

# Ogunian Metaphysics and the Metaphor of a Knife in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*

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**Abstract:** The widely celebrated Nigerian Playwright and Nobel Laureate, Wole Soyinka, is unapologetic about his fraternity with his hero-god and muse, Ogun – the Yoruba god of war, of iron and of destruction. Soyinka has, in fact, created many characters in his play-texts along the shores of Ogun's visceral form. This study, therefore, explores Ogunian metaphysics and the metaphor of a knife in Wole Soyinka's *Alapata Apata*. The study uses the textual analysis approach to give a close reading to the selected text and concludes that, Soyinka unveils the hegemonic constructs inherent in the dominant culture of elites. By so doing, he edges the subaltern few over the proletariats and makes the former to be more technically knowledgeable and insightful in the society.

**Keywords:** Ogun, Ogunian Metaphysics, Ideology, Iconoclasm.

## Introduction

Wole Soyinka is one of those intellectuals whom through their artistic works have recorded their sensibilities about the sociopolitical happenings in the society for the purpose of raising the consciousness of the people and proffering possible solutions. African literature has always been a vehicle through which writers express their sensibility about the sociopolitical, cultural and historical issues within the context of Africa and African experiences. For these writers, African literature must fulfill the role of illuminating the minds of individuals by educating them about the hidden facts in the helm of sociopolitical, historical affairs. In fact, Soyinka (1988: p.20) perceptively maintains that African writers are the "critical prods and guides of the societies. The artist has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his time". This view is not only limited to the Soyinka, as Achebe also argues that writers are teachers whose task is to educate the people about the reality of their sociopolitical experience.

Consequently, Soyinka's iconoclastic tendency is well foregrounded in the play entitled *Alapata Apata*. It is a long play rooted in Yoruba cosmological worldview with beliefs in

pantheons, and also eschews the plight of a nation that just emerged from the shackle of colonialism with its political leaders still entrapped with the imperialist-capitalists colonial affairs. The focus of this paper is to explore how the concept of “madness” or abnormality, as portrayed in Wole Soyinka’s *Alapata Apata*, gives insight into the despair, fear, failed government, disillusionment and uncertainty inherent in postcolonial nation.

### **Ideological Reflections in Wole Soyinka’s Dramaturgy**

Wole Soyinka - “the endlessly fertile” and “endlessly inventive” (Osofisan, 2001b: p.25) dramatist - is one of contemporary Africa’s greatest writers and unarguably one of the Continent’s most ideological and imaginative advocates of native culture and the camisole of the humane social order which it embodies. The fact is that:

As academic achiever, writer, playwright, filmmaker, actor, victim or terror and oppression, fighter of human rights and democratic freedoms, multiple prize winner, social guitarist and singer, Road Safety Corps founder, Soyinka is a quintessential public figure worthy of reading, study and emulation as a role model (Marino, 2006: pp.11-12).

Before any critical inquiry into Soyinka’s ideology, or as is often the case, social vision, the dramatist’s own account of his childhood, remains a natural cue to begin our excursion.

The memory recounted in his *Aké: The years of Childhood* (1981), where Soyinka paints a picture of himself – during his salad years - in the turmoil of the years of World War II (1939-1945) in which he struggled between the upbringing of his Christian parents and the tutelage of a grandfather who introduced him to Yorùbá spiritual traditions, provides us with a luminous contact with the frame of his soon-to-be ideological outburst and literary rage. It is upon this premise that subsequent readers and critics of Soyinka have subjected their criticism of his works, personality and ideology.

While popular critics of Soyinka’s works such as Ogunba (1975) have proposed that most of Soyinka’s writings can be understood from the perspective of one’s understanding of Soyinka’s stay in *Aké*, other scholars such as Azeez (2001: p.300) oppose this view by maintaining that, “it is the Yoruba culture and society, really, that should serve as the fount of Soyinka’s creative works”.

Therefore, to begin with the examination of the influences of Wole Soyinka’s ideology is to begin to recount his contact with his immediate family. Of this beginning, Gibbs (1986: p.24) observes that:

Indications of the ways in which Soyinka transformed the raw material of the life which surrounded him during his youth into his plays are provided by almost all his works. He has indicated, for instance, that Amope, the cloth seller who is determined to collect a debt in *The Trials*, has some qualities in common with his mother, Wild Christian, and that the character is also representative, in some respects, of the Yoruba petty-trader type.

This means that, Soyinka has often created the archetypes of his family members as characters in some of his plays within the larger framework of the plays’ primary location and concern. Also, Jones (1983: pp.1-10) itemises the influences that have framed Soyinka’s ideology thus: (a) his roots in Yoruba Culture; (b) Gods, spirits and ancestors; (c) Yoruba Occupations and Festivals; (d) Christian Influences; (e) Universities of Ibadan and Leeds; and (f) The Royal Court Theatre.

Dasylya (2004: p.139) further identifies the Christian influence in Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides*, as reflexive in some of his major plays such as *Death and the King's Horseman*, *A Dance of the Forests*, *The Strong Breed* by asserting that, "trouble is averted by the Christ-like figure who improvises wine at Cana of Galilee where He turned water to wine because there was no more wine and the celebrants were extremely worried". Also, we are made to understand that, Soyinka's works have hitherto "always drawn on existing materials in both the Yoruba and European traditions" (Gibbs, 1986: p.29), and this ardent truth cannot be overemphasised. Consequently, a modification of Jones' (1983) submission is made by Musa (2006: pp.219-220) who argues that Soyinka's artistic and ideological visions are influenced by a combination of factors which directly or indirectly sharpened Soyinka's dramatic and theatrical vision. They are; the Yoruba god of iron (Ogun), early contact with Western and Christian education; communal rites, rituals and festivals; romance and fraternity with the Yoruba travelling theatre troupes; individual disposition to life; societal socio-political, religious, moral and economic problems and Western theatrical modes.

Gibbs (1986) makes another revelation beyond those of Musa (2006) by arguing that, the sources and influences of Wole Soyinka's ideology and writings also draw gusto from his personal experiences in the New Year Festivals at Isara, Soyinka's hometown. Soyinka's ideological identity has attracted so many biting and favourable appraisals from critics. By the same token, Azeez (2001: pp.305-307) also observes that, Osugbo, Aje, Oro and Egungun cults are major influences of Soyinka's ideology.

Moving on to the various camps inhabited by the critics of Soyinka's works, Obafemi (1996: p.118) has observed that, "critics of Soyinka's drama can be grouped into three broad categories: the conventionalist, the materialist and the legislative". Musa (2007: p.75) further expatiates that, Oyin Ogunba, Eldred Jones, Michael Etherton and some other scholars belong to the 'conventionalist group', Femi Osofisan, Biodun Jeyifo, Andrew Gurr and many more belong to the 'materialist school', while Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubiike belong to the 'legislative school'.

The god "whose ritual Soyinka offers as the model for this organic restoration is Ogun, who risks his own life to bridge the abysses that separate the three stages of Yoruba existence - the world of the ancestors (dead), the world of the living, and the world of the unborn" (William Mcpherson cited in Binebai, 2018: p.18). Ogun, as Soyinka reads the myth, is unique among tribal deities because he is at home in none of these three structured states of experience. Rather, his realm is the chaotic region of transition between them, which Soyinka calls "The Fourth Stage" of the Yoruba universe, a condition where opposites collide without resolution in a menacing maul of chthonic strength that yawns ever wider to annihilate all social and natural order. Ogun's heroic passage through this realm not only preserves the connections between the ancestors, the living, and the unborn. It also revitalises the Yoruba cosmos by benignly channeling into it, fresh energies from the fourth stage. This model of social revolution is essentially a simulacrum of recurring crisis, where novel and alien forces are regularly mastered and integrated into the matrix of tradition and custom.

Consequently, Azeez (2001: p.302) identifies Ogunian characters in some of Soyinka's popular works when he contextualises that:

1. In *The Road*, we have Professor who removes road signs and also owns the AKSIDENT

store. This man paradoxically is also a custodian of the homeless – one of Ogun’s positive attributes – as he accommodates all sorts of people in his bar and even forges documents for them. Professor also celebrates at dusk with Ogun’s sacred drink, palmwine, tapped by no other but a god – man, Murano, the dumb one, who has one leg in the spirit world and one in the human world;

2. In *Madmen and Specialists*, the Ogunian character is Old Man;
3. In *Death and the King’s Horseman*, Elesin Oba and Olunde are characters that are moulded to bridge the gulf;
4. In *The Strong Breed*, Eman – also a short form of Emmanuel i. e. Jesus – bridges the gulf willfully;
5. In *A Dance of the Forests*, we are confronted with characters from all the worlds as presented by Soyinka in *Myth, Literature and the African World*, i. e. the worlds of the living, the dead and the unborn;
6. In *A Shuttle in the Crypt*, Ogun is invoked as Essence despite the fact that the poems also employ some Christian images and metaphors;
7. In *Ogun Abibiman*, the Ogunian essence is also directly invoked from the abyss of transition to assist a nation, a continent perhaps in a moment of transition.

Soyinka’s literary ideology can, therefore, not be disconnected from his reminiscence and ecstatic gyration in Ogun’s visceral domain. However, he still insists that being tied to any literary ideology handcuffs him as a writer, and such views become. Ipso facto, ebullient scholars such as Onwueme (1991) are of the view that Wole Soyinka falls to the camp of mythological crusaders. It should be mentioned that, Soyinka’s concept of tragedy is not overtly pro-western, yet it is not totally Aristotelian in conception but majorly communalistic in African theatricality. After comparing the Dionysian, Apollonian and Promethean values with the Yoruba gods, Ogun, Sango and Obatala, Soyinka (1976: pp.142-145) argues that: the Mysteries of Ogun and choric ecstasy of revelers . . . Yoruba tragedy plunges straight into the ‘chthonic realm’, the seething cauldron of the dark world will and psyche, the transitional yet inchoate matrix of death and becoming... Tragedy, in Yoruba traditional drama, is the anguish of his severance, the fragmentation of essence from self.

Having examined the major themes and tendencies in Wole Soyinka’s ideological chateau, the pedagogical attributes, revered Ogunian pictogram and immeasurable theatre cum literary erudition of his cerebral persona makes him to stand “in the world of letters like a giant elephant, massive in his productivity, and colossal in his artistic vision” (Osofisan: 2001b, p.25).

### **Ogunian Metaphysics and the Metaphor of a Knife in Wole Soyinka’s *Alapata Apata***

Alaba, the central character, represents individuals who suffer from the traumatic experiences of colonial and post-colonial rule. As a school boy under colonial rule, he expresses his dissatisfaction towards the hypocrisy of colonial education; especially in the way in which the “round atlas map of the world” is fixed in a “crooked” position. Alaba sees colonial education as a deceptive act to brainwash the colonies about the nature of the world. Thus, the conversation between Alaba and his son, Boy, smacks of generational difference, in that the former refers to the “round atlas map” as “the world”, the latter calls it “the globe.” While

the atlas map has remain fixed in structure, the name has changed so as to make any discussion on it looks riddle; and this could be grasp in the tone of the naive Boy:

**ALABA:** Are you still keeping the world in your assembly hall? On the tall shelf?

**BOY:** Sah?

**ALABA:** The world. You know, that round atlas map of the world. The one Queen Victoria gave to the school at her coronation. Is it still in the assembly hall?

**BOY:** Oh, the globe sah. Yes, we still have it.

**ALABA:** Ah yes, the globe—that’s what we used to call it. Have they straightened it yet?

**BOY:** Straightened it Sir?

**ALABA:** Hey, don’t they teach you people English at school anymore? You know what is straight and what is crooked, don’t you?

**BOY:** Yes sah.

**ALABA:** That’s what I’m asking you. The globe, or whatever you call it. It used to be bent—like this. Did they ever straighten it out, or did they buy a new one?

**BOY:** I don’t know baba. But the one which is there—it’s just like you said—tilted slightly, at an angle. Not that it is bent or crooked. All atlas globes of the world are like that (p.19).

The above copious excerpt brings to light the attempt by Alaba to question the colonial ideology through the “crooked” posture of the globe. The Boy, on the other hand, conceives the structure of the globe as a universal phenomenon which cannot be altered and neutralized through logic or reason.

The spatial setting of the play is somewhere around Lagos, while the temporal setting is situated against the backdrop of a female imperialist ruler, “Queen Victoria” and the self-government rule of indigenous political elite. This is explicitly deduced from the statements of the central character, Alaba: “The world. You know, that round atlas map of the world. The one Queen Victoria gave to the school at her coronation” (p.19). In another context, Alaba notes: “My school days may have stopped too soon, but Queen Victoria made sure the school never stopped” (p.32). To put the play into historical perspective, the educational background of Alaba started in the 19th century during the ascension of Queen Victoria as the monarchical ruler of England in 1847. This nostalgia feeling is to draw into focus the obvious fact that postcolonial problems cannot be disengaged from the imperialist colonial rule.

The revolutionary disposition of Alaba could be traced to his family background, especially his father influence. Alaba’s father, Pa Alonge, is one of the educated elite to receive western education in the heyday of colonialism. Pa Alonge rebels against the entire system of colonial rule, and this could be seen in his refusal to subscribe to Alaba’s headmaster who tries to lure him to pay for a new globe ordered from England. Pa Alonge who Alaba refers to as “a stubborn man, a man of principles” turned down the headmaster’s request, only for Alaba to pay “for his principle” (p.20). So, the defiance act of Alaba is not mainly against the new political bourgeois compradors, but also the repressive colonial rule that conditions the hegemonic rule of neo-colonial-bourgeoisie compradors:

**ALABA:** Just reminding you that your father’s condition didn’t begin yesterday. Won niamokun, eruori e wo. O ni—ah, a t’isaleni. You know what that means, don’t you?

**BOY:** No, Baba.

**ALABA:** Of course you wouldn't. It means, don't tell the man with K-legs that the load on his head is crooked. He'll tell you that the problem did not begin up there but from down below. The load on my head began to bend when I was your age, and all because I used my initiative (p.20).

In essence, the problem of postcolonial era cannot be disengaged from the encounter between the colonised and the coloniser. So, when individuals are trying to evaluate the predicament of Postcolonial society, there is the need to take a step backward into the antecedent factors. Alaba's idiomatic expression undermines, to a larger extent, the propositions of some postcolonial critics who think the study of African reality should go beyond the circle of nostalgia feelings about the past. In other words, sanity can only be restored in postcolonial society only if individuals understand where "the rain began to beat them", to borrow a leaf from Achebe. While the Western colonial-imperialists claim to bring civilisation and light to the heart of darkness, Africa, through education and Christianity, Alaba submits that such education and civilization is aimed at inculcating Western culture in the minds of young school children, in that such training does not give room for the school children to explore their creativities and personalities. This means that the capitalist-imperialist system of education is not channeled towards building intellectuals who could think out the context of what they are being taught in the school or read in the novels, historical books, life narratives, and travelogues written by White explorers. Alaba laments: "Only a primary school in my time, now it has gone up to secondary. Before long they will call it a university. Just give the bush fowl a little space to flap its wings and it boasts it can soar higher than the guinea-fowl—as if both are not destined for the hunter's gun" (p.32).

The conversation between the Prospector (a politician) and Investor (a foreigner) projects a complex interrelation between the post-independence political elite and their former oppressors; the Western powers still exercise some tele-guiding influence in the political and economic affairs of the former colonies. These western powers use the new political elite that took over the mantle of leadership at the dawn of independence to exploit the natural resource of the country. In this regard, several foreign powers (CIA, "the KGB and the MOSSAD") compete in the exploitation of the resources, but only those who meet up with the predetermined requirement are selected "bona fide partners" for such selfish and disruptive business:

**PROSPECTOR:** The Chairman was expecting the first down payment in full—that's for you-know-who-the man at the very top. Otherwise, he won't sign the approval form (p.14).

Thus, the competitive nature of the business is well captured in the words of the Investor: "Business is like war—eat when you can, where you can, what you can" (p.15).

**PROSPECTOR:** Good. We knew what we were doing when we decided on you. I don't have to tell you—hundreds responded to our email offer. Hundreds. No, thousands! And we were selective. We went online and checked all backgrounds and records. Some were syndicated con artists. They actually thought they were dealing with crooks like themselves. Now that you've seen The Source with your own eyes...here... (Take a package from the satchel and begin unwrapping it.) My big surprise. That's the package you saw me pick up at the Central Bank—much too sensitive to be kept in our offices. Or home. Only place for it was the Chairman's personal vault (p.11).

The Investor's visitation is not aimed at bringing development to the former colony, so to speak, but to exploit the natural resource by bribing the authorities in charge of the "Resource Control." While the foreign investor expresses fear of threat and uprising from those he calls "small people", "a deep one", "(a)n illiterate", "small individual", "a common butcher" like Alaba, the native prospector, on the other hand, believes that the local people have little or no idea about the government activities in the country. Alaba is seen as the watch "dog in the manger", a "headache" to the launderers whose aim is to auction out "the rockfield" which is "at least eight hundred and fifty cubic kilometres in all directions; that is, the only sensitive individual among the masses who is capable of exposing the corruptive act of the politician to the world. The only way for the politicians to keep their secretive activities is to silent and dispossessed Alaba; the Prospector aggressively maintains: "That dog thinks he's well positioned but—we'll flush him out. Pluck him down. Dislodge him. Take him out. Send him packing. Dispossess him. Immobilise him. Emasculate the bastard/ We'll burn his Certificate of Occupancy—assuming he even has one, mix the ashes in his palm wine and make him drink it down. We know how to put an end to his Resource Control" (p.17). In addition, the clandestine meeting would be terminated by midnight before anyone takes notes of the Investors visitation, with "police escort with siren in case of traffic, courtesy of the local governor" (pp.15-16). Even if Alaba happens to be aware of their dubious partnership with a foreign Investor, the Prospector submits that they either force him to compromise his stands or get rid of him: "Settle him you mean? That's the expression we use here. Don't worry, it's either we settle him or, we settle his arse. He has only the two choices" (p.10).

The cruelest, notorious, pontificator in the political arena is the local governor, Daanielebo who was a bricklayer turned politician. As an adolescent, Alaba posits, the governor has struggled for survival ("scraps") "in the jungle called Lagos...before he tried his luck with contracting" (p.37). Lagos itself is a notorious and stratified city that, in the word of Mother, "no longer understands the word decency" (p.118). Alaba perceptively maintains: "Ah, Lagos. Anyone who says the world is not bent should spend just one hour in Lagos. If he wasn't bent himself before he went in, he would come out bent like smoked crayfish" (p.188). On this note, the governor is one of those greedy opportunists ("ojuorolari") who takes advantage of the corruptive nature of the city and squeeze himself into the political arena with the help of his godfather, the garrison General; a "land crazy *sojaman*" (p.136), as Alaba calls him. Sarcastically, Alaba describes the governor as "a man of total timbre and caliber" to whom "[t]he entire state is [his] to do what [he] like[s] with" (p.134). He is the only person who is capable of luring Alaba, his childhood friend, into total submission through bribery and coercion; "(th)is motto", the Teacher maintains, "is—every man has his price" (p.36), "(a)nd he styles himself King of the Jungle—says there's no animal he cannot tame" (p.37). The governor notes that bribery is "[t]he language of politics. Different from that of a bricklayer" (p.131). The governor points out that if Alaba rejects his offer, he would be left with no other alternative but the use of force: "Well, don't forget that, Alaba, don't forget it. I can take whatever I want when I want. You're making me lose patience" (p.134).

In the face of recession, governor went ahead to secure "a billion-dollar loan" so as to host the forthcoming meeting on the "Economic Summit of Governors—United States, Diaspora and Nigeria" (p. 36). Moreover, the Prospector notes that brotherhood in political arena

depends heavily on co-operation, rather than morality and decency: “Childhood friendship no longer counts. This is business for queasy stomachs. The stakes are too high” (pp.17-18). The duplicitous, hypocritical, blackmailing personality of the governor could be grasped in the Prospector’s deceptive appraisals:

**PROSPECTOR:** He’s mean. He’s fast. He’s cool. His lop-sided smile can lull a rattle snake to sleep while he divests him of his rattle. He’s my partner within the partnership. He’ll help us bring that one [Alaba] to heel—if he proves troublesome.

**PROSPECTOR:** The governor is on our side. He knows how to deal with stubborn goats—no, dog. Dogs in the manger (pp.16-17).

Indeed, the abrupt retirement of Alaba from a profitable business, then sit on top of a rock doing nothing before the age of sixty which is the stipulated age from public service is seen as a sign of abnormality. The idea of retirement age shows that the political arena is a continuous recycling of old politicians who see power as their birthright which they are ready to secure at all cost. Majority of these politicians remains in power because they cannot control their luxurious lifestyles after retirement, and, most importantly, “[t]hey want to remain relevant” in political arena (p.38). The General, after his retirement from service, still exercises power in political affairs, acting as the “real father” (godfather) to the governor: “he pretends to be retired, but he keeps putting back his uniform, changing from military to civilian and back to military, to monetary and bribery and chicanery and giving me trouble” (p.136). The greediness for power is not something that can be taken away from military men; it is their inherent nature. To simplify, in the words of Alaba: “You can take soja-man out of uniform, but you cannot take uniform out of soja-man” (p.138). Another notorious despot is the military Head of State who is also known as “Maradona” due to his cunning disposition in political arena. Alaba succinctly captures the “Maradona” personality: “The one who created two political parties out of his military hat—one was a little to the right, the other a little to the left. That man, he swigiligued everything from elections to government money. He was such a natural born swigiliguer, they called him Maradona” (p.77). It is this same corrupt recycling *militrician* (garrison General) that the governor openly acknowledges as his “one and only mentor” “who taught [him] everything” he has learnt in politics. (p.135). In this regard, the foreign investor expresses a feeling of surprise during his first encounter with the Chairman of the Central Bank who, to him, “seemed rather too young to be heading such a pivotal institution” (p.12). Soyinka’s (2018: p.23) address to old politicians might be instructive at this point when he avers that

it is time for you also to leave the stage—stand aside and let a new generation take their turn. Yield up the space. You’ve had your turn—take a back seat and give new minds, new vigour, newly inspired others a chance to flower. To summarise: Stop behaving like a Nigerian!

The notion of vacating public office is not to do away with the old generation in any matter that pertains to the society; rather the years of experience should buy them wisdom in guiding the new generation on societal and economic growth and development: “Retirement only comes after experience, and experience brings wisdom. That wisdom belongs to all of us” (p.177). That is why retirement could also be regarded as a clarion call or “a discipline in itself” (p.60). Indeed, wisdom belongs to both young and old, but experience surpasses wisdom; or, as Alaba idiomatically puts it: “The youth may boast a rich wardrobe, but he



cannot match the elder for the tattered robes of experience” (p.188). Or, as the saying goes, “Owo omode o to pepe, t’agbalagba o wokeregbe. The child’s hand cannot reach the lintel, but neither can the elder’s enter the neck of the gourd” (p.110).

Retrospectively, Soyinka’s remarks could serve as an admonition to the recycling militicians in power with the hope of transforming the epistemic ideology of the dominant culture, reverse is the case in the imaginary nation in this text where young public figures also indulge in social vices such as corruption and bribery. The character of the Chairman of Central Bank is a case in point. The Chairman of Central Bank is a young, intelligent and vibrant man who is well grounded in financial management. He has been appointed as the Chairman of the government financial institution not because of his erudite scholarship in financial management but because the government of the day sees him as a viable machinery in misappropriation of public fund; as an interlocutor between foreign investors and prospectors; and as a liaison officer for financial institutions like “the World Bank and IMF” in funding the bogus project executed by foreign investors and local prospectors: “Our president believes in talent, not gerontocracy. That man you called young—he’s a financial wizard. Even the World Bank and IMF stand in awe of him” (p.12). In the absence of the President, the Chairman helps to misdirect public fund which accounts for why the President “left authorization to the Chairman of Central Bank” (p.15).

Corruption is a dread and contagious disease eating up the sense of dignity and integrity of public officers and impending the economic growth and development of the nation. The Investor’s and the Prospector’s accusations of local “countrymen” as those “running good business opportunities with their scam” and [t]arnishing the nation’s image with their spurious emails” (p.13) show the self-deceptive attitudes of the two characters. Arguably, those people (“scam—419”) who are involved in internet fraud are victims of bad government. They rob the foreign investors through internet lies and scam, and tarnish the prestigious image of their nation. The investor derides the Prospector’s nation, the latter remarks that corruption is a universal phenomenon: “That tells you. Greed! It’s universal” (p.13). It is quite unbelievable that the Investor who came to rob a nation’s resources would still have the nerves to speak up for his own country’s reputation: “But please—subtly. We don’t want a scandal that might reach our newspapers at home. The world is getting small. We may be a small family but we go back in time. People know us. We have a reputation to protect” (p.18). “The world is getting small”, in effect, as a result of globalisation. Globalisation is a calculated exercise, modern-hegemonic construct of the Western world in perpetuating into the economic and political affairs of developing and under-developing nations with the ultimate goal of keeping them as Other within the periphery of World culture, social, political, and economic arena. According to Ojaide (2015, p.5), globalisation is “expansionist takeover of the present-day developing countries by the Western economic system.”

It is ironic and self-shattering that corrupt investor and prospector are the one pointing accusing fingers at the internet fraudsters whereas their own dubious enterprise is worse than the “scam—419”, as the Prospector calls them. This is not to make case for internet fraud; far from it, to point fingers of denunciation in the direction of internet fraudsters by these two funguses infected persons is superficial and uncritical. Conversely, the corruptive enterprise

of the investor and the prospector is what results in the ruin of “good business opportunities” for the countrymen and in turn “tarnishing the nation’s image.” The “scam—419”, Investor, and government officials are all men of the skill. In fact, the governor’s denunciation of Alaba as a selfish citizen is the hallmark of ironical situation in the text: “Don’t be selfish, Alaba! I am appealing to your Yoruba self. If nothing else moves you, at least remember you are a Yoruba man. “Eniakan o kin je k’ilufe. You have to share, for the progress of the race” (p.134). Alaba’s response is also instructive: “A-ah, there I agree with you. The town cannot put on weight if only one man is eating. Still, my weighty brother, you leave me confused” (p.134). In this regard, Soyinka (2018) comments: “A loud voice in denouncing others is no substitute for coming to terms with one’s own crime against society...What do the Christian Scriptures says on this matter? First mind the beam in your own eyes before pointing at the mote in the eyes of others” (pp.10-11). Not only does the Investor, the Prospector, the governor say something more than they intended to say, but they even say something that they do not mean to say. Their points of self-shattering, with regard to their own conceptual arguments and assumptions, are also the moments at which the reader achieves the greatest insight into the malicious characters of foreign bodies and local political elite. The further they make case for their dubious act, the more violent the conflict between the elite and the countrymen becomes, to the point of auto-destruction. The play of *difference* between the two warring forces of signification (dominant culture and the subaltern) within the text further demonstrates how the privileged class in its own critical blindness “turns the weapon of [its] language upon [itself] in the mistaken belief that it is aimed at another ... We encounter it here in the form of a constitutive discrepancy, in critical discourse, between the blindness of the statement and the sight of the meaning” (De Man, 1971: p.110).

The modern world of postcolonial rule is one full of absurdity and uncertainty. The sense of being and nothingness in postcolonial era is figuratively captured in the words of one Shakespeare’s eponymous character, Macbeth who acclaims that human life and existence “is a tale/Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing (Acts 5, scene 5). Macbeth’s thought is concerned about the contingency and mutability of human life and existence, Teacher’s allusion, on the other hand, is to pass comments on the futility of present-day postcolonial era (p.40). The futility of postcolonial era is one in which the whole political plans and initiation signify nothing. A typical examples could be drawn from the mismanagement of “the Rolling Steel Mills of Ajaokuta which/ After forty years of existence producing the total sum of” (p.40) nothing; the ministry of power (“power turbines”) “which boast half a century of operations and still generate—of electric megawatts” (p.41) nothing; and the ministry of works which awards “expressways...out a hundred times but whose motorable mileage soonest thereafter is” (p.41) signifying nothing. These examples, by implication, show that despite independence, the postcolonial era is an extended version of colonial affair in disguise; to borrow a leaf from Franz Fanon, “black skin, white mask.”

The postcolonial affair is a hegemonic culture implicitly inscribed in the handing over documents of transition from colonial-imperialists to comprador-bourgeois elite. This culture was documented, in practice, not in a white and black format (written form), rather in the psyche of cruel and tyrannical despots who emerge as postcolonial political leaders. So, to dismantle the philosophical ideologies behind the colonial affairs in independence Africa,

there is the need to do a critical scrutiny of the functioning and disfunctioning of these ideologies, and perform a deconstructive surgery: a decolonisation of the psyche. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in his *Prison Memoir* (2018: p.47), argues that "(t)he colonial system did produce a culture. But it was the culture of hedonism without morality, a culture of legalised brutality, a racist ruling-class culture of fear, the culture of an oppressing minority desperately trying to impose total silence on restive oppressed majority". This culture was sanctified by the very structure and practice of the colonial administration of governors, provincial and district commissioners, and officers right down to the askari (native police and soldiers)" In this sense, Alaba volunteers himself to dismantle the life stifling ideological practices within the postcolonial political arena. The selfless service to speak up for the right of the downtrodden, to speak truth to the face of power "is not an academic exercise but a purposeful undertaking" that should be embraced by individuals in the society. This is not because he is educated, so to speak, but he sees the process of dismantling the hypocrisy of the political elite as an ethical responsibility.

Although, the Prospector thinks "no one would ever suspect that he's "sitting on top of something the whole world wants" (p.16), the Teacher, by contrast, is aware of the collaborative business between the foreign investors and the political elite with regards to the "rock". In his conversation with Alaba, the Teacher exposes the clandestine visitation of the Investor and Prospector to the rock: "All I know is that his [local governor] emissaries have been here. They have been exerting pressure. A lesser man would begin to feel a sense of obligation" (p.36). On this note, the Teacher warns Alaba against being emotional and sentimental in his revolutionary dispensation towards the criminality of the elite, especially in his dealings with the governor who was his old colleague in the college. Such collegiality sentiment, Teacher notes, is not easy to get rid of given "[t]he hand-to-mouth seminars that create the strongest solidarity" (p.36). Despite the governor's attempt to buy Alaba out, he remains obstinate; Alaba asserts: "Fortunately, what he wants from me, I cannot supply" (p.36). It might look puzzling why Alaba, and not the Teacher, is the one assigned to carry out the social responsibility of a watcher (a dog) over the misappropriation of the state resources ("the manger") by "sitting on top of something the whole world wants", as the Prospector has remarked. This is because Alaba is a retired butcher of the government and the rock is the meeting point that connects individuals in the society.

Hence, Alaba's choice to sitting on the "rock" from dawn to sunset is a calculated exercise to sensitize the local people about the need for transparency, discipline, integrity in governance and social relationship; this could be captured in the 1<sup>st</sup> Farmer's expression: "(Looks around) Come to think of it...hmm, you are right. All my life I've been going back and forth through here but...it never struck me before...yes, it is the only crossroads around. Still, even that could be just a coincidence" (p.22). The 1<sup>st</sup> Farmer later submits that Alaba is "a madman" who has been inflicted with madness by some "envious rivals" (p.25). Moreover, the idea of madness is a matter of perspective. Ngugi writes: "Madness, after all, is relative. It depends on who is calling who mad. In the state of madmen, anybody who is not mad is mad" (p.n). It could also be grasped how corrupt politicians, garrison Generals and, parasitic religious leaders and traditional rulers implicitly and explicitly display their madness. For the 2<sup>nd</sup>

Farmer, Alaba's choice is as a result of a Yoruba deity known as "Esu Laalu" whose myth depicts him as the master craft of confusion and uncertainty in the society:

**2nd FARMER:** And what is there on earth into which Esu cannot transform himself? Whose body can he not occupy—man or woman? Whose identity can he not borrow when he wants to sow confusion? Esu La-a-lu. Is Esu not the contrary one who threw himself into a burning house and still complained was freezing? He sat in the palace courtyard but kept screaming that the space was too small for him, then he squeezed himself into the palm kernel and finally stretched himself in contentment. Ah, Esu Elegbara, I beg you, don't mess around with my peace of mind..." (p.23).

The above excerpt has been copiously cited to vindicate the notion that the political elite, not Alaba, are the idle hand which has now become the workshop of Esu (foreign investors). The confusion of these political elite could be deduced from their lack of contentment in whatever is available at their disposal, not to stoop at the table of their former master for scrap of bread. They have hidden their dubious act from the sight of the general public like Esu who "squeezed himself into the palm kernel." Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2006: p.66), maintains that the modern man is perplexed and uncertain about the power that sleeps within him in the same manner Esu "squeezed himself into the palm kernel." The Teacher, like Nietzsche, sees it as his task to free modern man (Alaba) from the nihilism of postcolonial government. Since the postcolonial era has been relegated to the state of despair and instability, every aspect of human endeavor has to be subjected to "initiative" and "the will-to-power". On this note, Alaba sets out to philosophize with what he calls "initiative" which signifies that man can become the architect of his own destiny without any recourse to an alien force or entity. For Alaba, "initiative is like a butcher's knife—it cuts from both sides" (p.20).

In other words, the masses can only be free from the shackle of European imperialism and neocolonialism only if they are ready to challenge, question, and critique the philosophic constructs that uphold the dominant ideology and culture. The essential tool to do this job satisfactorily is "initiative". Initiative is the viable tool to call into question the epistemic knowledge, values, norms, beliefs inherent in a predetermined system. That is, the employment of initiative in education would enable those who acquired it to be critical of the dominant culture and ideology, and to deconstruct the hierarchical opposition between the privileged class and marginal class so as to demonstrate that the marginal is just as much more important as the privileged. In fact, if the theologians hold the view that "God is not crooked, so, he wouldn't make a crooked world" (p.68), then the stratification in every sphere of the society could be ascribed to human initiative so as to keep some less privileged persons at the backwater side of the society. Most importantly, initiative should enable youth to be self-productive and problem-solvers. If foreign products such as the "crash helmet" are too expensive for the masses to purchase, the youth should use their initiative to produce a locally made "[c]heap, steady replacement" helmet, rather than purchasing "those with import license, all profiteers, making money from" the less privilege, like the three Okada men (pp.153-154). In addition, creativity is not limited to a group of intellectuals, so to speak; it is a force that lies inside individuals waiting to be explored for the all-round growth and development. A genius man, as Alaba elegantly asserts, "did not need to pass an exam to

become London Butcher, or expert in *suya*. Instead, London came to me. Not just London, the whole world” (p.69).

Just like Alaba, Soyinka (2018) affirms that Ogun, the god of creativity (“initiative”) always equips his “Sons” with metaphorical tools (“knife”, “machete”) to execute judgment on corrupt, insincere, charlatanic individuals in the society: “I have listened to the voice of Ogun who has become increasingly impatient with so much that is going wrong. He has handed me his machete and given marching orders, saying, Son of Ogun, take this machete and cut through the brambles of lies, hypocrisy, double-talk and pontifications and insincere sententiousness. Cut off the tongues of liars so that your people can know some people. And Ogun says to me, clear a path for a new generation, and get rid of these self-recycling geriatrics” (pp.45-46). Alaba is totally consumed with the revolutionary voice of the Teacher who serves as a propelling voice behind his defiance: “With your help Teacher, only with your help. You help me develop the *willpower*. At the beginning, I also was not sure I had the strength in me” (p.37).

Consequently, the idea of “willpower” depicts Alaba and the Teacher’s attempts to create a new society out of their initiative based on what they see as ethical. For Alaba and the Teacher, the country needs “transparency” for there to be “stability” in government and economic; the society needs to be safe from disillusionment, chaos, despair, recession, unemployment, disorderliness: “...everything orderly, straight forward—that’s the way the world is meant to be. And that was my quarrel with that globe. It was bent. Asikiwu. So I used my initiative” (p.68). Hence, human development could only be achieved when the government officials embrace transparency in discharging their duties to the people. Transparency, therefore, is the seed that germinates into virtues such as equality, mutual respect, honesty, selflessness, self-reliance, accountability, and integrity. In restructuring the society, much modesty and consistency is needed by a government who “outlined [its] agenda, [its] electoral promises as it were, and [it] struck to them” (p.35); “who [has] plans for future generations” (p.59):

**ALABA:** Teacher, I thought I am supposed to be retired.

**TEACHER:** So you are. So you are. There are many kinds of retirement. Yours is the type that provides the world its stability. The world needs stability. Stability is dynamic and consistent. Consistency breeds confidence. Confidence breeds productivity. In a world as unstable as ours, we need symbols of consistency, even as earth needs the sun. (p.84)

## Conclusion

The preceding analysis of Wole Soyinka’s *Alapata Apata* exemplifies the philosophical world of Alaba whose *will-to-power* is to sensitise his fellow countrymen towards a play of initiative as a viable way out of political and social instability in the society. Whereas the political elite use their various offices to embezzle public fund for their own benefit, Alaba, on the other hand, employs his butchery skill to bring serenity and stability to the society. To unveil the hegemonic construct inherent in the dominant culture, individuals have to explore their initiative. Initiative, as such, is like the two edged sword that equips individuals with the zeal to deconstruct the philosophical ideology at work within a particular system. By implication for the analytical framework of this paper, initiative is another name for

Deconstruction, in that it offers space for meta-critique of the dominant culture and the binary opposition it asserts.

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