

Wole Soyinka and the Poetics of Commitment
 Emeka Nwabueze (ed.)
 CNC Publishers, Enugu 2018: pp. 228-239
 ISBN: 978-022-310-X

POETICS OF MAN'S DUALITY, EXPLOITATION AND PRESERVATION IN WOLE SOYINKA'S *MADMEN AND SPECIALISTS*

Isaiah Fortress, Edwin Onwuka & Anya Egwu
 Covenant University, Ota

Abstract

This paper examines Wole Soyinka's representation of man's duality and his perception and attitude towards the earth and his fellow man in society in *Madmen and Specialists*. It argues that an exploration of man's dual nature would aid our understanding of his bizarre urge to destroy the natural environment and inflict pain on his kind at times and preserve both at other times. Through contrastive analysis, it scrutinizes Wole Soyinka's portrayal of characters with negative and positive tendencies toward mother earth. Those with negative desires are constructed in the male-dominated destructive cult of 'AS' while those with positive ones are healers populated by women. This study also explores the tension between the sexes in a patriarchal society where men's sole motivation is a depraved exploitation of human and natural resources of the earth, while women work hard at preserving and sustaining the earth and its assets. Reader-Response and Eco-Feminism are deployed as theoretical framework in this study. The study concludes that *Madmen and Specialists* is a satiric comment on the perennial conflict between pro-nature, earth-preserving human forces and anti-nature, earth-exploiting persons. It is also a moral condemnation of man's irrational craving for power, domination and exploitation. It is a subtle micro construction of the universal tragedy of man's gradual self-annihilation disguised as wanton exploitation of the earth's resources.

Keywords: Soyinka, duality, exploitation, preservation, nature, Reader-response/Eco-feminism.

Introduction

Bero: You are proscribed, whatever you are; you are banned.
 Iya Agba: What can that mean? You'll proscribe Earth itself?
 How does one do that?

- *Madmen and Specialists*

Dualism is a philosophical viewpoint that operates on two main premises. The first is that spirit and matter are separate, and second is that good and evil are distinct principles in the universe each controlled by a divine being. However, duality is used in this paper to denote the paradoxical essence in human nature which manifests in people's attitude towards others in society and the natural environment. Man has the capacity for good and evil depending on the choice he makes. This choice often results in either exploitation and destruction or preservation

and sustenance of society and mother-earth. It is this dual nature of man and the conflict between the forces of exploitation and those of preservation that Soyinka's text explores.

Madmen and Specialists (henceforth *M&S*) centers on the conflict of principles and spiritual orientation between Old Man and his scientist son, Bero on the one hand, and both men and the women: Iya Agba, Iya Mate and Si-Bero (earth-mothers who are healers) on the other. A third set of characters, The Mendicants (devotees of the AS cult founded by the Old Man) are lost in the middle of the conflicts. The text opens with the Mendicants dicing with parts of their bodies, an allusion to their state of poverty since their bodies are all that remain of their worldly possessions. They represent the common people and their condition of abject poverty is reflected in the "sand-eating" metaphor:

CRIPPLE: You're just a rubber ball, Goyi. You need a hand to throw with, anyway.

GOYI: I can use my mouth.

AAFAA: To throw dice? You'll eat sand my friend.

BLINDMAN: Sooner or later we all eat sand. (*M&S Part One*)

This state of inhuman poverty is worsened by the unnatural activities of man that reduces his fellow men to the level of vultures who scavenge to survive. There is the satire on human desire for power and physical and psychological control of other aspects of nature. The mendicants are turned to vultures by Dr. Bero who expects them to "clean up the mess" caused by the senseless war waged by his kind; a war the mendicants know little about:

BLINDMAN: In that case we permit you to be buried.

GOYI: You are generous, gentlemen. I have a personal aversion to vultures.

BLINDMAN: Oh, come come. Nice birds they are. They clean up after the mess.

AAFAA (posing): In a way you may call us vultures. We clean up the mess made by others. (*M&S Part One*)

This messy assignment could be espionage or executions. For instance, when Bero asks the mendicants to secretly remove his father, the Old man, to their country home away from danger and keep watch over him till he returns, he knew it was a risky assignment and had no intension of paying them. For him, the mendicants are not worthy of wages. They exist for their exploitative value *sans* mercy with an attitude that degrades their humanity:

GOYI: There is bound to be something in it for us.

BLINDMAN: Something like burnt fingers?

GOYI: What do you mean?

BLINDMAN (shrugs): When things go wrong it's the lowest who get it first. (*M&S Part One*)

The mendicants are inextricably tied to the cult of AS though some of them are ignorant of its tenets or what the cult symbolizes. So, in order to fully align with teachings of the cult, the mendicants had to put Goya, one of their own in the complete picture of their assignment before going to work for Si-Bero, one of the women healers. Working for Si-Bero is not only to make money to feed themselves but to give them access to keeping proper watch on Bero's father till Bero's arrival. It required the pain is administered on Goyi to realize the true nature of the assignment Bero gave them, different from the kind they performed for the women healers. So he exclaims: "where am I". . . "Teligisti, tetigisti!" The others with one spirit respond heartily: "Rem Acu Tetigisti" (*M&S Part One*). Thus, by the symbolic administering of pain, Goyi is 'healed' of his ignorance of the cult's kind of truth; that Poison has its uses too.

But with nature symbolized by the mother-earth and the healer women, they believe that healing herbs and poison-herbs grow together because disinterested nature creates them together and each one is created for specific purposes. While humans may be ignorant of the value of the poison-herbs, birds can distinguish none-poisonous ones from poisonous ones. Humans destroy them wantonly. Juxtaposing the idea of good and evil, Iya Agba declares that "They grow together most of the time" (*M&S Part One*). By this she means that truth remains truth even when it stands alongside falsehood. Cannibalism is another evil tendency in the text. In the literal sense, it is feeding on the flesh of one's kind; but in the text, Cannibalism is used as a metaphor for various forms of exploitation of others. The desire to control, destroy or force one's will on others is cannibalism. Man's destruction of the natural environment for pecuniary gains is another.

Reader-response and eco-feminist theories inform the analysis of the text under study. Reader-response criticism focuses upon the active response of the reader to a text. At its most basic level, it considers readers reactions to literature as vital to interpreting the meaning of the text. On the other hand, eco-feminism views human beings as only one constituent of a much larger community; a community that includes all life and living systems. It therefore espouses restraint in the exploration and exploitation of the earth to protect its flora and fauna. It likens the earth to women in their common heritage of domination and exploitation by men.

Ogun's Duality: The Guardian and Destructive Essence

Olusegun Adekoya (ISALA, 2011) exploring the poems of Wole Soyinka's *Idanre* in his paper "The Creation Myth of Ogun and the Technological Transformation of 21st Century African Society" confirms the paradox of Ogun, the Yoruba god of Iron, war and hunting, and of creativity and guardian of the road. In Ogun "there is no separation of the artist and the scientist", the explorer and the warrior-destroyer. The Ogun myth reveals the paradoxical creative/destructive nature in man. "Ogun's role as poet is a symbolic representation and creative nature in man; and his vocation as scientist represents the destructive nature in man"(5). Ogun's other half, the active, warrior Spirit, the destructive part of his being destroying his other half, 'the guardian essence' will be his undoing for the Earth and the entire humanity, except an

urgent stand is taken for the creative essence in him, as represented by Iya Agba and Iya Mate. Except that blood thirsty destructiveness in Ogun's human nature, typified by the likes of Bero, is understood in the light of our current global environmental realities, the "splitting of the atom (6), an act that is originally intended to "liberate man from fear of insecurity, create and advance culture (1), will only help to release more potent power for human's negative use" (6). Current earth-warming, glacial-thawing, air and plastic pollutions and eco-cides are warning signs of Ogun's impending self-destruction.

In "Notes Towards an Informed Reading of Wole Soyinka's *Idanre*", Jean McMunn contends that the poems are complex, meaningful, inconsistent, riddled with obscure, densely packed matrix of references to Nigerian history and Yoruba tribal mythology and embracing most of the modern and historic experiences of the African world. His works, poetry and drama capture issues confronting modern Nigeria, colonial West Africa and the ancient traditions of the Yoruba religion. As reflected in *Madmen and the Specialists*, his outspoken resistance to undemocratic political regimes and human rights violations has as remained consistent.

In his *The Credo of Being and Nothingness*, Soyinka compares African spirituality heritage with other religions of the world like Buddhism, Islam and Christianity and the various sects and cult them. He contends that "It is sufficient to call the world's attention to the fact that religions do exist, such as on this continent, that can boast of never having launched a war, any form of jihad or crusade, for the furtherance of their beliefs. Yet those beliefs have proved themselves bedrocks of endurance and survival, informing communities as far away as the Caribbean and the Americas,"(Soyinka, 1991:17). He observed that "Violence appears to be the one constant in the histories of all the major religions of the world – a primitive aggressiveness, violence – despite the lip-service which their tenets pay to the need for tolerance, peace and understanding." (Soyinka, 1991:14).

In Harry Garuba's "Frontiers, Men and Gods: Wole Soyinka's Ogun and the Myth of the American Frontier" we see in the Yoruba mythology, Ogun as represented as "a kind of pioneering god who bridged the virgin abyss of primal chaos which divided the world of the gods from that of men."(Garba, 103) he is a god who cleared a pathway through the primordial thicket which separate the gods from man and therefore led the other divinities to be reunited with man, he is the divinity who expanded the frontiers of the primordial world by reaching out into new territory and thus redefining the character of the cosmos"(103). Ogun in Yoruba mythology is considered as "the source of Yoruba tragedy, the embodiment of will, and a paradigm of the radical self-definition of Yoruba people"(103). Ogun was "the first suffering deity, first creative energy, the challenger, the conqueror of transition. And his, the first art, was tragic art..., the explorer-god in the creative cauldron of cosmic powers. Only after such testing could the harmonious Yoruba world be born, a harmonious will that accommodates every alien material or abstract phenomenon within its infinitely stressed spiritually"(103).

As pathfinder to a new virgin territory, Ogun had to clear a path to the human world. As god of iron, Ogun is able to do this by forging a matchet out of iron-ore. This technological invention empowers him as pathfinder and road builder; and this makes him god of iron and metallurgy, creative, essence and guardian of the forge, god of blacksmiths, drivers and all whose trade have to do with iron and the road, thus in the Yoruba mythology, he is said to be the god of the road and road users are supposed to sacrifice a dog to him to ensure safety on their journeys. “Road accidents and deaths on the road are credited to his insatiable hunger(107). In Idanre, Soyinka celebrates him as “godfather of all souls who by road/made the voyage home”(107).

The transformative power of myth turned Ogun, harbinger of a new technology and first artisan, into the god of everything that has to do with the innovation (107).

In our contemporary world this creative and destructive possibilities could be seen in Soyinka’s works as he adapts the Ogun myth as a paradigm of the cultural situation of the African in the modern world. Soyinka contends that the modern African is in a state of transition between the traditional world and the modern world and the Ogun narrative of creative will provides the necessary paradigm for making this transition: “For good or ill, Soyinka believes that the Ogun myth is definitive of the pioneering possibilities of the African in a new world created by the impact of the west on Africa” (103).

By implication, we can see this represented in the destructive weaponry used in the text in question and the psychological impact of same in the life of the mendicants and the desire for power and control over the earth and its environment by characters like Bero. The duality in Ogun’s nature, the spiritual and the mundane, is well captured in the distinct creative and destructive characters of the Women fold and the Old man and Bero respectively. The mendicants as it were, are victims turned between these opposing forces. The mendicants represent the totality of nature’s oppression: the exploration, exploitation of the spiritual - of the “virgin of primal chaos” (103) and the physical exploitation and rape of the earth’s natural environment by the two destructive and constructive forces.

By Their Seed, the World Goes Round

There is in human nature the propensity to create and to destroy, and we can see this duality vividly displayed in *Madmen and the Specialists*: Mental and psychological mind control by characters like Old man and Bero in their desire to control fellow human by subjecting the mendicants to the tenet of the cult of As; as against healing herbs got from nature by the women fold; the wanton exploitation (41) and destruction of lives and generation corpses as against preservation, replenishing and healing; indoctrination and training the weak into As cult of cannibalism (36), and cruelty (36), and hypnotism (39-40) as against teaching others to develop the heart of kindness and to recognize edible and poisonous herbs. Use of tools of fear, intimidation, fear of death, hunger, war and bloodletting as means of control and power (36), (57) as against life preservation and reverence for nature and the earth symbolized by how Si-

Bero welcomed Bero back home through libation of palm-wine before Bero is allowed into the house:

BERO: I am tired. Let's talk of something else.

SI BERO: Oh yes, you must be. Come inside. No, wait. You mustn't come in yet. Be patient now, Bero. (Hurrying into the house.) Don't move from there. Stand still. (Si Bero reappears with a gourd of palm wine, pours it on the ground in front of the doorstep. Then she moves to unlace his boots.)

BERO: You still keep up these little habits.

SI BERO: I like to keep close to the earth.

BERO: (stepping back to prevent her from taking off his boots).

Bare feet, wet earth. we've wetted your good earth with something more potent than that, you know (*M&S Part One*).

The above dialogues speak for themselves in regard to speakers leanings and the position of the earth in their daily activities and vocations. While Si Bero wets the earth, in reverence, with palm wine, Bero wets the earth with blood: "something more potent than" (28) palm wine.

Through the Priest's dialogue with Bero, we deduced the twisted mind of the Old Man, the lord of the cult of AS:

PRIEST: ...I'm really anxious to know if he still intends to legalize cannibalism.

BERO: He does.

PRIEST: I know it. A stubborn man, once he gets hold of an idea. You won't believe it but he actually said to me, I'm going to try and persuade those fools not to waste all that meat. Mind you he never could stand wastage... but human flesh, why, that's another matter altogether.

BERO: But why, Pastor. Its quite delicious, you know... I give you the personal word of a scientist. Human flesh is delicious. Of course, not all parts of the body. I prefer the balls myself. (*M&S Part One*)

The Old Man's initial assignment was to "help the wounded readjust to the pieces and remnants of their bodies. Physically... instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK! Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body? (37), but instead, by manipulation and hypnotism, he now blesses human "meat" before Bero and others eat. "We said amen with a straight face and sad down to eat."(36).

BERO: But why not? Afterwards I said why not? What is one flesh from another? So I tried it again, just to be sure of myself. It was the first step to power you understand. Power in its purest sense. The end inhibitions. The conquest of the weakness of your too human flesh with all its sentiment. So again, all to myself I said Amen to his grace.

Initiated into the cult of As, Bero becomes a member of As with power, physically fit body but a mangled” mind. In contrast, the Mendicants are transformed into the Old Man’s dependants and helpless devotees - “thinking minds in mangled bodies” (37). We can see, for instance, how effective his As-cult philosophy of cannibalism transformed the mendicants. From the experiences of Aafaa and Blindman, two of the four mendicants: Aafaa, one of the mendicants, a priest before the tragic explosion transformed his body into a mangled mass discussing Old Man:

AAFAA: The Old Man, sir...the thing I call my mind, well, was no longer there. He took advantage of me, sir, in that convalescent home. I was unconscious long stretches at a time. whatever voice I heard was truth. It was always him. Bending over my bed. I asked, who are you? He answered, The one and only truth... Always at me, he was, sir. I plead insanity.

BLINDMAN: Once I even thought I could see him.

GOYI: Oh, but you did, you did.

BLINDMAN: No, not really.

CRIPPLE: You did, you. The picture forms in the mind, remember?

GOYI: His very words. But any fool knows they form on the eye.

AAFAA: Lord, he mixed us up.

BLINDMAN: You can see me, he said, you can see me. Look at me with your mind. I swear I began to see him. Then I knew I was insane. (*M&S Part One*).

The AS cult is perfected in the mendicants minds that they believe the circle of cannibalism is not complete if you do not suck back your blood sucked by your body-flea. The cripple ate the flea he picks from his rags and sucks back is own blood from the flea.

CRIPPLE: It tasted bloody.

GOYI: Accept my sympathies.

CRIPPLE: Not needed. The blood is back where it belongs.

AAFAA: The cycle is complete?

CRIPPLE: Definitely (*M&S Part One*).

The mendicants agreed that the blood has returned to where it comes from. In the circle of the cult of AS, he who eats his own kind must be eaten – no waste.

The Tenet and Philosophy of the Cult of AS

The A to Z of the cult of AS reveals what the philosophy of the cult stands for. It is a cult completely opposed to the natural order of things and thus stands opposed to what the women fold stands for. ‘A’ in the cult of As stands for abstract terms ‘Acceptance, Adjustment: “Adjustment of Ego to the Acceptance of As” (41). This according to Aafaa is key to the cult of As. ‘B’ stands for ‘Blindness in As’, as symbolized by Blindman, for only As (symbolized by the Oldman) is “all seeing”, “All shall see in As who render themselves blind to all else”(41). Followers of As can only see through the eyes of As / Old man. The ‘all seeing’ is followed by the all blind followers. But Blindman has doubt in this belief that “All shall see in As who render themselves blind to all else” (41). He believes that he is being deceived and contends that: “once I even thought I could see ... then I know I was insane” (38). It’s a cult of total submission to

one man, the Old man who controls the mind of his followers and who tells them what to believe and how to think and the resultant cannibalism, eating of self through self-destruction and eating of other kinds like fleas, body parasites for the blood sucked from As devotees (39). In order to prevent waste, sucking back your blood seems natural. There is complete loss of feeling for humanity because they have been psychologically transformed into monsters.

The cult of As also has some element of spirituality. ‘G’ in As cult stands for “Godhead” (42) and Cripple contends that what makes him continue to obey or to “collaborate” with the specialist is because of a “pet dream” (44) he had, alluding to the scriptures of Christ healing the sick, comparing the Oldman and Christ gives him hope. But Aaafa considers such miracle has the “conspiracy of the elite” which makes it impossible for professionals like Bero and philosophers like Oldman to be relevant: “Well, you have met your match this generation. Turn left, turn right, turn right about again, you’ll find everyone you meet is more than a match for you” (45). This implies that although the old man tried to play the priest, savior and god in one, a devotee like Aaafa sees him as Amateur and prefers the more practical “specialist” and professional Bero. Blindman also sees Oldman as false, who is conscious of what his gullible followers think about him and using their statements and comments about him to further enslave them. For instance, when the Cripple said he had a pet dream, the apparently absent minded Oldman oblivious of their conversation suddenly came alive breaking his silence with the statement : “Go on, your dream” (44). Encouraged, the Cripple narrates his dream:

CRIPPLE: I’ll tell you. Every night we sleep in this place I have that same dream. It’s what makes me stay on. It is what makes me ... assist ... It is what makes me continue to obey the specialist. Pause.

OLD MAN: (unnoticed, he has turned round to face them). Go on, your dream (44).

CRIPPLE: (for a moment he, with the rest, shows confusion). I ... dream he tells me to get on the table... So he operates on my back and in another moment he’s finished, wipes his hands and says ...

AAFAPA: Arise, throw off thy crutches and follow me.

CRIPPLE: (lowering his eyes as if in abashment). Yes, more or less the same words. But just as I want to get up, I woke up from the blasted dream!

AAFAPA: (with explosive disgust)

It is this dream that the cripple narrates that the Old man tried to bring to reality at the close of the play when he tried to operate on the Cripple, but Bero was quick to stop him with a shot:

OLD MAN: (at the top of his voice). Bring him over here. (He dons mask) Bring him over here. Lay him out. Stretch him flat. Strip him bare. Bare! Bare! Bare his soul! Light the stove! (They heaved him onto the table and hold him down while the Old man rips the shirt open to bare the Cripple’s chest. Bero rushes in and takes in the scene, raises his pistol and aims at the Old man.)

OLD MAN: Let us taste just what makes a heretic tick. (He raises the scalpel in a motion for incision. Bero fires. The Old man spins, falls face upwards on the table as the Cripple slides to the ground from under him (77).

Thus, coming to past, the common saying which states that: ‘he that lives by the sword will die by the sword’. The Old man lived by violence and died by violence in the hands of his son Bero and his followers in the cult of AS.

In the dialectics of the earth and the world, the earth is represented as going round and round in obedience to the circle of life carrying everyone along with her, but for the things that make the world go round, there is inequality and partiality. In what “goes round the world” (38) it is poverty and cruelty that goes round the world and for the likes of Bero and the Old man, theirs is power and exploitation of others. In earth’s provision of life, it is common wealth for all, man or the eco-system; but for the world of the Mendicants, it is common poverty. For Goyi, one of the mendicants, all he has to contribute to the world is fart (a product of As) to relieve himself as well as contribute to the pollution of the earth.

As for what is left of Bero as a relevant specialist, the old man is what is left in Bero’s humanity – that which has to do with one’s own, as the saying goes: ‘blood is thicker than water’, ‘mine is mine, rags for the dustbin’. The Oldman being Bero’s father, it is natural to protect the Oldman from those who seek him for feeding them with human meat and corpses (49). Bero thus employed the mendicants to secretly remove the Oldman away from the battle field to his Bero’s home surgery. This act of apparent concern by Bero for his father is the remaining splinter of humanity left in Bero’s conscience. If Bero allows his father to be killed or kills his father himself, then what is left of humanity in him is lost and Bero is reduced to an infra-beast. Old man is aware of this and so plays along his captors. He contends that “all intelligent animals kill for food” (51). But man kills in order to settle scores.

By Their Seed, the Earth Goes Round

The other half of humanity distinct from Bero, Old man and the cult of As is the women “fold” comprising Iya-Agba, Iya-Mate and Si-Bero, sister to Bero who sought knowledge from the former women and found true comfort and solace with the women (40). The three women represent the mother-earth and all she stands for – life, healing and cure. Their physical tool and symbol is the herb. They understand the earth; they protect and replenish her environment and the entire eco-system. Iya Agba confirms: “We put back what we take, in one form or another. Or more than we take. It’s the only law (58). These guardians of the earth consider man as only a part of the whole of the earth’s products, one of the many children of mother earth. In these women’s experience with healing herbs, they know the various herbs, those that are poisonous and the good ones. Even the birds of the field know the good ones to eat and the poisonous ones to avoid:

IYA AGBA: just now I remember what you said – birds haven't attacked it. Usually it's the poison kind they don't go near. (She breaks the stalk.) I thought so. This is the twin. Poison.

IYA MATE: it can't be poison.

IYA AGBA: they don't grow much... farmers destroy them as soon as they see them. But it's the poison twin all right. Except for that red streak along the stalk you wouldn't tell them apart.

IYA MATE: I don't even know there was the poison kind.

IYA AGBA: you don't see them much. Once in a lifetime. Farmers don't let them live, you know. Burn out the soil where they find it growing, just to kill the seeds. Foolishness. Poison has its uses too. You can cure with poison if you use it right. Or kill (17).

Bero avoids the healing-herbs but would rather use the poison herbs which Iya Agba and birds avoid to “sap the mind” (61). He abuses nature by reducing into electricity natural phenomenon like lightning into a tool for torture and mind control (66):

AAFAA: manifesto for every freak ? general Electricity!

OLDMAN: Electrocutes. Electric chair. Electrodes on the nerve-centres – your favorite pastime, I believe? Tell me something new. What hasn't being abused?

In Soyinka's *The Credo of Being and Nothingness* (1991), he questions this destructive-ego in human nature: “If the beast knows what herbs of the forest are his friends, what plea shall man make that boasts superior knowledge, yet knows no empathy with moisture of the air he breathes, the juice of leaves, the sap in his roots to earth, or the waters that nourish his being?” (34) So when Bero returned home and saw the women in their hut close to his house stocked with assorted herbs, he asked Si-Bero to eject them immediately:

SI-BERO: Don't harm them, Bero.

BERO: Either you throw them out or I will. Whose home is it? Their? Do they now lay claim to the land?

SI BERO: It belongs to Father.

BERO: Forfeited. Legally, he does not exist.

(He goes into the house, holstering a revolver. He goes up to the OLD WOMEN's hut quietly and tries to peep inside. IYA AGBA leans out of the hut and speaks almost directly in his ears. (56)

Here, the two opposing aspect in human nature meet – the good and the evil in man. The surgery house built of concrete and the hut, a temporary shelter for the women. Bero with a revolver in hand would “kill” in order to prove that he is the boss, but the women offered to “heal” and to “help” the sick (57). In contrast to the cult of As, the women's fold helped to hold broken spirit, soul and body together in harmony:

IYA AGBA: We took her into the fold – did she tell you that? To teach what we know, a pupil must come into the fold.

BERO: What fold? Some filthy thieving cult?

IYA AGBA: It's no light step for man or woman.

BERO: And what ... cult is this?

IYA AGBA: Not any cult you can destroy. We move as the Earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth moves, nothing more. We age as Earth ages.

BERO: (instantly angry). Watch it, old woman, your age earns no privileges with me. (57)

While the cult of As is “tenaciously” changing and recidivist-ly fluctuates, the women's fold are constant and ageless as the earth. While Iya Agba sought for a place to stand on earth in order to heal, Bero in ignorance and self-deceit is filled with the deceit of transient power, fear of rivalry and the control he has over fellow beings like the mendicants. He mistakes the women “fold”, for the likes of As cult and threatens to banish it: “You are proscribed whatever you are, you are banned” (58), but Iya Agba unmoved wonders at his “foolishness”, for how could he proscribe the earth on which he stands, that nourishes and sustains all that dwells on her. Iya Aga questions Bero: “What will you step on, young fool? Even on the road to damnation a man must rest his foot somewhere” (58). But the women could no longer tolerate the abominable sight of “abuse” and evil as manifested by Bero and the Oldman: Iya Agba, screamed: “Abuse! Abuse! What do we do? Close our eyes and see nothing?” (67). Si-Bero implores the other women to be patient with Bero but it is too late, he is gone beyond the threshold of sanity:

SI BERO: Debts! No, not him. Don't touch him, my mother.

IYA AGBA: I waste no strength on carrion. I leave him to earth's rejection.

SI BERO: Give me more time I have the power of a mother with him.

IYA MATE: (gently). We waited as long as we could, daughter.

IYA AGBA: Time has run out. Do you think time favours us? Can I sleep easy when my head is gathering mould on your shelves?

SI BERO: We labored hard together.

IYA AGBA: So does the earth on which I stand. And on which your house stands, woman. If you want the droppings of rodents on your mat I can only look on. But my head still fills your room from wall to wall and dirty hands touch it ... (She raises the pot suddenly to throw the embers into the store ... (75-76)

Aya Agba believes the only way to end this evil is to destroy the house bearing the herbs used solely for evil by the specialist and his father. The cripple's dream that he was being operated upon by the old man and saved came true but in reality it was to destroy him physically by the cult of AS. Bero came in just on time and shot the old man, thus destroying any iota of humanity left in him. The house and herbs are on fire and the women quietly walked away. In our observation from the point of earth-mother metaphor, we could see that the earth brings forth fruits based on the kind of seed planted by man, be they good or bad, without discrimination.

Conclusion

Findings revealed the play in question as a comment on the conflict between characters that revere and care for the earth and its environment and characters that exploit and destroy her. The plot in the play in question centers on characters like Bero and the Old Man who subjected their victims (the mendicants) to mental control and physical depravation on the other hand and nature focused female characters like Si-Bero, Iya-Mate and Iya Agba - symbols of earth's creative, preserving and healing virtues. We observed an intrinsic intra-textual comparism of the duality that is in human nature and the characters' psychological and ideological leanings. The play also revealed another kind of cannibalism: the As cult constructed by Oldman and Bero as tool of mental, psychological and spiritual exploitation and control over their subjects.

Works cited

- Adekoya, Olusegun. "The Creation of Myth of Ogun and the Technological Transformation of the 21st Century African Society" *ISALA*. No. 6. July 2011. ISSN: 2141-7377. (1,5,6). Print.
- Akporabaro, F.B.O. "Myths II Cosmogonic". *Introduction to African Oral Literature*. Lagos. Princeton Publishing Company. 172-191. 2006. Print.
- Berman, Tzaporah. "The Rape of Mother Nature? Women in the Language of Environmental Discourse" *The Eco-Linguistics Reader. Language, Ecology and Environment*. Great Britain. CONTINUUM. Edit: Alwin Fill and Peter Muhlhausler. 2001, 258-259. Print.
- Garuba, Harry. "Frontiers, Men and Gods: Wole Soyinka's Ogun and the Myth of the American Frontier". *Nigerian Journal of American Studies*. Ile-Ife. Obafemi Awolowo University Press Ltd. Edit: Agiri, Babatunde. Vol. 11, July, 1992. 103-107. Print.
- Kalejaiye, Dipo. *The Creator and the Disrupter*. Calabar. Centaur Press Ltd. 1982. Print.
- Ojaide, Tanure. "Quatrain Suite 13", *The Tale of the Harmattan*. Ibadan. Kraft Books Ltd. 2015: 18. Print.
- Osundare, Niyi. "They too are the Earth", "Ours to Plough, Not to Plunder", "Our Earth Will Not Die". *The Eye of the Earth*. Ibadan. Heinemann Educational Books (Nig.) Ltd.1986: 45, 48-9, 50-1. Print.
- Raj, S. Sushma and Davidson, Manjula. "Ecofeminism: The Pragmatic Posture of Feminism in the 21st Century" *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* Volume 2, Issue 8, August 2014, pp1-6. www.arcjournals.org
- Soyinka, Wole. *Madmen and the Specialists*. Ibadan. Oxford University Press. 1977. Print.
- Soyinka, Wole. *The Credo of Being and Nothingness*. Ibadan. Spectrum Book Ltd. 14, 17, 34: 1991. Print.