that The Labourer is paid Fourteen naira a month because he is lazy. In reaction, the defense council explains, “He is paid so little because he accepts it, and he accepts it because he would starve if he refused it, and even if he refused it, there would be many more people who would accept it” (176). It is also reflected in the case of Pa Jimoh who is arrested and locked in the police cell for three days for a crime he did not commit, where he works as a driver. He is maltreated and dehumanized by police but later declared innocent as the culprit is discovered. He is recalled without apologies from police or compensation by his employers. He has no alternative, but happy to go back to his job as the unemployment rate is very high. He is treated this way because he belongs to the fourth world and has no money to bribe the police. Adisa observes that “she didn’t want any police, she didn’t want any dealings with them. Their trouble never ended. Once they got into a man’s house, it is difficult to get them out. And they hadn’t any money with which to bribe anybody” (67). The police is again indicted, and is seen as the government’s agent of oppression.

Iyayi, like Okoye, uses the hospital to highlight the high level of segregation, marginalization that exists in the country. It is expected that the government should provide basic health care for all citizens, but this is not done. There is class stratification even in the hospital as “... some people slept on the hard floor or shared beds while others had single rooms to themselves which were invariably never occupied...” (162). This recurs again in the play-within-the-novel as the Counsel for Defense presents his case: “When in one public hospital, in the same society, one patient can sleep in a large air-conditioned room whereas other ordinary patients (men, women and children) have to sleep in corridors, on mats, on the hard, cold and roughly cemented floors or share beds, this is violence...” (186).

This other face of apartheid that manifests itself in poverty and segregation is further heightened by Idemudia’s illness, the attempt to admit him in the hospital, the shoddy treatment he receives in the first hospital, and the condescending, arrogant and insulting attitude of the nurses towards his wife, Adisa. The description of the hospital is an indictment of a government that has a duty to provide basic health care for the citizens, but does not do so. The hospitals are crowded with people and some of their illnesses are preventable, as they are caused by malnutrition, unhealthy environment, and hazardous, odd, and menial jobs. These people engage in such life-threatening jobs because they do not have an alternative, and when they fall sick, they cannot afford medication and their inability to get appropriate treatment early before the illness worsens due to financial incapacity which leads to preventable deaths like in Akalaka’s case. Very early in the morning, the university hospital is already crowded with so many sick people.

The long benches were full. The porch outside was filled with patients who were able to stand. Some of the waiting patients coughed violently. Mothers who carried sick children moved agitatedly. The faces that waited there were grim, serious and preoccupied with worry (53).

Eventually, Adisa and Idemudia manage to pay the required fees for registration, but they are financially incapacitated to continue to pay the bills. Adisa is forced to sleep with Obofon to raise money to pay for the hospital bill. Obofon exploits the situation and seduces Adisa who succumbs in a desperate bid to get money for food and to pay for her husband's medical bill and save her husband. Thus she strips herself of personal dignity while her husband sells his blood to be able to feed himself and his family. This action is like selling himself, worse than Sizwe Bansi's loss of identity in apartheid South Africa as captured by Athol Fugard in his play, *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*.

The unjust political structure is so bad that it affects the life expectancy of people, especially in the rural communities where social amenities are non-existent. The reader is informed that in the villages, people die "swiftly, mercilessly" as life in the village is hard and as "malnutrition and disease increased...It is rare to find people who survived the age of fifty, even when they did, they were invariably killed by time a few years later" (71). They die in the middle age because of social inequalities, and an unjust political system. Politics has therefore become an avenue for wanton destruction of human lives like in apartheid South Africa, though in this case, it is not through direct killing, but through discrimination and negligence. Unfortunately, the marginalized group constitute people who are the creators of national resources, but ironically they do not benefit from them. Resources are not allocated according to needs, but based on misplaced priorities and satisfaction of selfish desires by those who possess wealth in abundance. The writer calls attention to this anomaly with a hope that the message would impact positively on the society, thus confirming the view of a "symbiotic relationship between literature and politics in the sense that just as political decisions or developments could determine the course of literature in a given epoch, literary activities have been known to influence political developments" (Okafor 106). The other face of apartheid depicted in the novel, summarized in the play-within-the play, portrays a vision of an unjust social order, and thus, the author insists that politicians should set their priorities right through an equitable distribution of wealth, especially in the face of a daunting economic crisis.

The economic situation is so bad that Obofun who says that inflation refuses to pay his workers higher wages they demand when the prices of essential commodities soar. Meanwhile, the commodities provided by the government for distribution at lower prices are sold by officials to his wife, Queen. The author foresees that this situation would lead to a radical change of the political order if the oppressed challenge the political class. He sees oppression in the novel as violence against the oppressed and insists that the narrow-mindedness of leaders will make violence imperative for freeing the victims of inept leadership in the society.

The people of South African were forced by the apartheid regime to violence to free themselves from the oppressive political structures, the workers in like manner, resorted to violence in the form of strike action to free themselves. Likewise, the author creates a protagonist whose determination and resilience propels him to challenge his oppressor. The oppressors resist the change, and resort to intimidation, violence, blackmail and coercion to subdue them, but Idemudia resists and triumphs in the end.

The disparity between the exploited and the exploiters materialize through the play-within-the-novel presented at the hospital entitled “Violence” written by an ex-patient. It is through this play that the essence of the unjust political structure and social injustice in Nigeria emerge clearly as Iyayi coalesces various forms of social injustice against the oppressed class through this art of inserting a play that uses varied but highly symbolic characters. The characters in the play at one level reflect the plight the oppressed but in addition, present graphic illustration of the author’s awareness of the consequences of social inequalities. The characters represent the laborer, the teacher and the educated unemployed man and show the grave situations in which they exist as a consequence of negative political policies. The play unfolds through a court scene where a laborer for instance, questions the judge: “has your child ever fallen ill or wept or cried from hunger? Has your child ever died in your presence simply because he could not get access to a doctor?” (177). In reaction, the judge exhibits anger of the class of people he represents in real life. The other accused, a teacher, “was retired with full benefits after embezzling substantial government funds-amounting, as many sources have it, to nearly two hundred and forty million naira” (178), and Azonze, who was dismissed the previous week was his pupil who “...owned over two hundred houses built with public funds. He also owned several farms which were worked with government equipment and labour, and yet whose expenses and maintenance were charged to the government treasury” (179). The first character represents the oppressed class while the last two are used to prick the conscience of the leaders, and expose their activities to the public. As expected, the leaders present are not happy with the subject of the play. Thus the author presents the contradictions in the society, and through these contradictions, identifies the impediments to progress and development. The idea encapsulated in that play-within-the-novel is that a particular political structure can force citizens to base actions that could result in social upheavals. The defense lawyer puts it succinctly when he says:

...in my understanding, acts of violence are committed when a man is denied the opportunity of being educated, of getting a job, of feeding himself and family properly, of getting medical attention cheaply quickly and promptly. We often do not realize that it is the society, the type of economic and hence the political system which we are operating in our country today that brutalizes the individual, rapes his manhood. We often do not realize that when such men of poor and limited opportunities react, they are only in a certain measure, answering violence with violence.”(185)

This statement highlights the consequences of unequal allocation of wealth which results in deprivation. The play thus becomes symbolic as it represents the social forces in existence in society, showing that politics is not an avenue for selfish gains as seen in the existing political structure, thus refuting the view that “political power, is merely the organization power of class for oppressing” (Marx 337). The play insists that the government must be accountable to the people and that no government can be stronger than the citizens. The use of this technique amplifies the fact that “...art is the mirror in which the oppressor sees himself truthfully reflected, that is to say, at his ugliest. In his panic, the oppressor by a strange distortion of logic sees the ugliness in the art and not in himself, and instead of removing his own deformities, he breaks the mirror...” (Kunene 426).

The majority of the people who are the ordinary people, bear the brunt of all negative manifestations of a particular political system. They bear exploitation by the rich as reflected in Queen’s attitude to her workers and others like Iriso. The cumulative manifestation of oppression of Queen on the workers epitomizes the disintegration of a normative order and Idemudia feels particularly that it “consisted not of physical, brutal assault but of a slow and gradual debasement of himself, his pride as a man”(243). The author through the itemizing and fashioning of these incidents of debasement indicates that the major cause of disillusionment is class segregation, oppression and dehumanization. He comments that the workers are underpaid and “treated no better than slaves and is the highest form of violence maintained and jealously guarded by a greedy, unfeeling class of exploiters, greedy money-makers, conservative and reactionary public officials who in the end take all the credit for achievement of labour just as slave drivers took all the credit for the achievement of the slaves” (248).

Although Iyayi is part of the society, he shows that writers can rise above the society to undertake a creative mission of redemption. He succeeds in involving his idea imaginatively through the reflection of the economic structure, class differences, conflicts, contradictions and political struggles which are pointing to a better future. In this way, he confirms the assertion that “literature has often given us more and sharper insights into the moving spirit of an era than all the historical and political documents treating the same moments in a society’s development. The novel in particular, especially in its critical realist tradition, is important in that respect; it pulls apart and it puts together; it is both analytic and synthetic” (Ngugi, 72).

The two novelists present their convictions that there is hope for a better society through the articulation of ideas which coalesce to present an understanding that “human condition on earth is a consequence of man’s action or inaction...in some cases, the oppressed find themselves in such depraved situations because of their inability to take appropriate actions which would uplift their lives” (Iwuchukwu 5). The oppressed person should therefore not accept his/her fate meekly as his/her lot but should challenge the oppressor in order to liberate him/herself.

The authors highlight a consciousness of class struggle to end the type of the politics that breeds the other face of apartheid. It is a political structure, which like apartheid that deprives ordinary people of their right to the nation's wealth. In its place, a political structure that has the possibility of providing the necessities of life for every citizen, irrespective of social status should be entrenched.

In conclusion, in the two novels, the social attitude of the affluent occasioned by the political structure projects the vision of a callous and insensitive society that encourages and perpetuates apartheid. They depict the people in position of authority as selfish, dishonest and heartless. Okoye and Iyayi are parts of the society they depict in their novels as they have taken on creative missions of redemption. They succeed in showing other faces of apartheid through the reflection of the economic structure, class differences, conflicts, oppression and exploitation of the poor by the rich and the struggles of the oppressed to survive. The two novels in their assertions, explication of themes and character portrayals show indeed that there other faces of apartheid which are ever present in the society. The writers insist that although apartheid as a political structure has been dismantled in South Africa, as a concept and a way of life, it will continue to rear its ugly head in various forms, as long as class stratification remains in society.

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