



The Prostitute as a Commentary of the State in Post-colonial Africa: The Case of Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*

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Abstract

The essay examines Okey Ndibe's Arrows of rain to probe how he uses the figure of the prostitute to engage and interrogate political leadership and governance in fictional Madia. The paper argues that the prostitute by nature of her work and position, is marginalized in that she subverts societal moral order. However, I point out that the position of the prostitute in Arrows of rain serves as an appropriate vantage point from which the author explores a number of maladies afflicting contemporary African states. Of significance in the essay is the personality of Emilia's name duality as a prostitute and a profession teacher. Therefore, by interrogating the figure of the prostitute, the paper posits that the prostitute through her actions, speech and silences has been used as a strategy of representing the failed promises of the state in postcolonial Madia and Africa in general. In the main, the paper focuses on the intricacies around political leadership and the missteps of the leader are interrogated through his association with the prostitute. It is therefore within such a relationship that embeds failures of the leader. The question that arises from such a relationship between a prostitute and a leader is who of the two is "immoral"? Is there a possibility of reading political leadership in Africa against moral inadequacy as it is the case of a prostitute? The responses to the raised questions forms the basis of the analysis in this paper as I seek to demonstrate how the prostitute has been used deliberately to expose the social ills perpetrated by the leader.

Key words: Postcolonial state, prostitute, leadership, governance, silence

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the figure of the prostitute as a metaphor in the reading of the state in post-colonial Africa as depicted in Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. Informed by censorship and hostility from dictatorial regimes in contemporary Africa, most writers employ a variety of strategies to advance a host of contemporary experiences emanating from poor governance. In this paper, I read the prostitute in *Arrows of rain* as a rich site from which issues of governance in fictional Madia are hinged and interrogated.

The essay proceeds by examining the persona of the prostitute, societal perceptions of the prostitute and how the figure of the prostitute is read as a commentary of the socio-political immoralities, injustices and betrayals perpetrated by the political leadership in postcolonial states. This approach is informed by the fact that most post-colonial states especially in Africa grapple with issues such as corruption, assassinations, misuse of power, and betrayals that hinder the realisation of equity and sound governance. Such issues have worked against the initial aspirations of most countries in working towards a united front in terms of social, economic and political development.

It is worth noting that the depiction of the prostitute figure in *Arrows of rain* is conflated and complex. The text points at the fact that it is not the persona of the prostitute that is important but what she does with whom that provides for us material for interrogation. The prostitute in most societies is “erased and silenced” from most happenings because of her character of an “immoral” individual. This is especially so because of the stigma associated with her identity as a “woman on the side” which automatically casts her as an outcast and a despised member of the community. However, despite this, the prostitute is a loaded site from which the socio-political ills of respective regimes in power could be criticised and interrogated. Cognisant of the oppressive regime and environment within which *Arrows of rain* is produced, Ndibe employs the figure of the prostitute to comment on the consequences of bad leadership in post-colonial Madia (Nigeria). It is imperative then to look at how the figure of the prostitute is used to raise philosophical questions about governance by tyrannical leaders as discussed in the section below.

The process of marginalizing the prostitute in the society

The process through which the prostitute becomes marginalized in the society obliges her into silence. In most cases, society perceives the prostitute as an “immoral” member of the community who falls short of the qualities that define “good women”. To echo Edward Said’s words on the concept of orient, I point out that in this way, the prostitute is “othered” and despised because of the stigma that marks her social life and her very existence. Based on this, the prostitute lacks authenticity of belonging as a member in the community hence placed at the margin of the important happenings at the centre which is occupied by those considered upright. This discrimination denies her the freedom of expression which is accorded other members who are considered ‘normal’ leading to her automatic “silence”.

Most African literary artists such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o in *Petals of blood* and Meja Mwangi in *Going down River Road* have depicted the prostitute as one of the most ‘muted groups’ in the society. Such a portrayal of the prostitute is both interesting and complex because prostitutes are not entirely invisible. In other words, prostitution is, perhaps paradoxically and certainly hypocritical in that the portrayal of the prostitute is over-determined and silenced where possible by the society. Shirley Ardener observes that:

The inconsistency of requiring women to be chaste while chased, and at the same time requiring men to prove themselves by defeating the women’s success, is obvious. One way of resolving this dilemma is to have a category of females who are kept outside the recognized universe perhaps prostitutes, ‘women of the streets’ who belong nowhere, or strangers from other universes, who are not fully women for men to use to complete their ‘manness’. (1978, p. 36)

Based on Ardener’s observation above, prostitutes automatically form a muted group as they belong “nowhere” in as far as society’s categorization is concerned. Despite this, it is also instructive to point out that this line of thought does not in any way imply that prostitutes are literally “invisible” but that despite their physical presence, they remain unheard, and not to be spoken about. In as much as the prostitute is ‘invisible’ and marginalized by the society, the space they occupy as prostitutes help them to gain access to information and places that they could otherwise not access if placed in the category of “morally upright women”. It is then from such a position that I examine how the prostitute has been used as a metaphor in reading contemporary African states.

This is evident in *Arrows of rain* where Ndibe utilizes the character of the prostitute (Emilia) to speak out against social, political and economic injustices in Madia. Through flashbacks, and intimate relationship with the top political leadership of Madia, Emilia as a prostitute becomes a 'loaded' medium for socio-political protest and commentary.

The prostitute as a metonym of the nation-state

Most African literary writers such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o in *The Wizard of the Crow* and Labou Tansi in *Seven Solitudes of Lorsa Lopez* have interrogated poor governance and excesses of political leaders as being embodied in the leaders' physical and moral 'abnormality'. Such description of leaders is often employed to image their failed commitment to their electorate and also a failure of state governance. Informed by such, I point out that the use of the prostitute figure in the world in which *Arrows of rain* is set, becomes a socio-political commentary of African leadership and not just a case of "sexual immorality". Ndibe employs the prostitute to highlight the degree of immorality pervading state governance. In this regard, one is inclined to ask: who then is the greater prostitute? Is it the politician, the society or the prostitute? The answer to this question forms the basis of my discussion in this essay.

Ndibe in *Arrows of rain* employs Emilia as the prostitute. The author artistically delineates Emilia from Iyese as a dual character. For instance, Iyese only defines herself as a prostitute when she assumes the name Emilia and uses the name Iyese when not in the business of prostitution. In this regard, naming is significant in Ndibe's attack of the status quo. As a name, Emilia is cultureless especially if read against the African way of naming where a name embodies belonging, identity and lineage. In this way, the name Emilia denies her identity hence making her a woman on the side used for the sake of completing male machoism as seen in the text. Therefore, as a prostitute, Emilia becomes a space upon which power is played out and exploited by the powerful entity of the society.

As observed earlier on, as a prostitute, Emilia is silenced and only exists in the shadows of those who exploit her because of her character. The marginal position she occupies places her in a vulnerable position of exploitation, violence and inhumane treatment by the men that she offers her sexual services to. This is informed by the way in which "society has constructed her to an extent that any violence forced on her is dismissed as part of her identity" (Ligaga, 2004, p. 46) as a prostitute. Melissa Farley (2000) argues that prostitutes are "the most silenced group of women, the most raped group of women, in the world, and their voices are not heard", and that prostitution is, "socially invisible" (p. 30). Despite the prostitute's invisibility, the position occupied by the prostitute allows her to witness most of the happenings in the course of her trade. In addition, as a prostitute, she provides her services to men of all social classes and status thus becomes a carrier of information from such men she serves yet at the same time entering all the social spaces available. However, of import in *Arrows of rain* is the linking of the prostitute to state leadership. This is because Emilia does not prostitute with any man but with Isa Bello Palat- the head of state of Madia. When she is with Bukuru- the fiance, her relationship is of two adults intimately in love.

In contrasting Emilia's relationship with Bello and Bukuru, Ndibe automatically delineates Emilia from ordinary prostitution by juxtaposing her with state power. In most cases, women engage in prostitution to earn a living as a result of hard economic times pitted against scarcity of jobs or skills. However, in the case of Emilia, she is a trained teacher who can comfortably cater for her needs without engaging in prostitution. In fact, she had been married to a rich medical doctor who had all the

material riches but Emilia decided to leave all these to prostitute. Therefore, her social and financial background debunks the view that those who prostitute do it for monetary returns. In this regard, Ndibe uses Emilia metaphorically as a representation of the masses who are exploited, raped and betrayed by their leaders despite the natural resources and skills that abound in their countries.

The depiction of Emilia as a side woman for President Isa Bello Palat, the president of Madia is a strategy used to probe political leadership in Africa. A president is a father of the nation who is supposed to provide physical and psychological security for the citizenry he is leading. However, it is interesting to note that Bello is a contradiction of this expectation as he turns against the citizenry, he is supposed to lead by exploiting them sexually. Based on this, the reading of the prostitute in *Arrows of rain* cannot be complete in itself devoid of its intersection with the political leadership of Madia.

In most societies, women hold key stakes in the development and wellbeing of any nation-state as they (women) regenerate the human resources necessary for governance. Hence, like any other natural resources in the contemporary society, they need to be protected and valued. Therefore, their exploitation by those who wield power threaten the very essence of what women are in the society. The juxtaposition of Emilia against state power and leadership is informative as it provides a window through which the political leadership in Madia is caricatured and satirized.

Bello's sexual relationship with Emilia is employed to demonstrate power relations of domination and subordination since as a leader, Bello does not question the marginal position that Emilia occupies but reinforces it. In this way, the power that Bello wields as a president allows him to influence and determine outcomes for his own selfish interests. In this way, power becomes a component of politics that the ruling class use to maintain and sustain hegemony. Emilia's body as a prostitute becomes a battlefield upon which president Isa Bello Pallat uses to demonstrate his power and exploits against Bukuru Ogugua who is subordinate to Bello.

However, Emilia's relationship with Bukuru Ogugua and Bello is sharply contrasted in the text. Her relationship with Bello is that of prostitution while with Ogugua is based on love. She feels loved and emotionally satisfied when with Ogugua but is devoid of any emotions when she is with Bello. Unlike Ogugua who is understanding and loving, Bello uses violence and coercion to make sure that Emilia services him. As such, when Bello learns about Emilia's relationship with Ogugua, the revelation is especially disturbing since Bello is the embodiment of state power. Therefore, the thought of Ogugua being romantically involved with Emilia is unpalatable and demeaning to Bello's power and status as the president of Madia. This revelation forces him to use all possible means to ensure that he becomes the only man in Emilia's sexual life. He threatens Ogugua and the latter feigns madness for over twenty years to avoid being assassinated.

Bello has all the state machinery and power to ultimately silence Ogugua and it is the reason why Ogugua keeps away from Emilia. However, despite Bello's power, it is interesting to note that by the time Ogugua goes into hiding, Emilia is pregnant with his baby and not Bello's. Masculine authority and power is measured, especially in Africa, against the ability of a man to sire and in particular boy children. However, the author seems to suggest that Bello is "impotent" since he is unable to impregnate Emilia. Bello's inability to impregnate Emilia is symbolic of his "impotency" as a head of state. Bello is barren since he lacks the requisite skills to lead his country Madia. As

a father of the nation, he has been prostituting the state resources (Emilia) that would otherwise benefit the ordinary citizenry such as Ogugua.

The narrative voice informs us Bello has a wife. However, the wife has only given birth to girls. Most communities in Africa place a premium on a boy child and therefore any woman who does not give birth to boys is chastised and ridiculed and equated to one without children. As a leader, Bello desperately needs a boy child for him to be considered man enough and a leader. It is the lack of the boy child with his wife that drives him to run after Emilia. Therefore, though Bello is a man and a head of state, his power is in limbo as long as he does not have a boy child. As such, when he learns that Emilia is pregnant, he is excited because he hopes to get a boy child to complete his status as a man. However, when the child is born, Emilia informs him that it is not his but Ogugua's. Bello turns violent, kills Emilia and stubs the boy on his foot and storms out of Emilia's house.

Bello's murder of Emilia is imbued with multiple readings. Bello's audacity to kill an innocent woman who has decided to tell him truth is a manifestation of the tyranny's insecurity in post-colonial African states. Unlike Ogugua who lacks the courage to say truth in the face of the tyranny by feigning madness and decides to inhabit Beach B, Emilia tells the truth. Truth in dictatorial regimes is not welcome especially by the state. By saying truth, Emilia has in essence challenged the powers that be. In most nation-states, those in power are always scared of any competition and resistance from radical individuals challenging their powers. In order for tyrants such as Bello to safeguard against their selfish interests in protecting the power and their ego, they eliminate those they consider dissidents through death which ensures total silencing.

Therefore, by killing Emilia, Bello has silenced the truth that she carries. Ndibe uses Bello's murder of Emilia to demonstrate the inferiority complex that characterize Africa's political leaders, who attempt to compensate for their lack of leadership qualities and failures through a false pretense of power on their subjects. This shows that "Bello's quest for totalitarian power is typical of post-colonial dictatorship where the president has the final word" (Ligaga, 2004, p. 57) since such leaders do not invite any challenge of their power.

In this regard, since Emilia challenges Bello's male power by conceiving with Ogugua, Bello has to even his score by murdering her. This ensures total silence of Emilia so that Bello's inability to sire a boy child is never known. Bello's behaviour in the manner he deals with those who challenge his male and state power is reminiscent of the behaviour of leaders who ascended to power immediately after independence in a number of countries in Africa. For instance, in Nigeria (fictional Madio), and other countries such as Kenya and Uganda, political leaders have consistently silenced those opposed to the political leadership through mysterious deaths and arbitrary detentions. A case in point is, in 1976, the Nigeria's military government under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo ordered the destruction of the musical theatre of Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, a musician, who used his music to criticise the excesses of government of the day. Commenting on assassinations in Nigeria, Christopher Odetunde points out that:

Assassination has now been part and parcel of our political lexicon in Nigeria. Who is the abiter of the political assassination; it is the electorate that even rewards the assassins with victory and whenever the electorates begin to go against the grain and punish the assassins and their political employers, these born to kill politicians will stop their type of politics (2006)

The excerpt above captures the rampant existence of assassinations carried out by the political class in Nigeria. However, Odetunde also points out that the electorate have a share of the blame as they are the ones who elect such leaders. In addition, the electorate hold a fundamental position as they are the only ones who can change the status quo. This therefore calls on the oppressed to take charge of the direction of their lives by stopping despots in contemporary African states under stifling tyrannical regimes. Ndibe seems to echo calls for change when he presents in the character of Emilia somebody who can stand up to the leader and tell him the truth regardless of the consequences. Emilia's ability to say truth in situations that demand total silence is a key step toward ending the culture of complacency by the electorates likely to lead to an equitable and accountable society.

Political leadership in contemporary Africa has been characterized by assassinations and intimidations. Countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda among others are illustrative of states that have had most political assassinations. In most cases, assassinations are perpetuated by those in power to curtail any form of opposition and calls for accountability from dissidents. Therefore, Bello's violent and murderous behavior is symbolic of the symptomatic violence that has created past and present Nigerian and Africa's political regimes. Bello's actions and inactions automatically interrogate the position he holds as a head of state. Thus, by creating Bello as a tyrant, Ndibe shows that leaders in the persona of Bello are incapable and deficient of offering sound leadership in any country. In doing this, Ndibe caricatures Bello especially so because he has been installed as the life president of Madia (Ndibe, 2000, p. 15).

Bello's audacity to install himself as a life president is a plague that marks most political leadership in Africa where leaders such as Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Joseph Kabila of Burundi, Paul Kagame of Rwanda, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Muamar Gaddafi of Libya changed the constitution to allow themselves to stay in power as long as it takes. The power-hungry despots and criminals in the persona of Bello are not ready to relinquish power once they deep their hands in the state cookie jar flowing with power. Commenting on Nigeria's political leadership, Peter Eze (2005) laments that in Nigeria:

Criminals become policy makers and administrators, while God fearing Nigerians are turned into beggars and paupers. In the course of all this mayhem, suppression takes over freedom of speech and Human rights become animal rights as seen in the way people are killed.

The above quotation captures the atmosphere in *Arrows of rain* as Ndibe interrogates how Bello as the murderer and therefore a criminal becomes the life president of Madia. To this point, Bello is portrayed as a morally impotent and bankrupt person not fit for public office. This is because it is under his leadership that the military rape, murder and dump women in the waters at B Beach. All this is witnessed by Bukuru as the "mad man" on the beach. In allowing the military to carry out despicable actions to his subjects under his watch, Bello's leadership becomes predatory. This is because he has turned against the very people he is supposed to lead.

Another device that Ndibe employs in interrogating dictatorial leadership is his ability to give his characters different identities. For instance, Iyese, just like Bukuru in the text has two identities. The dual identity allows the characters to survive in Madia's political 'madness.' She has two names, Emilia-the prostitute and Iyese-the 'normal' good woman. The name Emilia therefore serves as a mask of what she does and helps

her to survive in a society that is very insensitive to her predicament as a prostitute. In addition, the name Emilia gives her power and strength to subvert oppressive structures that define people of her nature in the society. Therefore, it is through Bello that Iyese loses her name and adopts Emilia in order to serve him as a prostitute. This is because she is only Emilia when with Bello but once done, she assumes the name Iyese especially when with Ogugua. In this way, the name Emilia, which is only adopted for immoral acts represents all those whose lives in society do not demand of them to have that much identity of names.

I further look at Iyese's adoption of two identities as significant in reading and understanding the post-colony and the processes it has gone through to be where it is in the present. Naming is very important because within the name, we have a history, an identity, a genealogy and a culture. In this case, Iyese's identity with family name is a site that helps her to understand herself and her position as a formerly colonised person. Kwasi Wiredu points out that:

According to a very popular Akan proverb, it is because God dislikes injustices that he gave everyone their own name (thereby forestalling the misattribution of responsibility). Along with a clear sense of individual responsibility goes an equally strong sense of the social reverberations of an individual's conduct. The primary responsibility for an action, positive or negative, rests with the doer, but a non-trivial, secondary responsibility extends to the individual's family and in some cases, to the surrounding community. (1998, 308-309)

Wiredu's argument implies that a name has the linguistic inscription of accountability that defines one at the personal and social level. The name therefore marks the place at which a particular person can be called in language, yet at the same time recalls the individual's kinship and ancestral ties. In this way, the name implies myself and others that one identifies with which means that individual identity is intrinsically relational. Therefore, by retaining her name, Iyese is invoking her past, her society and her history which helps her in understanding her present predicaments as a woman and a citizen in Madia.

The absence of history within the realm of politics is one of the factors leading to suffocation of Madia's development. For instance, having observed what the society is going through, Pa Ata, the Social Issues Minister's father asks "why does our present bear no marks of our past? What is the meaning of our history [in our leadership]?" (Ndibe, 2000, p. 122). This demonstrates that by allowing Iyese two identities, Ndibe suggests the importance of history to post-colonial leaders to help them avoid repeating past mistakes in order to build a healthy nation. This is a good lesson Particularly for Nigerian leadership which has experienced a good number of coups and counter-coups in its history. Some successful coups in Nigeria as identified by those who assumed office include: January 1966 (General Aguiyi-Ironsi); July 1966 (General Gowon); July 1975 (General Mohammed); December 1983 (General Buhari); August 1985 (General Babangida); and November 1993 (General Abacha). Military leaders should therefore examine what was wrong in the past regimes for them to move Nigeria in the right direction. Just as Iyese's two identities help her in dealing with the present realities as having been shaped by the choices she made in history, the politicians too have to learn from the history that has shaped its politics and leadership into the present moment.

Going back into history as depicted in Iyese's name, it suffices that oppression of the masses has been a reality of most political struggles around the world. Its continued manifestations force the ruled to turn to their past historical leadership in an attempt to compare the way they were with the present experiences in their lives as is evident in Pa Ata's question (Ndibe, 2000, p. 122). This historical retrospection influences politics in countries such as fictional Madia by creating an urge to change inefficient leaders in power. History therefore becomes a recipe for social and political activism for individuals in the society. Depending on where one stands on the continuum of oppression, it becomes evident that history provokes individuals differently to either adopt positions opposed to peaceful resolutions of conflicts or peaceful channels. Iyese adopts the former approach in resisting authority when it is interpreted in relation to the class position that Iyese occupies in the society.

To this end, prostitution is read as a space dominated by violence since the experiences that a prostitute undergoes are very violent. The history of Nigerian politics therefore becomes replete with individuals who consistently violate peoples' confidence and leaders who do not recognize the importance of the country's history. Like Ndibe, Okello Oculi's *Prostitute* (1968) pays homage to history by introducing us to a "betrayed heroine who recalls scenes from her rural village, going back to her peasant roots of her rural childhood, [...] of the daytime wind that blows houses down and carries large pillars of dust into the sky" (Qtd in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Homecoming*, pp.72-73). In this case, just like Ndibe, Oculi stresses the importance of history in tracing where things started going wrong. It is then only when this is established that politicians can lead productively.

On the other hand, Emilia is a name that she adopts when selling her body to men. It is this body she sells that forms her resistance to authority. When Emilia finally rejects Bello's advances, she is not only rejecting her individual degrading situation but protesting against the capitalistic system and all its consequences as personified in Bello. On the reading of the body, Bell (1994) observes that although the body is a site where all form of oppression converges, "it is [also] the site of resistance" (Bell, p. 12). Like Emilia in *Arrows of rain*, Tanga in Beyala's *Your name shall be Tanga* transcends all pain and psychological torture by adopting different forms of identities that helps her to survive in an insensitive society. For her, she is a "girl child-woman." Her identity as a child therefore is intertwined with that of a woman. Tanga's two identities are used in different occasions for different reasons. Despite the duality of identity, Tanga's two identities do not have a clear delineation since the two are interwoven. Iyese adopts the name Emilia as a site that gives her ability to deal with the humiliation of being a prostitute, hence helping her to survive.

Emilia's drive into prostitution is not one for material gains but one that offers a site for resistance against male power. Hence, Emilia as a prostitute goes beyond the prostitute figure and becomes a metaphor for Madia as a post-colonial state constantly prostituted and raped by tyrannical leaders. Rape is a violent act in which a woman is forced to have sex against her will. As a coercive act, its motivation is closely linked to the socialization of males in a way that links masculinity with aggressive striving for dominance over others and one that identifies women's sexuality as the reward for successful men. This is because in the act of rape:

[W]omen are objectified as nothing more than sexual objects through which the rapist gratifies his sense of success in the use of power to subordinate a woman. Thus, the essence of rape is not sexual, rather, it is a violent act that coercively redefines another as something less than human, mere object for use. (Skipper & McWhorter, 1981, pp. 399-401)

Dianne Herman (1989) contends that rape is a logical result of a culture in which the masculine role is defined as one of dominance, the feminine role as one of subordination as it is typically presented in literary texts such as *Arrows of rain*.

Since rape is a matter of exercising one's power, it can be interpreted in light of the crimes post-colonial leaders commit against the citizenry that they are supposed to lead and protect. Through force, the leaders impose power down on people thus instilling fear and anxiety in their lives. By instilling fear to subjects, the leaders retain their political positions with little opposition from the ruled. In this regard, sexual power is but a further manifestation of political power along a continuum of patriarchal authority which is supposed to ensure perpetual submission of the ruled. This is well illustrated in *Arrows of rain* when Bello rapes Emilia to show his power. Through rape, his power as a man and president of Madia is felt. Bello's act of rape is an attempt to have Emilia submit to his demands. This is because "rape is a political act rather than a sexual one, because the goal is to enforce men's power over women" (Baumeister & Tice, 2001, p. 163).

Therefore, through Emilia's story, rape becomes the sexual encounter forced upon her by the politician as represented through Bello. Emilia, as a metaphor of Madia, is the abused, enslaved victim of a brutal political and patriarchal tyranny. However, what is interesting is that despite the power that Bello struggles to portray through his relationship with Emilia, Ndibe presents Bello as a man who is impotent as he cannot impregnate Emilia. I argue that depicting Bello as impotent, Ndibe demonstrate that dictatorship is sterile since it fails to lead people in the right way. This indicates that power can only be productive in a violence free environment and corruption free as depicted by Ogugua's personality and relationship with Iyese. It is within this mutual relationship that Ogugua impregnates Iyese. This is contradicted with Bello who is violent and tyrannical in the way he deals with Iyese.

In this way, violence and rape can be read as draining the country of its resources thereby leaving it bare and barren while exposing it to other vulnerabilities as seen in the lived experiences of Iyese. However, the power that Bello forces down on Iyese can be said to be challenged in that all along he does not make Iyese pregnant. The failure of Bello to impregnate Iyese can be read as a challenge of male power. This becomes a symbol in interrogating tyrannical regime's ability to lead their subjects through very crude violent acts. In this case, the victimised, prostituted, and raped woman is construed as a metaphor for the nation-state under dictatorial regime. The political leadership in the persona of Isa Bello Pallat defiles the nation embodied in Emilia as a helpless woman (citizen).

Emilia's boy child, who is the cause of his mother's death, is symbolic of hope for a better Nigeria. When Iyese is murdered, Ndibe artistically saves the child because he is the future custodian of the story that has to be told. Indeed, this comes to pass as Iyese's son (Femi Adero) is the one who smuggles Bukuru's story from prison and has it published by international media. Thus, through the consciousness of Femi Adero, Ndibe anticipates a better future for Madia by presenting daring and honest dissents in the persona of Femi Adero.

The choice of rape as a political weapon against the prostitute by the government machinery in the form of military task men is significant because it reflects the military as accomplices in Bello's sexual politics. This leads to the undermining and marginalizing of women such as Emilia. This is well captured in the lack of state action

to prevent violence against women, and the lack of direct action from the public against this brutality. Despite Emilia reporting her ordeal with Bello to the police, she is dismissed because she is a prostitute. The reluctance of the police as an institution mandated to provide security to the citizens to protect Emilia is a pointer to failed governance.

As a prostitute, Emilia's identity is thus defined in relation to her body and sexuality by the society. On sexuality, Bell points out that "sex has become a focal point for the exercise of power through the discursive constitution of the body" (1994, p. 12). Bello therefore demonstrates his power through physical violence manifested in different ways ranging from rape to beatings of Emilia. Bello rapes Emilia knowing very well that because of her identity as a prostitute, no one will listen to her side of the story. Emilia therefore becomes objectified for male consumption while at the same time treated ruthlessly by the powers that be. In this case, rape becomes the only way through which power can be exercised on people incapable of fighting back or resisting.

However, the author satirises institutions such as the police and the military that have been put in place to protect the citizenry in postcolonial Africa. It is ironical that the very institutions that ought to protect people subvert their role by championing atrocities committed by tyrannical leaders and go unpunished as depicted in Madia's military task force. Government machinery is used to silence people instead of protecting and allowing them freedom of expression. Therefore, Ndibe directs his dissatisfaction of the system against post-colonial nation-states which have continued to oppress and exploit the masses through formal government institutions.

In the pretext of clearing prostitutes from the streets, the military end up raping them hence perpetuating what their leaders such as Bello do best. This scenario is replicated in most postcolonial African states. In a classic example, On December 2003 in Kenya, the government deployed policemen on Nairobi's Koinange Street to arrest prostitutes as a way of cleaning up the city. However, in the course of this exercise, politicians were found as some of the clients out to buy the services of prostitutes. In a story carried in *The Daily Nation Newspaper*, a video showed three politicians and several prominent businessmen beckoning prostitutes to their cars on Koinange Street, and then helping them inside, before the police moved in. Of interest in this scenario is that the prostitutes were arrested and arraigned in court but the politicians went free.

This incident is a reflection of a deficiency of moral authority and integrity of leaders who are themselves beneficiaries of such vices. In *Arrows of Rain*, after raping the prostitute at the beach, the military men go free despite Bukuru's evidence as the only person who witnessed what had transpired. Despite Bukuru's serious allegations, no investigations are carried out by those mandated to do that to either nullify or validate Bukuru's allegations.

To this point, it is instructive to point out that Ndibe depicts a society whose moral fabric is torn, corrupt and very oppressive. By engaging in prostitution, the persona of the prostitute challenges such order in the society where we have few rich people/powerful and a majority poor/subordinate. Califia observes that the position of the prostitute cannot be reduced to passive object, but instead should be "understood as a place of agency where the sex worker makes use of the existing social order" (1997, pp. 29-30). The prostitute therefore becomes a symbol of society's resistance against an oppressive authority.

Despite Ndibe's portrayal of Emilia as a prostitute, he gives her an elevated position among other prostitutes she works with. For instance, Emilia is educated and initially had a good job as a teacher. In addition, the narrative voice points out that Emilia's ex-husband was rich. In this way, if we read prostitution as arising from a position of economic and monetary incapacity on the part of women, then Emilia does not fit in this category. Ndibe further contrasts Emilia from other prostitutes by bestowing her with courteous language. For instance, contrary to the vulgar and dirty language that most prostitutes use, Emilia, we are told is "at once comely and domestic" (Ndibe, 2000, p. 104). Why then does Ndibe use her as a prostitute and very distinct from other prostitutes such as Violet who is killed at the beach? I point out that by leaving her rich husband and teaching job to prostitution, she becomes a commentary of the degenerating moral and political authority of the state. The corruption, violence and injustices experienced in Madia, are but a result of material excesses of the leaders who are out to amass more wealth for themselves. On material excesses, Ndibe writes that:

Madia was in the stranglehold of the most vicious kleptocracy anywhere on the continent- a regime in which ministers and other public officials looted whatever was within their reach, and much that wasn't. (2000, p. 117)

In similar manner as observed in the excerpt above, Bello rapes and prostitutes the nation's resources symbolised through Emilia as a woman. In this way, Ndibe uses Emilia as a strategy to comment on the state of Madia. The fact that Emilia leaves material wealth, a secure job and a wealthy husband, Ndibe indirectly tells politicians to transcend greed for wealth to find a permanent solution to their dependency. Since Iyese is independent by being free from the domination of a society, the country too has to find a way of being independent by doing what is considered right. Through the use of the prostitute as a subversion of the social order, Ndibe advocates for the disposed such as Emilia to offer resistance to the status quo. Liberation can only be attained when the people are truly free; when they control all the tools as instruments of their physical, economic, political, cultural and psychological being. Put differently, when the people control the means and context of their integrated survival and development, they are considered liberated.

CONCLUSION

The essay has explored how Ndibe employs the prostitute trope as a space that creates resistance and as a site where hope for future leadership can be found. For instance, it is Emilia's son, Femi Adero, who is the custodian of the story that has to be told. In him we see the intellectualism and honesty that post-colonial states need in leading the electorate. The essay has argued that it is only in the marginal positions, like that of the prostitute, that people offer resistance against the authority not by violence but through their actions and being truthful. Through the prostitute as a silenced individual, the paper has shown how the prostitute is used as a metaphor in interrogating how the state misuses power to instil fear in the citizens it is supposed to lead.

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