

**Followership Complicity in Insecurity in Nigeria: A Case in Femi
Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen***

Oyewumi Olatoye Agunbiade
Walter Sisulu University, South Africa

Abstract

Insurgency, kidnap for ransom, banditry, herdsman-farmers clash, and gruesome killing of individuals have become quotidian security realities in contemporary Nigeria. Scholarly approach to this concern has often resulted in criticism domiciled only at leadership while neglecting the role of the followership in this security predicament. This paper is therefore designed to examine the representations of the complicity of the people in insecurity using Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* (2002)¹ as a case study. The investigation combines a deliberate look at the dramaturgical devices employed by Osofisan to enhance this representation. Georg Lukacs's theory of literary realism and Achille Mbembe's model of the Postcolonial theory are adopted as the framework for the study to unravel the complicity of the people. At the same time, the method applied is the interpretive design and the socio-artistic approach to literary criticism. Osofisan deploys dramatic metaphor, aesthetics of masking, Orunmila motif, and Satire to unmask the villains who mystify efforts to address insecurity and throw the state in a nightmare. The revelations are incredible even as vigilantism is deconstructed. The play points attention to the need to carefully examine proposals on ending insecurity in Nigeria while also contributing to emerging scholarship on investigating the followers with regards to their contribution to their disillusionment.

Keywords: dramatic metaphor, Femi Osofisan, followership and insecurity, insecurity in Nigeria, literary realism, vigilantism

¹ *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* was first published in 1992 by Heinemann Educational books (Nigeria). The revised edition published in 2002 by Opon Ifa Readers is used for the analysis of this study.

The oracle was clear yesterday—Increase the night guards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death. And who knows a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness (Femi Osofisan, 2002, p. 139).

The varied complexions of banditry, kidnapping, robbery and insurgency by Nigerians to their fellow countrymen have made the discourse of security in Nigeria a complex one as one finds it difficult to pin down the saint or the villain in the emerging twist of attacks that seem to defy all attempts at ending insecurity in the country (Umoh, 2015; Udoh, 2015). However, the situation is worrisome even as scholarly opinions are divided in attributing its causes and identifying those responsible for insecurity in the country. Ajidahun (2012) indicts the state as responsible for the insecurity in Nigeria, given the stifling economic factors which have given birth to armed robbery in the society. Umah (2019) corroborates that unemployment, poverty and ineffective security agencies are the major causes of contemporary insecurity in the nation. Contrary to this, Ezeabasili (2022) traces the insecurity situation in the country to Nigeria's political system, which gives room for political thuggery. She concludes in her assessment of the political situation in Nigeria between 2015 and 2021 that political thuggery gives a breeding ground for kidnapping, terrorism, armed robbery and drug addiction.

However, there has been little or no literary critical work that traced insecurity to the undoing of the followers. A closer study is Abubakar Gimba's *Letter to the Unborn Child* (2008), where Gimba holistically indicts the followers as complicit in Nigeria's backflip development, contrary to Chinua Achebe's (1984) fuming rage that *the trouble with Nigeria* is emphatically leadership. While Gimba (2008) did not provide a sufficient explanation for followership complicity in insecurity, the current study strives to partake in the discourse by critically examining how the people have contributed to the complexions of insecurity in Nigeria. The study approaches this investigation by engaging the utilitarian art of the dramatic genre owing to its pedagogic and sociological dynamics (Owonibi, 2009). Moreover, since drama is the re-enactment of the way of life of a particular people, drama thus becomes an appropriate medium both to reflect and examine insecurity and advocate national peace and security (Ajidahun, 2012; Utoh-Ezeajugh and Ogbonna, 2013).

Femi Osofisan's drama is apposite to this exploration as he has extensively dramatised the feelings of fear, anxiety, lack of protection, and the threat to life and property (Beland, 2005; Ezeabasili, 2022), which this study adopts as a working definition for Insecurity in Nigeria. His *Once upon four robbers* (1980) is a social commentary on the Nigerian government's decree of the public execution of armed robbers. This play has sparked divergent public and scholarly opinions regarding the death penalty as a panacea to ending crime in Nigeria. *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen (Aringindin)* is another detective play from the stable of the playwright where he experiments with unravelling the paradox in the nation's insecurity. Although scholars have examined it (Awodiya, 1995; Ajidahun, 2012), it has not received critical attention regarding followership defects as the current study investigates. This study will contribute to the notion that man's natural state combines evil and good regardless of the class s/he belongs to in society (Akporobaro, 2001; Cates, 1992). The study thus seeks to justify the claim that the Nigerian drama remains an unbiased medium in the reflection and refraction of the contemporary Nigerian society as it stops at nothing to comment on and satirise the oppressor and the oppressed, the rich and the poor, aristocrats and ordinary people in its bid to address challenges of development in the country (Utoh- Ezeajugh & Ogbonna, 2013). Femi Osofisan in *Aringindin*, like his earlier plays: *Farewell to a Cannibal rage* (1986), *Birthdays*

are not for dying (1990), *The Inspector and the Hero* (1990) and so forth, takes his social investigation a step further to x-ray the security situation in Nigeria and the consequent establishment of Community Based Armed Groups, CBAGs known as vigilante groups by the people. The study, therefore, will examine how the playwright indicts the people/ followers of complicity in their predicament as the nightguards given arms to protect their people turn into robbers. Osofisan thus becomes relevant in contemporary security discourse in Nigeria as this study pitches *Aringindin* as an exposé, partly to the untold causes, and further as a guide to the solution to Nigeria's insecurity.

Of Insecurity and Complicities in Contemporary Nigeria: A Review

In 2015, while Nigerians were still groaning under the scourge of Boko-Haram insurgency, herders killing, banditry and kidnapping joined these evil forces at the first tenure of President Muhammadu Buhari's civilian administration to make life unbearable (Idhalama, Dime and Osawaru 2021). From the North-east down South-west and to the East, the nation is thrown into mourning and wailing as the people cannot sleep with their eyes closed in a country acclaimed to be the giant of Africa. Rape and gruesome killings of innocent individuals are rife while the herdsmen alleged of these crimes are above the law (Olaniyan, 2019; Idhalama, Dime and Osawaru, 2021). Southwest Nigerian roads have become dangerous spots as abductors kidnap for ransom, and when the ransom is delayed, they kill their victims. Farmers-herders clashes have further heightened insecurity in the region as farmers are daily exiting the areas noted for infinite agricultural potential in the southwest. It becomes illogical that the war against insecurity is not yielding tangible results as it seems the war is only fought in the media.

The Abuja-Kaduna train attack on March 28, 2022 is one among these dastardly acts where hundreds of travellers were kidnapped. Meanwhile, these travellers chose rail transportation because of the dangers of being kidnapped on the road (Isenyo, 2022). Another brutal act is the Saint Francis' Catholic Church attack in Owo, Ondo state on June 5, 2022 where over forty worshippers were gruesomely killed during the Sunday mass service by unknown gunmen (BBC, 2022). However, the Nigerian Defense Headquarters and the Ondo state governor, Rotimi Akeredolu, announced on 6th August, 2022 that the attack was carried out by some Ebira indigenes from Kogi state living in Owo (Sunday, Nzor, and Akingboye, 2022; Ayitogo, 2022). This ridiculous news becomes a bitter pill for the residents who have peacefully cohabited with the Ebira people for years. These are few among hundreds of other incidences of gruesome attacks and abductions for ransom that Nigerians have experienced in recent times (Ekpo, Agorye and Tobi, 2018). All these attacks and the seeming inability to end insecurity have made many Nigerians to lose hope in the government and even indict authorities as complicit in their predicament (Ekpo et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, compromise and complicity are two strategic words in security parlance that are used to describe the involvement of an external party or conniving of an official (internal party) with an enemy to frustrate a mission (Lepora and Goodin, 2013; Agunbiade, 2019). Recent development in insecurity in Nigeria have been reportedly traced to the involvement of some state actors and stakeholders, indicating the need to look inward (Guardian, 2021; Obiageli, 2015). Therefore, the government and security personnel have been alleged complicit in Nigeria's insecurity, while some investigative efforts have reportedly been compromised. For instance, Ekpo et al., (2018) frame how the security operatives, the state governors, and past presidents have been blamed and alleged complicit in Nigeria's insecurity using DapChibok (Dapchi and Chibok school) kidnapping as a case study. According to Ekpo et al., "there were factoids to speculate that the Borno State Governor and Chairman of the state security council,

Mr Kashim Shettima, the former president and grand commander of the Federal Republic, Dr Goodluck Jonathan and the Nigerian military were complicit or accomplices to the security breach” (p. 7). In the study, Governor Shettima of Borno state was blamed for ignoring warnings by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) that he should not situate any examination centre outside the state capital following alerts of an impending assault on the schools by militants. This action of Governor Shettima has engendered speculations and politico contextual analysis, of which Mr Shettima was alleged to have been a shadow party, and the abduction, a demarche (Ekpo et al., 2018).

The security operatives are also not exempted from this blame game. According to Oyewole (2016), “despite series of alerts received by the military commands in Damboa (36.5 km away from Chibok) and Maiduguri (130 km away from Chibok) between 7:00 pm on April 14 and 2:00 am on April 15, 2014, the call for reinforcement did not receive prompt response, culminating in the outnumbered soldiers fleeing after about an hour of gunfight with the insurgents” (p. 26). It was also disturbing to hear that when the whereabouts of the abducted girls and their abductors were subsequently divulged to the Nigerian security forces by families and communities, the security men failed to act (Okome, 2017). The same army has also been alleged culpable in the attack on Dapchi girls abduction on 18 February 2018 as they withdrew forces from the area a week to the attack claiming the town is safe and that the police had taken responsibility for the town. However, the Yobe State Commissioner for Police denied any such handover or consultation took place (Crisis Group Africa, 2018). Subsequently, the presidency has been indicted of being a party to the state of insecurity in the country with the Federal government’s lackadaisical attitude to attacks on the people. According to Nti (2014), former president Jonathan found it difficult to believe the abduction of the Chibok girls until the Tweet #BringBackOurGirls# from a Nigerian lawyer, Ibrahim Abdullahi, exploded on social media.

The year 2020-2021 brought succour in the southwest after a series of brutal attacks by Fulani bandits on residents with the messianic intervention of the Yoruba freedom fighter, Sunday Igboho, who emerged to rescue his people. The gruesome killing of 50 people by bandits in his country home Igangan, Oyo state on 5th June 2021 became a watershed for this development. He also gave herders a seven-day ultimatum to vacate Ibarapa and Oke-ogun area of Oyo state due to the criminal activities of armed herders (Kabir, 2021). However, in early July 2021, Sunday Igboho fled the country after authorities raided his home in Ibadan, alleging him to be a separatist figure and complicit in attacks against herders. The twist in this development is how the same government has been docile in nipping in the bud or taking decisive steps over the ravaging banditry and insurgency in the country to the extent that certain characters have taken the opportunity to become prominent over security matters. Aside from Igboho, the controversial Islamic cleric and a former captain in the Nigerian Army, Sheikh Ahmad Gumi from the Northern part of the country has appeared on the security scene. Sheikh Gumi, according to Oyero (2021) in a Punch Newspaper report, on June 28, 2021, “has also been seen hobnobbing with bandits and kidnappers and had also recently recommended the establishment of special courts to try bandits and kidnappers but many Nigerians have since flayed the cleric for being complicit with the bandits”. The same Gumi is reported to have played mediatory roles between the bandits and families of the abducted in the northern part of the country (Ochieng and Kiriungi, 2021).

The preceding reveals that these alleged complicities had not only involved the authorities and the security operatives but have started filtering among the people in their effort to arrest insecurity. Though incredible that the people could be an accomplice to their disillusionment, Nigerian quotidian security realities which have given rise to vigilante groups, ethnic militias

and advocacy for community policing have shown the possibility of this milieu. Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* is apposite for the current study as the playwright presents a paradigm shift and novel glance in these complications.

Theoretical Consideration

This study adopts an eclectic approach to analyze the primary text for ideological and aesthetic purposes. This is aimed at aiding the unraveling of the paradox in the security situation in Nigeria. The approach is in line with Ambanasom's admission that:

No single approach is valid for all works. No matter its claims and supposed validity one should not carry a single approach blindly to a work of art; it is rather the work that calls forth the type of approach suitable for its apprehension. An approach that is only remotely relevant to a work of art may mislead its conceiver to condemn the creative writer for the wrong crime; it may force the critic to judge and crucify the artist for what he never set out to do in the first place. (Ambanasom, 2003, p. 6)

Georg Lukacs's theory of literary realism (1962 and 1964) and Achille Mbembe's (1992 and 2001) model of the Postcolonial theory of literature suggest themselves by the genre of the text and the ideological concerns of the play. Both theories are combined in the study with the socio-artistic approach to literary criticism, which blends the sociological and artistic approaches to literature for a proper understanding of a literary work. The literary realism of Lukacs, for example, reflects the totality of society by revealing through the narrative form the underlying conditions of history in terms of the truthful depiction of the socio-economic tensions in the society without bias toward the bourgeois or the proletariats (Keller, 2014). Lukacs aver that "the general paradox of art is sharpened in those genres which are compelled by their content and form to appear as living images of the totality of life" (Lukacs 1962, p. 92). Having confirmed that drama reflects the fact of life, Lukacs then contends that "life is constantly providing the possibilities for genuine drama" (Lukacs, 1964, p. 20). The central tenets of Lukacs theory are the presence of realistic characters, a plausible plot and complete detail of everyday life, all of which are deployed in the primary text.

The study combines Mbembe's version of the postcolonial literary theory owing to the need for a critical examination of the idealised members of the society. Mbembe's position is a provocative challenge to African scholarship as Robins (2004) puts it that "rather than critique of neo-colonialism and global capital, Mbembe writes about the excess of the postcolony, including the connivance of the masses in rituals of state power" (p. 20). Mbembe (1992) in cautioning the African critics insists that "the analyst must watch out for the myriad ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive and actually toy with power instead of confronting it" (p. 25). Mbembe's caution is adroitly considered in the current study. That is why this study departs from earlier studies that are not incisive enough to query the role of the people in the nation's ailing security status quo. Therefore, the choice of Postcolonial theory is not only to reflect Nigeria's debilitating state of security but also to depict how the people have become accomplices to their predicaments. The study further engages the interpretive design and the Socio-artistic approach to literary criticism for analysis. The analysis combines the sociological and artistic approaches for a better apprehension of the full meaning and significance as well as the aesthetic realisation of the imaginative text (Ambanasom, 2007). By this, the study examines the text given its wider social context and the effectiveness of the dramatic techniques deployed by the playwright. With this frame of thought, the play *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* is engaged in this study.

Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen: A Synopsis

Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen is one of Femi Osofisan's detective plays where he unravels the paradox of insecurity in a typical African Society (Agunbiade, 2019). Unlike his position in his popular detective *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) where he alleges the leaders of complicity in insecurity, in *Aringindin*, Osofisan takes a critical look at the rising menace of crime. It is observed that although the situation has grown worse than the milieu depicted, the playwright has a message to contemporary Nigeria. In the play, Osofisan demonstrates his intrepid and indomitable social commitment as he embarks on the critique of the Nigerian security system from a novel vista. Evidently, the *play* is an adaptation of Brecht's (1941) *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI* set in the 1930's gangster-ridden Chicago where a powerful man runs a team of men doing a protection racket on the local greengrocers. These men ask for money to keep the locals safe from the gangsters tearing up their stores, but unknown to the locals, the gangsters are the powerful man's men.

Aringindin opens with a disordered town square where stores have been looted over night by robbers. The robbery (the third in two weeks) which has become a recurring issue is however brutal this time around as the night guard – Lamidi is killed. The scene is suddenly crowded as the shop owners appear one after the other wailing and recounting their loss. Aringindin the protagonist and the eponymous character, appears at the scene with Baale (the traditional king) to assess the situation and condone with the store owners and family of the nightguard. Unknown to Baale and other citizens, Aringindin is the one responsible for the robberies. He has an ulterior motive of taking over the palace. As an ex-soldier, he has advocated the creation of a Vigilante group; a request which Baale has repeatedly turned down because the gods have revealed that it will be used to perpetrate more evil in the community. Adeoti (2009, p. 399) also captures the mind of the gods that "a tiny but arm-bearing segment of the population may, one day undermine the authority of Baale and imperil the security of the unarmed majority". Baale succumbed as he could not continue to see his subjects suffering from robbers' attack even as the police who should protect the people are corrupt.

Aringindin launched another attack where Baale is humiliated and abdicates the throne. Ayinde, the school teacher who is the only voice of reason in the town, is also killed, and Yobioyin, his fiancé, is abducted by Aringindin's men. Aringindin mainly succeeds in this intrigue due to the aid of his accomplice – the elected counsellor (Kansillor) and other young members of the society who join his security outfit to unleash mayhem on the community. Idoko (2009, p. 142), describes Aringindin's role in the play as "a masquerade bringing violence and subjugation in the guise of security and protection". Aringindin's vicious dream is eventually hatched but short-lived as he is toppled by the collective effort of the people who used their traditional ingenuity, which he has abused against him.

Discussion

The contemporary situation of insecurity in Nigeria in terms of a rise in banditry, kidnapping for ransom, herders-farmers clashes and insurgency has resulted in the growth of Community-Based Armed Groups (CBAG) also known as indigenous security network (which are modernised vigilante groups), which led to Nigerians advocating community policing. This development in the west of the country saw the creation of the Western Nigeria Security Network code named Operation Amotekun by the South-west governors, while in the East emerged the Eastern Security Network created by the leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu. Both were created in the year 2020 as indigenous security outfits to

curb the rife of crime in the regions. However, their creation attracted divergent debate regarding the pros and cons of such security outfits (Umoh, 2015). Femi Osofisan a restless researcher and prophetic avant-garde dramatist in following Mbembe's caution on the ordinary people has in *Aringindin and the Nightwatchmen* subjected opinions on such indigenous security outfits to investigation because the outfits are composed of the common people who have volunteered to help end crime in their vicinity. This also is in line with Georg Lukacs position on the totality of reflection of the entire society. He thus embarks on an investigation of vigilantism and security challenges in the country.

Osofisan not only anatomises the activities of vigilantism in Nigeria as exhibited in his eponymous character – Aringindin, but goes deeper to unravel the least examined reasons behind the formations of such groups. With the character of Aringindin, a onetime soldier, the playwright demonstrates how what is presented to be in the interest of the society could also be a means to swindle the members of the society. Osofisan, however, did not fail to depict the significant reason for the quest for nightguards which is increased crime and the weakness and corruption in the police force. The play thus opens with the entire community representing Nigeria, being looted by armed robbers while the security guard, Lamidi is killed (*Aringindin*, p.124). Osofisan humorously depicts a scenario where the nightguards are disappointed after bringing a robber to the police and are told to go back because the robber is a regular criminal who has completed his term with the police (*Aringindin*, pp. 162–163).

Osofisan, therefore, presents the outcry of Nigerians for indigenous security outfits in the face of these insecurities with the wailing of the residents and owners of the looted shops whose plights are being championed by Aringindin. Baale, however, is reluctant to approve Aringindin's suggestion of forming a vigilante group. He does this because of its consequences which the gods have indicated. The vigilante groups are, however, widely advocated because these formations, according to Pratten (2008: p.10), “have recourse not only to the physical weaponry of imported and locally produced handguns but to a repertoire of supernatural devices” which can make them invisible and protect them against bullets (Anderson, 2002). Osofisan in the play depicts that as powerful as they are, the vigilantes are still immediate members of their respective communities. He thus presents how some of such nightguards have ulterior motives and could be hijacked to perpetrate more havoc than external criminals.

In the face of increasing crime in Nigeria, the creation of such security networks in certain parts of the country are being asked to be subjected to investigation. One of such calls has been made by the Benue Youth Forum which had specifically described the Miyetti Allah planned vigilante group as an invitation to crisis (Duru, 2022). Similarly, the International Centre for Investigative reporting has alleged that a few elements in the Operation Amotekun in the southwest part of the country have been arrested for alleged attempt to perpetrate crime (Abolade, 2022). The Nigerian government has also alleged the Eastern Security Network (ESN) as responsible for continued unrest in the Eastern part of the country (IAGCI, 2022). Although this claim could not have been unconnected with the imbroglio between the Nigerian government and the proscribed IPOB (Channels TV, 2021), the unabated unrest and crime in that part of the country and allegations against ESN is worrisome.

Osofisan presents this restraint on the proliferation of Vigilante groups by Baale who has sought the face of the gods as Baale openly discloses that,

BAALE: the oracle was clear yesterday—increase the Nightguards, give them arms, as Aringindin requests, and you grant the power of arbitrary death! And who knows, a long journey may then begin for us into a season of darkness! (p. 139)

As the gods predicted, it later becomes clear that Aringindin with the most appealing proposal of ridding crime in the community, is the villain and head of criminals ambushing the community just as in Brecht's (1941) *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI*. Aringindin the retired soldier has a selfish interest of becoming the head of the community. He has a team of armed robbers he has been training to help hatch his intention. These robbers are members of the community. They occasionally unleash terror on the community by raiding shops at night after which Aringindin will suggest to the victims the need to have a vigilante group. By this, he makes life unbearable for the Baale, who eventually succumbs and later abdicates his position as the traditional ruler. In Aringindin's proposal, he wants volunteers in the community to join his vigilante group. He further converts these volunteers to robbers who terrorised the community before and after Baale abdicates his throne. Osofisan's presentation of the complicity of the nightguards in crime is a message to contemporary Nigeria, where he foresees the tendency that the vigilantes could become robbers. Even Oluode who the Baale sends as a spy among the nightguards betrays his mission and is silent until Ayinde the school teacher, exposes Aringindin's plan to take over the community the next day. Osofisan presents the bias in such complaints and proposals which Aringindin tenders in an interview with Agunbiade (2015) when he remarked that, "appearances do not always tell the truth, (...) just because he has been complaining, we don't ask, why is he complaining? Perhaps he is complaining because he is not one of those enjoying the corruption" (Agunbiade, 2015, p. 5). Osofisan, in other words, is saying that not all those complaining about the state of insecurity in Nigeria wants insecurity to end.

It is ridiculous to imagine such development Osofisan presents. This is as he presents realistic characters that Nigerians can identify, with plausible plot that captures history and the contemporary twists in insecurity in Nigeria. For instance, the erstwhile Bakassi Boys, also regarded as vigilantes, reportedly extorted money from business people and traders while their activities were characterised with thuggery and unjust killing of individuals. (Meagher, 2007). The Oodua Peoples' Congress, OPC has also been alleged as perpetrators of human right abuses (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Osofisan therefore presents the irreducible ambiguity among the people in their clamour for security just as he indicts them as complicit in insecurity as long as some of them betrays the reason behind the formation of such outfits.

Metaphorically, the play also suggests the formation of insurgent and banditry groups and the gullible entry of youths and teenagers into such in Nigeria. Osofisan shows how the younger generation are brainwashed without ethical reasoning of the import of their decision to perpetrate crime on their community and thus allege them as complicit. In the play, the entire community rejects the voice of reason as represented in Ayinde the school teacher, while they digest without question the lie of their elected counselor (Kansillor). Osofisan presents Ayinde's counsel against the proposed nightguard below:

AYINDE: Aringindin is our hero: he has made our nights safe, chased away the robbers who would steal even our dream! But let me ask you, what is the price we pay for this safety? Answer me? We sleep safely, but everywhere Aringindin's decree surrounds us like iron fences!... let him take his reward, and let him also be retired! Disband the nightwatchmen!...things are happening which, in our innocence, will soon turn this place into a virtual prison yard! Unless you take my advice now (p. 159).

Ayinde and his fiancée Yobiyin represent informed citizens, civil societies and Non Governmental Organisations who sensitise the youth and the people on the proper steps to take to rid insecurity. However, their voice is overpowered by Kansillor, who rallies the people against Baale and for the creation of the nightguard outfit. The Almajiris (lumpen children) and other idle youths in Nigeria who are gullibly brainwashed into crime and violence are represented in the nightguards who betray their community in the play. One finds it ridiculous for an entire community to be against the voice of reason. They, therefore, join the nightguard and allow themselves to be used against their families. This is why the Cameroonian social theorist Achille Mbembe has written extensively on the excesses of the postcolony, noting the need to “respond with greater urgency to the shifting priorities of contemporary... complexity of everyday life in the ‘African postcolony’” (Syrotinski, 2012, p. 413). In Mbembe’s opinion, both the dominant and the dominated have robbed each other of vitality, leaving each other impotent (Mbembe, 1992). Therefore, he no longer sees the masses (followers) as being coerced by a dominant force but being coerced by themselves. Mbembe thus submits as we see in *Aringindin* that “in the postcolony, an intimate tyranny links the rulers with the ruled” (Mbembe, 1992, p.25). The likes of Aringindin and the vigilantes in the play are therefore seen in the cryptic lens of Mbembe as traitors. The nightguards are culpable in the insecurity in the land. They know the truth but decide to join robbers to afflict their kinsmen. This is what Osofisan has shown that the perpetrators of insecurity in Nigeria are from individual communities while some are among the security agencies to produce tyranny, an act which is incongruent with what they are meant to be to the society. Their complicity in the insecurity of their community is incredible and a paradox. This is why Osofisan in an interview with Awodiya said,

I don’t just question any longer only the people I consider evil forces, I also try to question nowadays even those who claim to fight for the betterment of this society (Awodiya, 1993, p. 39).

Osofisan therefore wants the people to be truthful to themselves as the play dramatises one of the Yoruba proverbs that says “*Kokoro to n jefo ara re lowa*” (*the pest destroying the vegetable lives on the vegetable*). In other words, the parasite feasting on the society lives within it. So the banditry and kidnapping for ransom in Nigerian communities are perpetrated in connection with the individual members of communities. The attack on Saint Francis Catholic church Owo, Ondo state on June 5, 2022 confirms this as the perpetrators are said to have connived with some Ebira citizens in the community (Sunday, Nzor & Akingboye, 2022). Many of the bandits and kidnapers in Nigeria are thus believed to reside or have accomplices in attacked communities. This facilitates the attacks because they know the in and out of such communities. These bandits and kidnapers are not strangers; even if they are strangers to the communities, they are not foreigners. If the thesis of Osofisan in *Aringindin* is the need to conscientise members of communities against insecurity and immoral acts, the creation of the National Orientation Agency (NOA) by the Nigerian government in 1993 is, therefore, a response to the play. It is, however, paradoxical that rather than abating, the situation has deteriorated since NOA’s formation. This study thus points to the urgent need to look into the policies leading to the formation of the agency for it to accurately respond to the insecurity in Nigeria.

Another form of complicity in insecurity by the followers is the sheer attribution of security to the leaders, while the followers prefer merry-go-rounding in the day and sleep off in the night. Osofisan presents this through Kansillor when challenged by his daughter Yobi on why he has shirked the responsibility he owes the people who elected him:

All our people wish to do is to sleep, while some watchmen take control. They talk, but they do not wish themselves to be in charge. As long as they are allowed to dance their dance, unchecked and make their miserable coins in the morning market, and waste it all away again in the evening at some celebration. As long as the merry-making is allowed to go unchecked, as long will they never care about the man whatever that is in the saddle of power: and all who shout the words of warning in their ears will be brutally shoved aside (p. 173).

Osofisan, in this piece, thus dramatizes and resonates the cliché that “security is the collective responsibility of all”. He suggests the collective effort of the people rather than waiting for a messiah like Aringindin or the police who has consistently failed them. In other words, if a vigilante network or community police is to be set-up, it must be composed of the willing and responsible members of the society; not those coerced to join such groups. The community leaders must jointly organise it. The play reveals the failure of some vigilante groups that Nigeria has had because they emerge from the sole conception and ethnic bias of their leader, who often eventually use such groups as racketeers. Although Baale planted Oluode among Aringindin’s nightguards, it would have been better if Baale was in charge of calling the shots. He, however, could not because he did not subject Aringindin’s proposal to communal appraisal before endorsement, thus giving us the picture of the future of such an institution if carelessly embraced. Aside from minor allegations, Operation Amotekun in southwest Nigeria met this requirement and has attracted commendations because it was jointly advocated and formed by governors of the six southwest states after due consultation with the people in response to banditry and herders-farmers clashes in the region (Sowole and Kolawole, 2020; Nwoko, 2021). However, the ESN in the East has been faced with a barrage of allegations because its formation was not subjected to such consultation. The Benue Youth Forum is thus critical of the Miyetti Allah planned vigilante group by the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN) in the North because of fears that it could be hijacked to unleash terror in the middle belt region of the country.

Yobi, the heroine of the play and only female character not cowed by Aringindin stresses this need for unanimous acceptance of indigenous security outfit/ community Based Armed Group (CBAG) when she challenges Aringindin that: “one day, our people will be awake, and they will stop so calling helplessly for messiahs. They will be ready, everyone to assume responsibility for their own lives. And then true democracy will come” (p. 172). True to her prediction, the people eventually woke from their slumber. They unanimously conspired to have accepted Aringindin as their king but killed him on the day of his much-desired coronation and peace returned to the community. This shows that the people have the solution to their predicament if they really desire to address insecurity in their communities.

For any literary work to be successful, such work must be composed of certain aesthetic qualities (Ambanasom, 2007). Osofisan is not only mindful of this in his works, but this philosophy essentially inspires him in *Aringindin*. Therefore, the artistic dimensions of the play are telling just as Osofisan achieves his dramaturgy through dramatic metaphor. Meanwhile, Dramatic metaphor, according to Cash (2012) “is a complex device used by playwrights to draw a comparison between two seemingly dissimilar things, images or events”. Its deployment in the play allows the playwright to capture and bring to his audience’s memory the strange images of crime in Brecht’s *The Resistible rise of Arturo UI* (1941) and the brutal reign of Adolf Hitler while in power in Germany. He also spawns a metaphor for the future by artistically crafting familiar characters like Aringindin and plausible events in contemporary Nigeria’s insecurity. The play thus ignites familiar incidences and consequences, which are

elements of Lukacs theory of literary realism. By this, the audience and reader easily identify with the characters and incidences for facile comprehension and social decision. Aside from the dramatic metaphor upon which the play is enacted, Osofisan deploys the aesthetics of Satire, paradox, masking and orunmila motif to arrive at these sordid revelations. He employs Satire in the play, but contrary to his contemporaries' notion of Satire as a tool to criticise the rulers; he deploys it to chastise the followers. In the play, Ayinde employs the elements of Horatian Satire as he is vociferous in lampooning Aringindin, Kansillor, and, Oluode – who is a spy among the night guards. We see this when he challenges Oluode to disclose Aringindin's plan to take over the town from Baale:

AYINDE: He is afraid, can't you see! A man of his status and reputation. What is it that would make someone like Oluode tremble like this? Courage! All it needs, Oluode is a little dose of the courage that earned you your name (p. 180).

Osofisan reverses his satirical swipes rather than pitching them at the leaders; he directs them to unravel the secrets behind insecurity in Nigeria. The playwright, therefore, wants the people to be vociferous and expose the villains of insecurity in their midst. He further presents the thesis of the play with paradox. This is as a most incredible act is orchestrated by the assumed saint – Aringindin, in the community. He shows us that no one (including the leaders and followers) must be spared in the quest to get to the root of insecurity in Nigeria. He confirms this with a fictional portrait showing everyone in a mask, including Kansillor, who is the representative of the people in government and Aringindin, who pretends to be a lover of the people but, in reality, their arch enemy.

Osofisan, however, divests Aringindin's mask of deception with the orunmila motif rooted in the traditional Ifa divination corpus noted for exploring knowledge (Awodiya, 1995). Baale's consultation with Orunmila through the traditional Ifa oracle unravels and unveils the villain in the play. Aringindin is, by this act, discovered as the people's arch enemy. The people are initially helpless to arrest the situation until Aringindin meets his inevitable end in the hands of the same people he has victimised during his coronation. This discovery tells of a lacuna in contemporary Nigeria, which is the poor deployment of Information Communication Technology (ICT) for intelligence, investigation and security. It thus signals the increase in crime as the perpetrators know they cannot be easily discovered. The criminals' masks will therefore be divested with the deployment of hidden cameras, drones mounted with cameras and Closed-circuit Television, CCTV as Aringindin is discovered through traditional intelligence. The play is also a model in literary realist drama. It thus justifies Osofisan as a visionary artist with the eye of a seer and prophet who has written far back in history about contemporary happenings in Nigeria with real-to-life characters. Although it is observed that the situation has grown worse than the milieu depicted, the playwright has demonstrated the fact that literature is not limited by the chariot of time as it captures contemporary insecurity in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study has provided an alternative engagement paradigm to assessing and ending insecurity in Nigeria. The novel exploration of followership regarding security matters in the country undoubtedly suggests the need to begin to look inward in each community rather than concluding that crimes are exclusively perpetrated by external forces, the leadership or thinking security is the sole responsibility of leaders. Osofisan's investigation confirms this as the play shows through the character of Aringindin and his nightguards that some members of the society, like ex-servicemen, retired civil servants, traditional chiefs and other ordinary people

(followers), are accomplices to raging insecurity in Nigeria. The study also suggests that Nigeria is sitting on a keg of gunpowder, with the rate of insecurity in the land. Should the status quo remain unchecked, a state of anarchy is looming just as Aringindin toppled the Baale and took over power. The study, therefore, contributes to scholarship on vigilante groups. The proliferation of vigilante groups without legal frameworks and the Nigerian government's laissez-faire attitude to insecurity attest to this. The study is therefore suggestive of the need to subject existing CBAGs to investigation and conscientize the people to collectively discuss and propose the best way to address insecurity in their domain and not leave it for a single person or group to undertake.

It is further observed from the analysis that the Nigerian mode of intelligence gathering for security is still very far behind in the age of technological development. The traditional intelligence that aided the discovery of Aringindin is therefore suggestive of the need to deploy surveillance equipment and Information Communication Technology, I.C.T in terms of drones mounted with cameras and Closed-circuit Television, CCTV to nip in the bud insecurity in Nigeria. The government also needs to overhaul its National Orientation Agency (NOA) to sensitise Nigerians about the sanctity of life and the dangers of banditry, kidnapping and insurgency to fellow citizens. The campaigns and sensitisation of a revived NOA will help resist any attempt to draft the people into criminal outfits or get them indoctrinated into inhumane ideologies. The study also shows that the people must be decisive in sniffing out and prosecuting anyone found complicit in kidnapping, banditry, and insurgency to serve as a deterrent to others. Given *Aringindin's* contribution to emerging insecurity trends in Nigeria, this study concludes that Femi Osofisan is an avant-garde playwright and literary realist who is committed to a truthful depiction of his society with neither bias toward the leaders nor the followers in the bid to address challenges of development in Nigeria.

References

- Abolade, L. (2021). Has Amotekun reduced crime rate in southwest 18 months after. International centre for investigative reporting ICIR. Retrieved September 26, 2022 from <https://www.icirnigeria.org/has-amotekun-reduced-crime-rate-in-south-west-18-months-after>
- Achebe, C. (1984). *The trouble with Nigeria*. Oxford: Heinemann Books.
- Adeoti, G. (2009). The trope of the market in Femi Osofisan's dramaturgy. In T. Akinyemi, & T. Falola (Eds.) *Emerging Perspectives on Femi Osofisan* (387-408). Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Agunbiade, O. (May 31, 2015). Unpublished Interview with Femi Osofisan by the researcher. Ibadan.
- Agunbiade, O. (2019). *Followership and post-independence disillusionment in selected plays of Femi Osofisan* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Ibadan.
- Ajidahun, C. O. (2012). Understanding Femi Osofisan's *Once upon four robbers* and *Aringindin and the nightwatchmen*. *English Language and Literature Studies* 2(3), 115–120. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v2n3p115>
- Akporobaro, F.B.O. (2001). *Introduction to African oral literature: A literary-descriptive approach*. Lagos: Princeton publishing company.
- Anderson, D. M. (2002). Vigilantes, violence and the politics of public order in Kenya. *African Affairs*, 101. pp. 531–555. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/101.405.531>
- Awodiya, M. (1993). *Excursions in Drama and Literature: interviews with Femi Osofisan*. Ibadan: Kraft Books.
- Awodiya, M. (1995). *The Drama of Femi Osofisan: A critical perspective*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Ayitogo, N. (2022). Updated: DHQ clarifies statement on Owo church attack, says four suspects arrested. Premium Times. Retrieved September 7, 2022, from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/548009-dhq-clarifies-statement-on-owo-church-attack-says-only-one-mastermind-arrested.html>
- BBC (2022). Nigeria Owo church attack: Gunmen kill Catholic Worshippers in Ondo. Retrieved July 1, 2022 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-61697409>
- Beland, D. (2005). The political construction of collective insecurity: From moral panic to blame avoidance and organised responsibility. Centre for European Studies, Working Paper 126.
- Brecht, B. (1941). *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, trans. Bruce Norris (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017).
- Cash, J. (2012). Dramatic metaphor, *The Drama Teacher*. Retrieved May 1, 2022, from <http://www.thedramateacher.com/dramatic.metaphor>
- Cates, D. F. (1992). Wickedness. *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 12, 251–262. <https://doi.org/10.5840/asce19921214>
- Channels TV (2021). Some persons are using IPOB, ESN to commit crimes- Dave Umahi. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.channelstv.com/2021/04/22/some-criminals-are-using-ipob-esn-name-to-commit-crimes-dave-umahi>

- Crisis Group Africa. (2018, April) *Preventing Boko Haram abduction of school children in Nigeria*. Briefing No.137.
- Duru, P. (2022). Miyetti Allah's planned Vigilante group invitation to crisis-BYF. Vanguard. Retrieved September 10, 2022, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/09/miyetti-allahs-planned-vigilante-group-invitation-to-crisis-byf/>
- Ekpo, C., Agorye, C., & Tobi, B. (2018). Dapchibok and the alleged complicity of the Nigerian security apparatuses: the law in the face of blame game. *African Journal of Law, Political Research and Administration*, 1(1), 1–18.
- Ezeabasili, I. E. 2022. Political thuggery and Insecurity in Nigeria 2015-2022. *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research*, 5(7), 3185–3188.
- Gimba, A. (2008). *Letter to the unborn child*. Ibadan: Kraft books Limited.
- Guardian (2021). Insecurity: Where is the President, Retrieved May 11, 2021, from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/insecurity-where-is-the-president>
- Human Rights Watch (2003). World report 2003 (Nigeria). Retrieved August 10, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k3/pdf/nigeria.pdf>
- IAGCI (2022). Country policy and information note Nigeria: separatist groups in the south-east. Retrieved September 10, 2022, from https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1068774/NGA_CPIN_Separatist_groups_in_the_South-East.pdf
- Idhalama, O., Dime, A., & Osawaru, K. (2021). X-raying the million-point agenda of the Nigerian government by Library and Information Professionals in the country, *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*, 10(2), 104–121. <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijl.10.2>
- Idoko, F. (2009). Femi Osofisan: popularity of his audience or audience of his popularity? A survey of two Nigerian university communities. In T. Akinyemi, & T. Falola (Eds.) *Emerging Perspectives on Femi Osofisan* (133–150). Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Isenyo, G. (2022). Terrorist bomb Abuja-kaduna rail track, attack train filled with passengers. Retrieved September 10, 2022 from <https://punchng.com/updated-terrorists-bomb-abuja-kaduna-rail-track-attack-train-filled-with-passengers>
- Kabir, A. (2021). Special report: inside story of how Sunday Igboho rose to prominence. Retrieved February 12, 2022 from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/features-and-interviews/442313-special-report-inside-story-of-how-sunday-igboho-rose-to-prominence.html>
- Keller, E. (2014) Georg Lukács' concept of literary realism. *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 47(1), 30–38 <https://doi.org/10.1179/aulla.1977.47.1.003>
- Lepora, C., & Goodin, R. (2013). *On complicity and compromise*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lukács, L. (1962). *The historical novel*. Trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell. London: Merlin Press.
- Lukács, L. (1964). *Realism in our Time: Literature and the class struggle*. Trans. J. & M. Mander. New York: Harper Row.

- Mbembe, A. (1992). Provisional notes on the postcolony. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 62(1), 3–37. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1160062>
- Mbembe, A. (2001). *On the postcolony*. London: University of California Press.
- Nti, N. B. (2014, November). *Silence on the lambs: The abducted Chibok school girls in Nigeria and the challenge to UNSCR 1325*. Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. Policy Brief, No.3.
- Nwoko, K. (2021) Amotekun: The Southwest region’s response to the failures of the Nigerian police and worsening insecurity in Nigeria, *African Identities*, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2021.1994368>
- Obiageli, D. (2015). Insecurity and civil society response in Nigeria: a historical perspective and its implications for peace and development. *AFFREV*, 9(4), 110–122. <https://doi.org/10.4314/afrev.v9i4.9>
- Ochieng, B., & Kiriungi, J. (2021). Sheikh Ahmad Gumi: the Nigerian cleric who negotiates with bandits. BBC. Retrieved September 20, 2022 from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-57007326>
- Olaniyan, K. (2019). Rule of law? What rule of law? Retrieved September 13, 2022 from <https://mg.co.za/article/2019-11-22-00-rule-of-law-what-rule-of-law>
- Osofisan, F. (1980). *Once upon four robbers*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Osofisan, F. (1986). *Farewell to a cannibal rage*. Ibadan: Evans Publishers.
- Osofisan, F. (1990). *Birthdays are not for dying and other Plays: fires burn and die hard, the Inspector and the hero*. Ikeja: Malthouse Press Ltd.
- Osofisan, F. (2002). *Major plays 2: Esu and the vagabond minstrels, Aringindin and the nightwatchmen, Red is the freedom road*. Ibadan: OponIfa Readers.
- Owonibi, S. (2009). The Political Consciousness in African Literature: A Critical Analysis of some Selected Plays of Femi Osofisan. In T. Akinyemi, & T. Falola (Eds.) *Emerging Perspectives on Femi Osofisan* (99–112). Eritrea: Africa World Press.
- Oyero, K. (2021, June 28) NANS meets Sheikh Gumi, seeks release of abducted students. *Punch*. Retrieved September 13, 2022 from <https://punchng.com/nans-meets-sheikh-gumi-seeks-release-of-abducted-students>
- Oyewole, S. (2016). Rescuing Boko Haram schoolgirls victims. *New Zealand International Review*, 14(1), 25–28.
- Pratten, D. (2008). The politics of protection: Perspectives on vigilantism in Nigeria. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 78(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E0001972008000028>
- Robins, S. (2004). The (Third) world is a ghetto? Looking for a third space between “postmodern” cosmopolitanism and cultural nationalism. *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 1–2, 18–26.
- Sowole, J. (2021, May 15) Again suspected herdsmen kill three farmers in Ondo. *Thisdaylive*. Retrieved September 13, 2022 <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/02/15/again-suspected-herdsmen-kill-three-farmers-in-ondo>

- Sowole, J., & Kolawole, Y. (2020). South-West states pass Amotekun bill into law. *ThisDay*. Retrieved September 26, 2022 from <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2020/03/04/south-west-states-pass-Amotekun-bill-into-law>
- Sunday, O., Nzor, E., & Akingboye, O. (2022). Akeredolu, CDS confirm arrest of Owo church attackers. *The Guardian*. Retrieved September 5, 2022, from <https://guardian.ng/news/akeredolu-cds-confirm-arrest-of-owo-church-attackers>
- Syrotinski, M. (2012). Genealogical misfortunes: Achille Mbembe's (re)writing of postcolonial Africa. *Paragraph* 35(3), 407–420. Retrieved September 5, 2022, from <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/74847>
- Udoh, E. W. (2015). Insecurity in Nigeria: political, religious and cultural implications. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*, 5, 1–7.
- Umar, L. A. (2019). Causes and Effect of Political Thuggery in Nigeria. Retrieved from SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3432353>
- Umoh, N. (2015). Mitigating insecurity in Nigeria through social and institutional interventions. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 5(1), 22–26.
- Utoh-Ezeajugh, T. C., & Ogbonna, K. S. (2013). Cultural imperatives for peace and security in African drama: Ogonna Agu's *Symbol of a Goddess* and Sonnie Ododo's *Hard Choice* as paradigm. *Creative Artist: A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies*, 7(1), 12–31.

Corresponding author: Oyewumi Olatoye Agunbiade

Email: oyebiade@gmail.com