# THE MOTIFS OF DREAM, MADNESS AND COMICRY IN FRANCIS IMBUGA'S PLAYS

BY

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## DECLARATION

This thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other University for examination,

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine Imbuga's use of the motifs of dream, madness and comicry as some of the stylistic devices that illuminate his thematic concerns.

The introduction gives an insight into major issues such as the general concepts of the motifs, the statement of the problem, objectives, scope and the literature review.

Chapter one discusses the dream motif as a stylistic device in Imbuga's plays. It focuses on how the dreaming characters in the plays fulfil the characteristics identified in the outlined nature of dreams. It is also noted that through the dream device, Imbuga makes inroads into the minds of his characters and is able to explicate their unobserved conflicts and motivation.

Chapter two examines the extent to which madness may be objectively real, while it may also be something that is thrust on people who hold divergent views from the majority. The chapter further shows that Imbuga deliberately uses some of the mad characters to surmount censorship, to propound various thematic concerns and to put forward his vision.

Chapter three investigates the concept of comedy in general and comicry in particular, with a focus on the comic

characters in Imbuga's plays. The chapter further notes that these characters are created for theatrical appeal, the furtherance of various themes and the provision of comic relief. This chapter also looks at the contradictory traits apparent in the characters, which make this stylistic device worth studying.

Finally, this study delves into the realism of Imbuga's depiction of society through the concepts of dream, madness and comicry. It concludes that Imbuga has created a recognisable society through these motifs. The motifs are stylistic innovations which not only provide us with an insight into Imbuga's works but also in the understanding of archetypal characters in real life.

# INTRODUCTION

Francis Imbuga is Kenya's premier playwright and an accomplished thesbian as well. Initially he wrote several radio and television scripts. To date he has written the following plays: The Fourth Trial. Kisses of Fate (1972); The Married Bachelor (1973); Betrayal in the City (1976); Game of Silence (1977); The Successor (1979); Man of Kafira (1984); Aminata (1988) and The Burning of Rags (1989).

The most popular of these plays, Betrayal in the City and Man of Kafira have been setbooks in the Kenya secondary school syllabus for an appreciable length of time. Meanwhile the two, along with The Successor. Game of Silence and Aminata form a component of the university literature syllabus where they are studied as part of East African Literature.

All these plays have been performed at the Kenya National Theatre and other venues by several theatre companies. Betrayal in the City. was Kenya's entry in the Drama Section of the Second world Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture, FESTAC 1977. Man of Kafira and Aminata are popular texts[1] at Iowa University in the United States of America and in West African countries.

Imbuga's plays generally dwell on political, social and economic issues as observed in post-independent Africa. Our

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[1] Imbuga disclosed this in an interview on 6th June, 1990.

study focuses on the dream, madness and comicry motifs in the plays. These are some of the stylistic devices that Imbuga uses to portray the reality of the individuals, in particular and the masses, in general. The recurrence of the dreaming, mad and comic characters in the plays is conscious hence the contention here that they are not characters for their own sake, but that they illuminate Imbuga's vision of a society in transition.

Our first concern is to identify the themes of these characters' dreams. We seek to establish the sort of characters the dreamers, comics or those considered mad are. This should help us gauge the credibility of Imbuga's creations in relation to the societies he is talking about. If only those characters with similar traits are shown as mad, for example, we need to examine why this is so, and what it tells us about the individuals and the society. This should help us understand Imbuga's own attitude towards the characters and the societies in which they live. We shall in the process attempt to analyse the similarities and differences of the characters in the different plays to appreciate the development of the motifs in Imbuga's writings.

The study tests the hypotheses that the use of the dreaming, mad and comic characters enables Imbuga to expose social and interpersonal follies and vices; that Imbuga uses the persona of dreamers, madmen and the comics to sensitise

society; that the device of madness is a mask against official censorship; and that the use of 'mad' characters or idiots who otherwise say valid things is meant to correct the prejudices the 'normal' society harbours against the mad. Through the characters in his plays, Imbuga expresses dissatisfaction with contemporary Africa: a continent that is plagued with social injustices, economic hardships and political impropriety. His plays, therefore, call for a redefinition of independence with the masses as potential agents of the desired change.

Our discussion of the dream motif will first focus on the nature of the dreams in the plays. Imbuga's portrayal of the dream is the same as what a psychologist, Anne Faraday says of dreams. In Dream Power (1972), she asserts:

> dreams often... bring to our attention things we failed to notice in waking life...by looking inward at treating the dream as an existential message about the state of our inner world, we can discover our problems and regain long buried aspects of the personality. (16)

Dreams can therefore be used as springboards for understanding man's nature and the universe at large. The dream magnifies issues that remain unresolved within the individual. These are very apparent in many of Imbuga's characters.

In certain African communities, dreams are regarded as divine revelations and believed to be the medium of communication between the living and the dead. Among the Luo community of Western Kenya, for example, there is the belief

that a dead person who wants a child to be named after him will communicate that wish to either of the child's parents in a dream. A person who is murdered and hidden away or who drowns is also believed to always send messages of his whereabouts in dreams to someone in the community. Thus Imbuga's own communal background[2] may also have had an influence in some of the dreams in his plays where the individuals are visited in their sleep by `ghosts.' We need to examine the causes and consequences of such dreams and their possible contribution to the plays. The dreaming characters are Mosese in Betrayal in the City, Boss in Man of Kafira, Raja in Game of Silence, Chonda in The Successor, Jumba in Aminata and Agala in The Burning of Rags.

Our analysis is hinged on the premise that dreams, complex as they are, are a fundamental facility of man's nature and we cannot claim full understanding of ourselves until we are able to appreciate even this extra-physical aspect.

In our analysis madness is viewed as a mental state whose interpretation depends on the perceiver. There are times when the madness exists in the mind as the person purported to be mad is not. Our analysis is against the backdrop of issues such as the playwright's attitude towards the mad characters;

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[2] Imbuga admits that his community regarded dreams as serious revelations.

whether the characters are really mad or not and what the audience thinks of the characters dabbed mad.

We also focus on comicry as an aspect of drama that emphasises more on characterization. We have identified it as a motif in Imbuga's plays hence our focus on the comic characters. In our study we examine how these characters who elicit humour and offer comic relief are woven into Imbuga's drama which otherwise deals with serious social issues. We notice that the character and behaviour of Mulili is different from that of Agege or Segasega. While we might laugh at Mulili in Betrayal in the City. Imbuga intends to use the character to satirize political leaders who do not ascend the echelon of power because of intellectual or political prowess, but simply because of being perfect sycophants or beneficiaries of nepotistic favours. On the other hand, Imbuga intends to use the comics Agege and Segasega to uphold the status of the so-called small man. Segasega underlines the important role of the `small man' in creating the `big man'.

After examining these motifs, each in isolation, our intention is to determine whether they are a deterence or a facilitation of Imbuga's message and style. Imbuga's prolificacy, themes and style make him a writer worth serious study.

Our study is justified by the fact that scholars who have shown interest in Imbuga's works have focused on aspects other

than the dream, madness and comicry motifs. Most of what has been done has been either on individual plays or on certain specific themes. In this study we have gone beyond the undetailed guide books based on the single texts done in secondary schools and the theses that have looked into other aspects of the plays, by focusing on these three motifs and identifying them as stylistic devices.

Laban Erapu, in Notes on Imbuga's Betrayal in the City (1979) examines plot, themes, characterization and style. He identifies a "cunning intelligence" behind Jusper's "psychological shield that he (Jusper) uses as a self-protective device to enable him achieve his goal." Erapu goes on to state that Jusper has "the ability to play on the psychological weakness of the person he is talking to,"(16) hence not many people are able to understand what he has in mind.(16) Erapu sees Jusper as one who has a sense of right and justice.

He also observes that Mosese is an idealist, not a practical man, and that his dream portrays him as one who entertains political ambition. Under characterization he singles out Mulili as corrupt, selfish and ruthless, among other negative qualities. Like most other scholars, he contends that Mulili is amusing due to his "broken language" and the overstatement of what he wants to say. Erapu's conclusion is that Mulili's "success as a character on stage

lies in the comic relief he unintentionally provides in a play that otherwise has a serious tone with little humour in it."(39)

In our study we intend to go beyond Erapu's area of focus. We seek to look at Mosese as one disillusioned with the regime and his dream as a manifestation of his disillusionment. Jusper's madness a useful stylistic device and Mulili as a character is both comic and symbolic which in terms of dramatic impact is a double-edged sword in Imbuga's works.

Austin Bukenya and Richard Arden in their Notes on Betrayal in the City (1978), identify Jusper as "very vocal and clear-mindedly aware" of what is wrong with the system. Their opinion is that Jusper's madness can be seen as "extreme frustration and anger" and that he is "the best representative of the people worst affected by the evil system in Kafira."(40) They view Mosese as an idealistic man whose dream is a kind of "wish-fulfilment" since he longs "so much for freedom and justice." The duo rightly identify Mulili as the villain whose portrayal achieves a lot of dramatic effect. They express a very significant point about Mulili when they observe that his lines are unforgettable, unique and hence he is "fascinating." They thus summarise him:

> Mulili...is the clearest example of the evil in our societies...the author draws our attention to him by making him amusing, even when he is being most vicious...as we watch him we begin to understand the evil that he represents. (46)

We intend to transcend this observation by examining the stylistic and thematic significance of the comic character in Betrayal in the City and Imbuga's other plays.

Wahome Mutahi in A Guide to Francis Imbuga's Betrayal in the City (1988) examines Imbuga's life and writings, themes, characterization, language, and style. He also gives a summary and commentary of scenes. While he singles out Jusper as a sensitive person with a vision, he takes a definite stand about him. He states that in certain instances, Jusper's speech reveals that he (Jusper) is "not totally normal," yet in the madness "he expresses opinions that cannot be said of a madman."(22) Mutahi thus concludes that Jusper "is a victim of political madness."(23)

Over and above, Mutahi correctly states that Jusper's state of mind has contributed a lot in making him one of the most intricate characters in the play. We shall contend with most of what Mutahi says of Jusper but investigate further the normality or otherwise of Jusper, and further illustrate that Jusper's `madness' is a device by Imbuga, against official censorship.

Mutahi regards Mosese as a victim of circumstances and a man of principle "who wants to keep his dignity in the face of persecution."(26) He regards Mosese's dream as an "expression of his subconscious self" - his hope of Kafira to come. Mutahi

sees Mulili as both a comic and a tragic character who "occasions laughter even in moments of deathly conflict."(27) Our study seeks to take these observations into account and to explore further the dreaming, mad and comic characters as motifs and devices in Imbuga's plays.

Aiden Williams in Revising Betrayal in the City (1989) discusses themes, characterization and dramatic role. Like Mutahi, he notes that Mulili provides "comic relief in the grim action of the play," and like Bukenya and Aiden, he states that we are attracted to pay closer attention to Mulili who, in fact, personifies the evils in the Kafira.(19)

Williams also states that "in situations of extreme stress... Jusper's conduct is not entirely normal."(37) Yet he sees "good sense" in some of what Jusper says. Like we hope to demonstrate, he mentions that Jusper's madness is an expression of his extreme anger and acts as a shield of protection. This opinion is acknowledged, but Williams says very little about Mosese's dream beyond pointing out that in the trance, Mosese imagines that the present government of Kafira has been overthrown and that he has been freed and he has accepted a post in the new government.

Ciarunji Chesaina, in her Notes on Imbuga's Man of Kafira, (1984) makes a significant observation to the area this study focuses. In discussing the dream she says: "Dreams reflect a

person's fears and aspirations and therefore a dream motif is a very appropriate technique of examining a person's psychological state."(34) She clarifies the issue of Jusper's madness when she asserts that he is not mad but is only considered so because he is "courageous, sensitive," and has a "sharp clarity of vision." But her analysis is only as far as Jusper and Boss are concerned in Man of Kafira. She discusses Jusper's madness only from the point of view of characterization, an aspect of theatricality which we have studied in its entirity.

Chesaina regards Bin-Bin's characteristics as peculiar to him since he represents agents of state but is not a stereotyped character. He is a survivor and one to whom the "end justifies the means." She further states that to Bin-Bin, "human beings are tools of the State." However, she acknowledges his theatrical role of contributing humour to the play. Her conclusion is that "both in character and in his theatrical appeal, Bin-Bin strikes the audience as a robot" who has "accepted to suppress his humanity and behave like an automation".(15) We seek to examine further the role of the comic characters in Imbuga's plays and establish whether he has created stereotypical comics or not.

With regard to the guide books, we can only say that there isn't enough detail on the aspects they explore since they are meant for Secondary school students revising for examinations.

But through them, we can discover certain aspects that merit further investigation. Thus they suggest useful guidelines to the study of the dream, madness and comicry.

Among the scholars who have done an indepth study of Imbuga's works is Claude Dusaidi. In his thesis "East African Drama: A critical Study of the plays of Zirimu, Ruganda, Imbuga and Ngugi," (1981), he examines Imbuga's Betrayal in the City, Game of Silence and The Successor. He explores the themes of cultural conflict in the earlier plays and Imbuga's later concern with the social, economic and political issues affecting Africa. While he identifies various dramatic devices, he criticizes the dream device in Game of Silence that it causes "technical production problems" and limits Imbuga's audience to those "sophisticated enough to distinguish between reality and illusion." He argues that Imbuga should have used a simpler dramatic technique to express his ideas effectively. We intend to carry out an investigation into these observations with a bias on the effectiveness of the dream device.

Dusaidi only addresses himself to the dream device which he does not adequately tackle but does not recognise the prominence of madness in some of these plays. The judgemental statement he makes about Mulili, is that the character is an "illiterate buffoon"(96) who sets the audience roaring with laughter every time he appears on stage, and who is also an

"opportunistic senseless killer." Dusaidi does not look into the stylistic significance of Mulili and the comic characters in Imbuga's other plays as we have done.

Gachugu Makini in his thesis "The Drama of Francis Imbuga," (1985), analyses the seven plays then published by tracing Imbuga's development into becoming Kenya's leading playwright. He outlines the events that have influenced Imbuga's writing over the years but concludes that although Imbuga "has made a significant contribution to the body of socially committed literature, he has not fully mastered the technique of playwriting."(vii) While we do not intend to look at Imbuga's techniques of playwriting in totality, it is our contention that the devices our study focuses stand out in his plays.

In Makini's study, the focus is not really on the motifs of dream, madness and the comicry, although the opinions he expresses are invaluable to us. Like Chesaina, he finds the issue of Jusper's madness clarified in Man of Kafira but goes ahead to single out madness as a device which, for expressiveness, makes the `mad' characters "stand out" and also enables the playwright to "pass comments on his intolerant society without getting into political trouble." This, he says, is so because "madmen are not constrained by self-censorship that hold back sane men from saying outrageous things." He finds madness a "device that gives the play an added novelty."(104)

According to Makini, Imbuga's persistent use of dreams is an indication that the playwright takes dreams seriously. Makini singles out Boss in Man of Kafira as both a madman and dreamer but he does not investigate the use of the device in the other texts. He also sees the dream in Game of Silence as a device that "alienates the characters from the audience" since the impression created is that "their minds do not work in a normal sequential manner..."(136) He agrees with Dusaidi on technical production problems caused by a play structured in dream form. This calls for a critical study on the development of the dream motif in Imbuga's plays in order to objectively test the validity of the statements alluding to the obscurity allegedly created by the dream.

Makini also makes a number of comments about each of the comic characters but does not look at them in the framework of comicry as a motif: in any case, the analysis of comic characters is a minor part of his study. He sees Mulili's language as "irresistibly laughable" and a factor that gives the play "freshness and novelty." But among other things, he also observes that Mulili's manner of expression underlines the fact that the play is set in "a third world country where English is not a first language for the majority of the people."(96) That is a view that is quite contentious in that the rest of the characters speak fluent English. Our opinion is that it is a deliberate attempt on the part of the playwright to give Mulili such ungrammatical lines. Mulili is

a parody of certain political leaders in Africa whom the play sets out to satirize. From The Successor, Makini refers to some thematic statements made by Segasega although he does not analyse the statements as part of the comic character of Segasega as we have done.

These scholars have however brought out observations which we have found significant although some of them are not up to date. Imbuga continues to write and there is need to update our analysis of the development in his works. For example, he has published two more plays: Aminata and The Burning of Rags which the theses referred to have not addressed themselves to, simply because they had not yet been published. The more reason why we found it necessary to undertake a more specific study is that Imbuga has so far maintained the use of the devices our study focuses and hence created motifs out of them.

Any new and related publication by a writer calls for a rethink of whatever might have been said on the earlier works. This is in the academic belief that the more a writer is studied, the clearer perspectives become about his works and the wider the scope of dealing with him.

This study has adopted the view that literature must be applicable to society. Literature, in fact, draws its reference from the society in all its aspects - the social,

economic and political, and how man fits in this milieu. Thus, literature must be judged in the light of its relevance to the society it is supposed to portray. Likewise, the artist´s commitment to his society is judged in the light of the issues he raises and the success with which he mirrors the society in his literature.

Drama, more than other genres of written literature, belongs to the realm of art that is performed directly to the audience. Since it is primarily oral, it enjoys the patronage of a wider audience than fiction. Because of this, drama is a very powerful method of communication as it appeals to many of the senses. Its potency lies in the fact that it is staged and hence made `real.´ Its appeal is direct and immediate both to emotion and the senses. Drama must then be seen as an instrument for both entertainment and education.

If it has to achieve the latter purpose, drama must be accessible to the audience both in language and style. It is from this view point that Imbuga´s plays are analysed in this study. In writing, he has to have in mind the audience and choose the most appropriate method of reaching them. The audience should be able to follow the development of the plot for maximum comprehension. Imbuga´s choice of the devices under study must have been guided by the belief that they would help put across his ideas best. He has chosen characters that his audience should be able to identify with in order to

appreciate the immediacy of derivation that goes with true, realistic and didactic works.

The contexts created in the plays are also recognisable as evidenced by, for example, anagrammatical names like `Abiara´ for Arabia and `Kafira´ for Africa. Our study is then based on a two pronged pivot that even if art is didactic, it must still retain the aesthetic appeal.

It may be strongly felt that every didactic work of art should offer some kind of pedagogical solutions to the issues it raises. That, however, is an untenable position; there is no obligation on the writer to offer solutions. But that is not reason enough to prevent us from recognising them when he does. Jean Paul Sartre, in What is Literature? (1967) has so appropriately observed:

> To write for one´s age is not to reflect it passively; it is to want to maintain it, or change it; thus to go beyond it towards the future, and it is this effort to change it that places us most deeply within it. (236)

Our contention in this thesis is that Imbuga tries to offer solutions to the problems he points out. These solutions serve as pointers to his vision of the ideal society. Thus he can be seen as a writer who considers himself an agent of change, and his plays, instruments of effecting the desired change. The credibility of his vision as portrayed in his use

of the motifs under study forms a focus for intricate analysis.

Although this study addresses itself primarily to Imbuga's plays in which the motifs of dream, madness and comicry feature prominently, other related devices such as the soliloquy and the play-within-a play will also be drawn into the discussion where appropriate.

This chapter has basically outlined what the study is about. Our conviction is that Imbuga has made a conscious and purposeful use of the dream motif. In the next chapter, we examine the concept of dream and analyse its stylistic and thematic significance as a motif in Imbuga's plays.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE DREAM MOTIF IN IMBUGA'S PLAYS

As a basis of our study, we need to refer briefly to some scientific studies on the dream in order to terminologically clarify what it is.

Sigmund Freud, in The Collected Papers Vol I (1949) regards dreaming as a form of thinking and a traditional form of revelation.(357) Ira Progoff, in Jung's Psychology and its Social meaning (1955) considers the dream "a tool for the interpretation of personality"(143) while Malcolm, in Dreaming (1959) describes it as "a sequence of thought indulged in while one is awake or asleep," signified by "delusion, fantasy, hallucination, illusion, imagination, reverie, speculation, vision, goal, hope and wish."(94) Ellenberger, in The Discovery of the Unconscious (1970) looks at dreams as "problem-solving"(188) while Hill, in Such stuff as Dreams (1967) summarizes the dream as "a work of art... inventive... prophetic... message... curative... instructive."(xvii) Hall, in The Meaning of Dreams (1966) defines the dream as:

> A succession of images predominantly visual in quality, which are experienced during sleep... the dreamer experiences it as though he were seeing something real... the apparent reality of a dream is also evidenced by the fact that we may wake up with pounding heart or rapid breathing or a scream... Talking and walking during sleep also confirm the idea that a dream is often experienced as though it were real. (2-3)

From the above definitions, we can conclude that the dreamer is an unconscious being who has no control over the contents of his dream however active he is during the dream. He is devoid of all that knowledge of the natural order of the world. Metaphorically, therefore, anyone who is absent minded and may talk nonsense or reply irrelevantly to questions may be regarded as dreaming. In essence then, some unconsciousness is a prerequisite for dreaming to occur and gives reasons for attempts at analysing the dreams in order to understand them.

Psychologists have identified two major phases of dreaming that are distinct from each other in character. In what is called the Rapid Eye Movement (REM) dream, the dreamer experiences greater visual intensity and emotional involvement. The dreamer is drawn deeper towards a complete world of fantasy. Dreams in this category are always very vivid and therefore more likely to be recalled. As Faraday observes in Dream Power (1972):

> It is reasonable to assume that there is always a better chance of recalling an emotional dream than a bland one, a long one than a vague one, just as we tend to remember our more exciting and dramatic experiences in waking life. (64)

The other phase is the Non Rapid Eye Movement (NREM) dream which is less fantastic, vague and relatively incoherent.

Our study focuses on dreams that are akin to the Rapid Eye

Movement dreams. The body movements that break episodes in an on-going dream resemble blackouts on the stage production and stage directions in the text, for these mark the demarcations of the episodes.

From the standpoint that dreams have a lot to do with what happens in real life, people dream of things that have happened or things that may happen. We can argue that dreams act as recollections of our actual experiences - remembered or reproduced. They also express our aspirations, some of which are of infantile origin; in what has been referred to as the `safety valve´ function of dreams. Dreams give a carthatic feeling because they may create pleasures that are desirable but are not experienced in real life. This explains why our dreams may be dominated by things we are deprived of in real life. Thus the dreams become avenues "to the conscious parts of the mind which had hitherto been inaccessible in man´s search for self knowledge."(Faraday, 74)

Hill considers the above aspect of dreams important in making certain revelations about the world of sleep which he describes as:

> An imaginary world which is often more real than the real world... a world in which mankind speak the same language; the language of imagery and metaphor. It is a world in which man, stripped of his hypocrisies, deceits and masks stands or lies naked before his own eyes. (viii)

Our world is a make-believe one for we are forever

masquerading. During sleep, the individual is unmasked and his activities are not censored. In the study of the neuroses, Freud called for the penetration of the dream imagery as told in order to get to the core of the dream as experienced.

Our study supports the notion that the unconscious is more efficient than the conscious in portraying the true personality, hence in the study of the dreaming characters in Imbuga's plays, we shall identify the ideas that reside in the dreams and what motivates those characters. The characters to consider in this respect are Mosese in Betrayal in the City, Boss in Man of Kafira, Raja in Game of Silence, Chonda in The Successor, Jumba in Aminata and Agala in The Burning of Rags. We notice that these characters dream either when asleep, awake or when half-awake and their dreams express both personal and social anxieties. We shall begin by looking at the dream and the dreamer in Betrayal in the City.

The play is set in Kafira, a fictitious post-independent African country being ruled by a despotic president who relies heavily on a clique of sycophants to govern the country. The state is characterized by vices such as betrayal, corruption, nepotism, oppression and denial of freedom of speech. The disillusionment that arises out of this is captured in the following conversation between Jere and Mosese in the prison

cell:

> Mosese: For years we waited for the Kingdom, then they said it had come... but no. It was all an illusion. How many of us have set eyes upon that kingdom? What colour is it?
> Jere: ...I guess it is blood red.
> Mosese: It was better while we waited. Now we have nothing to look forward to. We killed our past and are busy killing the future. (31-2)

The `Kingdom´ referred to is the `independent state´ which has not fulfilled the expectations of the citizens. The idea of independence seems not to be explicitly manifested in the political, social and economic system of the new state and therefore remains an "illusion." For Mosese therefore, the expectation of independence was a more tolerable period than the current one which is a betrayal. He does not see a future for Kafira if the present system is to be perpetuated.

Mosese himself is a victim of the system. Having been a lecturer at the university, he lands in jail as a result of daring to question the stringent conditions imposed by the government at Adika´s funeral but through a trumped up charge of being found in possession of an illicit drug. Jere himself is a renegade from Kafira´s police force. He also ends up in jail for refusing to continue frustrating the Doga family. His disagreement with Mulili over whether to let the shaving ceremony go on is the most probable reason for his incarceration. His case illustrates that Boss is out to suppress any dissenters, be they part of or not part of the state mechanism.

The apparent bleak future position of Kafira is depicted symbolically through Mosese sitting with his back to the audience;(21) a figurative gesture of his disillusionment with the future. In a subsequent dream(34-5) however, he visualizes a future Kafira in which his wishes of a better regime are fulfilled. In this dream, Mosese meets and shakes hands with what appears to be colleagues in a new government after his release following a probable coup. The latter offer him a job which he says he would consider accepting although he would not forget what he has undergone. He describes himself in the reverie, as a participant in a government "in the hands of the people," and in a society where people take pride in what they have genuinely built rather than passively received from godfathers and benefactors. He also sees his acceptance of the post as a sacrifice of principles and exhorts others that sacrifice is necessary in the envisaged state. It turns out in Man of Kafira that the post he was offered was that of a Prime Minister, a post which puts him in a very influential position. Mosese does not feature in Man of Kafira, but it is reported that he was shot during an attempt to overthrow the government. This confirms that he remains rebellious and seeks conditions even the new regime has failed to create. His dream therefore seems to have aborted.

The use of the dream in this instance breaks the play from dialogue to a dream sequence and this establishes a new mood. This mood is particularly important in creating the second

effect, that of foreshadowing the events that take place later in Kafira. The dream also enables the playwright to economise on character; he does not need to use another character or technique to create the impression of the `future of Kafira.´ While Mosese´s dream functions like a flashforward, it differs slightly in that it has tract of mime sequences where the flashforward would require actual characters. The dream therefore overcomes the problem of superfluous characters.

Mosese´s behaviour in the reverie resembles that of Wamala in J. Ruganda´s The Burdens.(47-9) Like Mosese, Wamala addresses imaginary people and imagines himself as a top executive. But Wamala differs from Mosese in that his reverie is a flashback into the days when he was actually a minister while that of Mosese is a projection into the future. However, Wamala and Mosese are both victims of post-independence political systems.

The use of dreams in the cases of the two show the possibilities of diverging the dream as a stylistic device to cover for flashback, flashforward and even to talk about the present. This creates the possibility that a playwright can use the device economically to traverse the past through the present into the future. The dream therefore, becomes a reflexive and reflective device: it leads us into the character´s internal conflicts and reveals to us what the character perceives as possible solutions. As in Mosese´s case

we get a glimpse of his discomfiture with the regime and what he hopes the future would be.

In Betrayal in the City, Mosese is the only explicit dreamer. But Jusper makes reference to a dream in which his late brother, Adika appeared to him as if to push him on to take revenge for the murder. He tells Regina that Adika does not give him a night's peace and that during one night Adika almost hit him with a slide rule.(38) In his dream, we can infer Jusper's determination to avenge the death of his brother, which he does by killing Chagaga and hence underlining the theory that dreams are reflections of individuals' conscious lives and actual experiences. The dream exhorts Jusper to take a decisive action and it ends up being a justification for that action.

Man of Kafira is set after a coup d`e`tat that sees Boss' overthrow and sends him to exile in Abiara. The play holds Boss to ridicule. The theme that runs through the play is the value of human life on earth which leaders like Boss have apparently ignored. Boss is both a dreamer and a madman. Unlike Mosese who dreams of the predicament of the masses and the need for a democratic society, Boss reportedly "sees things, animals and strange insects in his dreams."(11) It is such nightmarish dreams that aggravate his mental disorder.

In the character of Boss, Imbuga depicts some of the

psychological traumas of a deposed leader who cannot live as anybody else rather than the president he was. These traumas occur in his sleep and dream. In this, certain parallels can be drawn between Boss, who convinces himself that he is still the president of Kafira, and Wamala who finds a panacea in drinks and relives the past in his reverie. According to Wamala´s wife Tinka, these are only "perpetual backward glances to make the present tolerable and the future worth waiting for."(Ruganda, 11) Tinka draws him back to reality just as Boss´ wife, Mercedes, does when she reminds Boss that he has ignored his responsibility to the family.

Boss´ life is governed by dreams. When he is awake he lives in daydreams just as he does not have a peaceful sleep without nightmares. In the daydreams he is deluded into believing that he is one of the historical figures: Shaka or/and Hitler, and that he is "the greatest man on earth."(27) He expects his orders to be obeyed. For instance he demands that his host, president Gafi, send someone on a mission to Kafira to gauge people´s attitude towards him and that the Pope´s own representative in Abiara be sent for to pray for him.

Boss is further steeped into the illusion that he is the right leader for Kafira by the impostors Taget and Grabio posing as Roving Eye and Cardinal Ojwang´. Thus the prayer session becomes a consummation of the illusion. His obsession

robs him of the power to think rationally and he tumbles helplessly towards his death.

When Clement Ojwang'(Grabio) prays and craves "for the day of truth,"(34) Boss does not even see the irony in the prayer, that judgement awaits him. Imbuga uses this irony to heighten Boss' delusions about his future role in Kafira and consequently to satirize him. At the end of the prayer, Boss is completely convinced of his importance to Kafira and even daydreams of a warm reception. What is suggested here is the absence of distinction between dream and reality in Boss' life.

In a different context, Boss also reports to his wives the dreams that he apparently experiences during sleep. One such dream is that Allah and God (Sic) spoke to him in his sleep. In another dream, four angels carried him in "a sedan chair" and led him to a "small box full of... messages."(37) He further claims that he picked a red message that read "Man of Kafira." On this basis alone he leads his family back to Kafira. These dreams are exaggerated to satisfy Boss' ego and they play the important role of urging him on.

The colour red that he refers to is symbolic. Kafira needs his blood to match the numerous deaths that he caused during his reign; a fact Jusper alludes to when he says on Boss' return; "I see blood in every Kafiran homestead."(70) This

echoes Jere's statement in Betrayal in the City that the colour of their country is "blood red." But ironically Boss admits that red is his favourite colour and that there is no danger in the dream because he has not seen the "head of the devil" in it. The fact that he loves the colour red also implies that he delights in the sight of bloodshed and therefore celebrates death.

In one vivid dream(45-51) Boss is confronted by the apparition of the late archbishop Lum-Lum whom he killed for refusing to conduct a church wedding between him and his second wife. If done, this would contravene the laws of the church. Imbuga uses the dream here to criticise those leaders who are ready to spill blood due to petty differences and those who do not respect the integrity of other institutions simply because they are in power.

In the dream, the archbishop shows Boss the apparitions of Sober and Drunk. These are ghosts, "shadows of a dying generation" who in their wake are the "footsteps of the people." Lum-Lum asks Boss to follow them because they will lead him "away from the doubt that now plagues" his mind. While it could be true that Lum-Lum's ghost has confronted Boss, it also seems that Boss' conscience is troubled and he would only be peaceful if he realises and comes to terms with his past mistakes.

Sober calls Boss "a transparent man" - a rich man without a heart while Drunk refers to Boss as one who is unmindful of the sufferings of his people. He says: "I will die and return to teach him (Boss) the relationship between the mouth, the stomach, the heart, the mind and man's general existence." Conventionally, the heart is a symbol of feeling towards others. Reference to Boss as a man "without a heart" implies that he is inconsiderate, callous and completely indifferent to the situation of the others, presumably his former citizens. Saying that he will teach Boss the relationship between the "mouth..." Drunk clarifies the need to appreciate that man is a multi-organic entity who also has a social dimension to his existence and one who oppresses therefore disturbs the whole equilibrium of a person's existences. The example of Jusper and Mosese bear this out. Boss' transparency as alleged by Drunk is a comment on his depersonalization. He is depicted as being empty of feelings, principles and a future; Drunk here implies that Boss is an empty shell rather than the hero he thinks he is.

The idea of transparency among political leaders is now a topical issue especially in Kenya. Imbuga's vision on this issue therefore is much stronger with impending events than it was when the play was written. Boss was not transparent during his tenure of office; he did things under cover, things that cast doubts on his credibility as an honest leader. Truth has

now surfaced to him in a dream. Thus Boss, and symbolically all the leaders are reminded to be transparent. They should be able to defend and justify their actions. Currently in Kenya, the allegations of corruption and the quest for democracy are just steps to ensure that there is transparency and accountability.

In the dream, the archbishop forgives Boss, calls upon him to open his eyes and see his people and asks him to guard himself against evil. The dream then acts as a reflection of what lies in Boss' subconscious; things that he wishes to rid himself of in his conscious state. Regina remarks to Bin-Bin after the dream that Lum-Lum's "was the only death he (Boss) ever wanted to wipe out of his mind, and now it is done."(50) She sees the pardon as a purgation from the stigma of Lum-Lum's murder.

The dream marks the end of Boss' exile and the return to Kafira. This structurally acts as the hallmark in the plot. Stylistically, it marks the turning point and portends the acceleration towards the climax and the resolution of conflict. Boss' decision to return to Kafira comes as a result of his claims that his dreams always come true. The impression he creates is that he understands the meaning of his dreams yet it seems that he is only claiming the ability for egoistic reasons. Boss, in this instance, ends up as a parody of African leaders like Amin who used dreams to justify certain evil actions.

Back in Kafira Boss believes he is welcome and must be given a forum. He does not understand why Jere attempts to protect him from the public, neither does he have the idea that he is a prisoner awaiting trial. He goes ahead and ironically states: "the wishes of the people must be satisfied."(69) This and his perverted sense of grandeur make him quite comical. For example, when he talks of being killed by a "grenade, a powerful bomb," he is still reflecting the notion that he is powerful. His imaginary expectations are anti-climactically reduced when he only dies from a knife stab by Regina. Regina has often `dreamt´ of a rebellion against Boss, and has once attempted to stab him in his sleep. Through this episode, Imbuga has juxtaposed reality with fantasy created by Boss´ dreams. There is yet another striking similarity between Boss and Wamala in Ruganda´s The Burdens. Wamala too relives his past through dreams and is also killed by his wife, Tinka. The difference is that Wamala is stabbed in his sleep while Boss is stabbed in public.

In the depiction of Boss as a dreamer, we notice nearly all the characteristics of dreams and dreaming that we have in our definitions. He dreams both when asleep and when awake; he expresses his hopes and fears in his dreams. He is the only dreamer who becomes comical, ridiculous and ends up mad.

Game of Silence explores the conditions in a society similar to Kafira from the point of view of its psychological

effects on Raja, an African student pursuing further studies abroad. Most events in the play take place in his mind. He is critical and suspicious of his home country to the extent that he becomes neurotic. His colleague, Bango, poses as a student of psychology while in fact spies on him since he is considered dangerous by his home government. The major difference between the two is that Bango acts on the realistic level while Raja's actions and anxieties are seen through his dreams.

The play is deliberately set within the framework of a sequence of dreams that Raja experiences. The immediate challenge it poses is the need to equip the audience with the knowledge that Raja is dreaming and that the characters and action on stage are features of his dreams. The disjointedness and sometimes, obscurity, in the dialogues are presumably attempts to give credibility to the dream framework.

Predominantly, in his dreams, Raja explores injustice in his society and the helplessness of the common man. In his first dream, he sees beggars, madmen and cripples, the "enemies of good old society" as he calls them. He hears their helpless moans and reprimands Bango for ignoring them: "very few normal people ever pay attention to dogs,"(1-2) he says. In the dream, there is a sharp contrast between the two. While Raja shows deep concern with the sufferings of the common man, Bango remains indifferent and pleads with the former to look

at himself as an individual who has "raised" himself "above the confusion."(11)

In a subsequent dream ,Raja foregrounds the value of human life. Here he is disturbed by the question of death. His instinct tells him that his daughter, back home, has died because as he says: every five years ever since I was fifteen something terrible has happened."(6) First, it was his mother´s death, then five years later his daughter died and now it is five years and justifiably enough, he dreams that his other daughter has died. This is reinforced by his strong faith in dreams: "my dreams almost always come true."(22) He vivifies the death of his daughter to give justification to the supposed death of the second one. Even this means nothing to Bango who only consoles him that it is never too late to get another child to make up for the dead one(s).

There is something peculiar about the predictive nature of dreams in this play. Although Raja dreams that his daughter has died, it is his sister Flora that is dead and it is exactly five years after the preceding death. The funeral procession that Raja visualizes, conceptually is Flora´s. This dream could be linked with a separate one in which he foresees danger in Flora´s marriage to Jimmy, the "big man´s son." The dream here serves as a flashback. It gives the background of Flora´s death with the revelation that she has been poisoned by Jimmy´s sister.(40)

The character of Raja summarises the point that dreams are integral parts of and reveal much about one's personality. They are reflections of what has happened and in some cases indicators of what is to come. A number of Raja's other dreams do come true. For example, he is locked up but released after the strike, Bango and Jimmy die as he has dreamt. His beliefs about dreams reflect Imbuga's own "respect for dream as a carrier of truth."[3]

Indeed there is no way of divorcing Raja in his waking life from his dreams. Unlike Boss whose dreams are mere delusions, Raja's dreams spring from deep concern for the society. Raja says that he does his thinking in his sleep. His dreams are a forum for reflecting on the plight of the common man and he chides the likes of Bango who sleep comfortably because they are in league with the political leaders. Raja tells him:

> You sleep inspite of all the moaning, but it is not the same with me. Sleep is my enemy... I am scared of sleep because that is where I do all my thinking. All my reflections are behind closed eye-lids. In sleep I put two and two together and arrive at the inevitable answer...(4)

Conceptually then, Raja's going to sleep is not the same as taking a leave from life around. It is, in fact, a plunge into another active life of deliberating through dream on the

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3 Interview Opcit.

waking life. This shapes his approach to life and what he proposes for the society. His dreams are like passageways from the past to the future.

Raja dreams of the need for a revolution, a time when "the bottom must rise since the top will never descend."(25) The "bottom" meaning, the masses, are called upon to take a leading role in shaping the future of the society. The play actually seems to end on an optimistic note when the people stage "a dance of the future" after the death of Bango and Jimmy to celebrate the release of the political prisoners, among them Raja. But alas, the dance leads to Flora's grave, she who unsuccessfully tried to bridge the gap between the "top" and the "bottom."

The whole play bears absurdist traits: the unusual emphasis given to dreams; the nature of the dreams; the disjointedness of parts of the dialogue, especially between Raja and Bango and the vagueness of certain things, for instance, the death of Raja's daughter. It is not really easy to justify Raja's feeding the baby on cassava, neither is there justification for Emma to have gone out "begging for food." In the end one does not understand why the baby's death is pronounced "Death by Natural Causes."(11)

By using absurdist qualities in Game of Silence, Imbuga has made a strange departure which he admits was a harsh

reaction to those who had criticised Betrayal in the City as a simple play both in structure and plot. In Game of Silence therefore, he has adopted the methods of The Theatre of The Absurd where things happen without any logical relationships. In this way the writers of The Theatre of The Absurd defy conventional theatre as Myron Matlaw asserts in Modern World Drama An Encyclopaedia (1972):

> absurdist playwrights... matched form with theme. Eschewing conventional plot, story and characters... absurdist playwright created a dramaturgy that reflected their anguished vision of universal reality through apparently meaningless, illogical dialogue and action. (6)

Through this method the audience is challenged to figure out the meaning of the play for as Martin Esslin in "The Theatre of The Absurd" (1968) observes:

> In the Theatre of the Absurd... Not only are the members of the audience unable to identify with the characters, they are compelled to puzzle out the meaning of what they have seen. (200)

At the end of Game of Silence. the audience is left wondering what the play is all about, and puzzling out why the playwright adopts the dream framework. Imbuga's own explanation is equally obscure. During the premier production of the play he says:

> It is because of this tendency to alienate the subconscious from the conscious and to dismiss the latter as "mother of dreams" that I was prompted to write GAME OF SILENCE... 4

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4 Francis Imbuga `About The Play.' A review of Game of Silence directed by Tirus Gathwe, Kenya National Theatre, Nairobi May 12 - 19, 1977.

But such obscurity is condoned in the Theatre of the Absurd where

> the action supplies an increasing number of contradictory and bewildering clues on a number of different levels, but the final question is never wholly answered... This suspense continues even after the curtain has come down. (Esslin 200)

One advantage with Absurd Drama is that the playwrights say everything they want to say however disjointed they are and this is done through the use of very few characters. For instance, Tewfik Al-Hakims's The Tree Climber (1966) has only five characters on stage yet according to the stage directions of Act one:

> There are no sets in this play... the past, present and future sometimes all being present at the same time and one person occasionally present in two places on the stage and talking in his own voice twice at the same time. Here everything interlocks with everything else... (1)

Since Game of Silence was a conscious experiment, it is evident that Imbuga has drawn a lot from The Theatre of The Absurd. In the use of the dream device, there is almost a complete attachment to absurdism. Raja goes to the extent of dreaming that other characters are dreaming and the dreams end up interlocking with reality.

Some parallels could be drawn between Game of Silence and Serumaga's The Elephants (1971). The protagonists, Raja and

David, are university students abroad. Both plays are set in the students' rooms but Raja's is a room in his mind. Both 'run mad' after the death of close family members, Raja's is as a result of his daughter's death while David's is his parents' death. Both have a close colleague they rely on; Bango is an intelligent officer who keeps track of Raja while Maurice, a refugee, helps David with his research work and shares the same apartment. Raja and David live in make-believe worlds. Raja's is created through his dreams while David lives through Maurice by protecting the latter from the truth of the death of his (Maurice's) parents. He thrives in seeing Maurice happy for this is what he himself misses. He tells Jenny "... Truth that sears the brain and pierces the soul like a million porcupine quills. I am protecting him from madness. My fate."(47) Both David and Raja lost their mothers at the age of fifteen.

From the foregoing discussion therefore, it is evident that Imbuga has demonstrated that the dream as a stylistic device can be used in various ways to achieve varied effects. The dreams of Raja (Game of Silence) and Mosese (Betrayal in the City) show that the device can be used to outline the need for political change and to criticise the society. In Boss' dreams it is used for satire. The relevance of dreams proceed from Imbuga's conviction that they reveal the motivations of the characters. In response to a question to clarify his

standpoint about the dream motif he says:

> The dream opens up the psychological state of being of the characters. For me, it is this psychological state of mind that forms the basis of the real reality as opposed to the doctored reality which we see in our examination of interpersonal relationships. 5

This clarifies what has apparently guided his use of dreams.

The setting of The Successor is slightly different from that of the preceding plays. Here, Imbuga surveys the theme of the struggle for succession in the Empire of Masero and the effects it has on the society. Emperor Chonda's dream of his father's "head without a neck and shoulders"(39) is the dramatic force in the play and it triggers off the dreams of the succession that the play revolves around.

Oriomra, one of the chiefs of Masero, gives us the first hint of the Emperor's dream in the former's discussion with Dr. See Through. We are immediately faced with the issue of See Through's credibility as a seer. Oriomra asks him to tell a lie when interpreting the Emperor's dream and he agrees. So when he tells the Emperor that the late Emperor wants his son to name his successor, the impression created is that the diviner is playing Oriomra's game.

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5 Interview Opcit.

Emperor Chonda is haunted by his late father both during the day and in the night. His nightmare is reported on several occasions but it is vivified only at the shrine as he waits for the diviner to interprete it for him. He falls asleep on the chair and later jerks his head forward and stares directly ahead of him. He turns this way and that way as the creature dodges him.(30) When his words become audible, he is heard to be pleading with his father to leave him alone, to spare him the embarrassment of being haunted in the presence of his subjects. In the dream, the head of Chonda's father emerges without the neck and shoulders; merges with Chonda's to become one head and rises from the flood which, significantly, is a mass of red waters. Dr. See Through gives it the interpretation that:

> Your father will not have you step in his own blood, that is why he sends his head to you; Two heads are better equipped to avert the eminent blood-bath symbolised by the red waters of River of Life and Death. (37)

This interpretation alludes to Oriomra's earlier suggestion that Chonda should name his successor and avert blood-baths. The seer, however, warns Chonda to beware of darkness in light"(39) since he is a ruler who does not know much about his people other than what he is told by his advisors. The seer seems to be more concerned about peace. He uses the dream to exhort Chonda to be wise in naming his successor. The Diviner is apparently aware of Oriomra's

intrigue and gives refuge to Jandi, the rightful heir to the throne.

Chonda's dream and the dreams in the later plays, Aminata and The Burning of Rags have their root in the African traditional religion where dreams are believed to be divine revelations. Because of the belief in life after death, dreams are regarded as one of the ways in which the dead communicate to the living. There is an inherent belief that the dead have a stake in what goes on in life. The reverence of the dead impose on people some sense of restraint because the dead are believed to operate on a superior plane in the super natural world hence "death makes even crazy fellows sacred" as it were.

Chonda's dream has a key position in The Successor because it triggers off the events in the play; events that are resolved in the interpretation of the dream. The conflict that is created by the dream is the need for an honest successor to the throne. What is suggested here is that Chonda's advisors are not trustworthy so he relies on the dream. The dream therefore comes out as a determining activity when afterwards Chonda realises that he has trusted the wrong people: "The trust I poured upon my closest friends was without roots," he says. "It was blind trust, the worst disease for us rulers of the world."(61) This speaks also for Boss in Betrayal in the City whose advisor, Mulili, turned out to be his betrayer.

In the instances of Oriomra and Mulili Imbuga raises the issue of sycophancy which has some relevance to post-independence Africa. Sycophants always say only what the leaders want to hear for fear of political reprisal. These are inconsistent politicians who change with current political conditions for their own individual gains. On the other hand political leaders themselves take offence when told the truth and brand their critics dissidents. This is discussed further in the next chapter that looks into the madness motif.

In The Successor therefore, it is evident that Imbuga is charting out the characteristics of desirable leadership, characteristics that lack in some of the political leaders in his plays. Jandi who is wrongfully banished and who does not raise a finger against his accusers becomes the successor. When asked to decide on a punishment for Oriomra, Jandi answers: "... the punishment of an evil doer is the people's choice. It cannot be left in the mouth of one man."(66) This is a lesson to Chonda who hastily banished him against the pleas of some of the people.

The dream in The Successor is used to advise Chonda not to lose touch with his people. It is also used to guide Chonda in decision making. It marks the beginning of Imbuga's use of the dream to introduce contentious matters and to act as a determining activity for the leaders. This trend is continued in Aminata and The Burning of Rags.

Aminata is a play that was commissioned to give a certain aspect of the African woman that people have tended to overlook. Although it deals with other issues too, women's liberation is its major theme. The `moving spirit' behind the play is the memory of Pastor Ngoya who, as a christian catechist, is vocal against discriminatory customs but is supportive of equality and family planning.

Ngoya confides in his daughter Aminata and this sets his son Ababio and his brother Jumba against Aminata. The heroine Aminata does chores that would be identified with men: She buys her father's coffin, brings piped water to the village and educates her drunken brother's children. She plays a leading role in initiating development projects in the village of Membe.

Aminata's deeds run concurrent with Jumba's dreams. He sees Aminata as evil because she survived when the `red bird' struck his children and because Ngoya has used her to deride tradition. Ngoya becomes his arch-enemy more especially for the former's prevalence on the males to be sterilized. Jumba's tragedy lies in the fact that he cannot get more children and only remains with the mute Mbaluto after the others' death. He holds this against Ngoya for allowing the church to uproot the ancestral tree; an act he sees as portentous of the tragedy that befalls him.

Jumba reports that Aminata recurs in his dreams. It only serves to express his fears and wishes. According to Jumba, Aminata conspired with Ngoya to:

> Slap Membe in the face and embarrass me and the stool of rule... She wants to use that thing she calls law to strangle our ways of ages. The blame sits on her father's head. He came, planted the new religion in our women's heads and manured it with their ignorance... The blame sits on my head too, I should have shunned that second knife. (17)

Jumba fears Aminata's fame and these fears which continue in his dreams are also seen in his reference to the day when young Aminata led the women in taking chicken soup and hence violated the tradition that women must not eat chicken.

Jumba's wife, Mama Rosina, calls him crazy for harbouring grudges against Aminata and her late father. When Jumba and Ababio cement the late Pastor Ngoya's grave, it is Mama Rosina who reminds him of the vengeance of the dead whose wishes are ignored. Jumba does not heed this warning.

Ababio too believes that Aminata is evil. He soliloquizes his feelings about her and the piece of land that their father has bequeathed her in his will. Naturally and traditionally, he is the first son who should inherit that piece of land. He therefore vents out his emotions especially now that even the village idiots consider Aminata superior.

Ababio's emotions are captured in this soliloquy:

> Land is not a degree... They can collect all the degrees in the world,... but let nobody touch my land... no woman will touch my father's land because that is my land. A will? What is a will?... The wishes of the dead? Since when did the dead start having wishes? (23)

Ababio's soliloquy serves the same function as the dream. He seems to be challenging a commonly held belief that the dead are revered and what they communicate to the living in dreams is respected. The wishes of the dead that we encounter in Imbuga's plays are just derived from the issues that faced them before they died. In this case tradition is used to force the living to accept things that ordinarily they might have rejected.

In Aminata, it is evident that Imbuga wants to highlight the transition in the society. The society is divided; there are those like Nuhu who are ready to welcome change and those like Jumba and Ababio who are opposed to change. Imbuga uses the late Pastor Ngoya to create the themes of opposition among the living. It is the same Ngoya who is recalled to resolve the conflict between Jumba and Aminata. Ngoya's ghost confronts Jumba in his sleep. This episode and that of Boss and Chonda before, are instances of leaders being haunted during the day as they take a nap. These are different from Agala's dream that takes place at night.

As the ghost confronts Jumba, the latter screams, jumps

out of bed and pleads with the invisible being to leave him alone. It is his behaviour that indicates that he is dreaming. His lines also suggest that he has complied with the demands of the ghost. He accepts to "knock down the cement" on the grave and to hand over the controversial piece of land to Aminata.(62-3)

The dream creates a change of action in Jumba. It arouses in him a self-realisation that his refusal to accept change is a losing battle. With the creation of government rule, the stool loses its symbolic significance and it becomes futile trying to protect an outmoded system of leadership. This realisation and his conspiracy with Mama Rosina to be the village head, leads him to step down and allow the elders to hand over the piece of land to Aminata. The dream then, marks a turning point in the play and comes out as a device used to develop the plot.

Imbuga's latest play to date The Burning of Rags is a modification of his first play The Married Bachelor. It is aesthetically superior to the 1974 text and the content and characterization are more credible although it retains the themes of the earlier play.

The play opens with a dream by old man Agala. He tosses and turns on the bed indicating that he is the dreamer as the ghost of Matilda, his late daughter-in-law, addresses the

audience. As Matilda sings, Agala gets off the bed and a heated conversation ensues between him and the ghost. The dream serves to introduce to the audience the major issue in the play that is the circumcision of Yona, Matilda's son by Denis. Theatrically, then, the dream sets the mood of the play and creates a strong sense of suspense. It is used to announce and introduce on stage, the characters in the play.

The fact that Matilda has taken the responsibility of the circumcision shows some discord in the family which is the basic conflict upon which the play is built. When Agala tells his wife, Klima, of his dreams, she tells him that he is "losing his head." She further tells him: "... You opened a window in your mind and let her (Matilda) in. And that is why you are under the spell of that illness of the blood. You never let yourself rest even in sleep. It is always the same, bad thoughts."(6)

This remark emphasises the standpoint that dreams are a continuation of the thinking process and that they underlie people's lives and personalities. The boy's circumcision features in Agala's dreams because he strongly feels that it would be a shame to him if Denis does not take the full responsibility of Yona's circumcision, and, worse still, if the operation is done in the hospital.

The suspense in the dream is created when Matilda says that the boy is "dying to become a man" yet he is

"fatherless."(4) Agala's obsession with Yona's circumcision is explained by the dream device. Matilda feels that Agala who played a leading role in having Denis marry her, should take responsibility for the boy's initiation and be viable for Denis' shortcomings. The ghost tells Agala:

> I have come to advise you to protect yourself from your son's failures... to witness your silence... feel the mask on your head and touch the lies that germinate between you and your manhood.(3)

Matilda's suicide is recalled in the dream and Agala is called upon to give it a second thought from the traditional Africa's point of view. It turns out in the play that Denis had kept the full details of the suicide from Agala. Babu's interpretation of Matilda's haunting of Agala is that "she did not arrive where she went."(43) A similar episode is in The Successor where Chonda feels that his father haunts him because he is displeased with something. These instances are explained by the traditional belief in life after death and which presumes that the living-dead play an important role in the lives of those still on earth. Matilda's ghost is a manifestation of life after death and falls in place with this belief.

Babu's words indicate that he believes that the dead only take a peaceful rest when they are satisfied with their earthly life and that they have the ability and onus to seek a redress when that is not the case. Agala's dream in which he

sees Matilda's ghost tends to imply his guilt-consciousness. Thus he is able to rationalise Matilda's appearance. In this case the dream acts both as a window through which we see the state of mind of the character and as a motivation of his later action.

The Burning of Rags appeals to us at the symbolic level. In the dream, Matilda's ghost enters "pulling a long rope whose end we cannot yet see." When the boy, Yona, screams from the direction of the other end of the rope, Matilda responds that she is "still searching" and says that "after midnight" she would "no longer bear the responsibility alone." Thereafter she ties her end of the rope on one of the legs of Agala's bed. The other end of the rope pulls in Yona bleeding from circumcision (2)

The rope symbolises that Agala has to bear the responsibility of caring for Yona and ensuring that he undergoes the necessary ceremony. That seems the only appeasement Matilda would accept. It also alludes to his being answerable for his son's marriage to the late Matilda. Symbolically too, the rope round the boy's neck is reminiscent of Matilda's suicide. In which case, Agala's bed acts as the mango tree on which she tied the fatal rope. It therefore implies that failure to circumcise the boy in a befitting manner is like stifling his life.

It is significant that at the end of the dream, it is the boy who unties the rope from the bed and follows in Matilda's wake.(5) This implies that Matilda relies on the boy to perpetuate her lineage and it explains why she takes his circumcision as her responsibility. It could also be the point that Imbuga wanted to emphasise in the modification of The Married Bachelor. In the former play, Yona dies after his father's failure to go for the washing of the wound two weeks after the boy's circumcision. But in the Burning of Rags despite that failure, the boy survives[6] when he is admitted to Getrude's Hospital in Nairobi where he is successfully treated for what is regarded as a `curse.' It appears here that Imbuga is again calling for a synthesis of cultures.

Before the final curtain, the apparition again appears and pulls the rope to reveal that all the characters who have been in the play are tied to the branches of this rope ... except ... Denis and Hilda.(69-70) This implies that like Matilda, they are dead (have committed suicide). The argument is reinforced by Agala's death(5) at the end of the play which signifies the end of the old order as significantly epitomised in the fact that the play ends at midnight and therefore the

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6 Yona becomes ill two weeks after the circumcision and this is attributed to his father's failure to burn the boy's `rags.' Old Agala is prompted to take the `dying' boy, the rags and roots, along with him to the city in search of Denis. Nevertheless the rags are not burnt.

beginning of a new era or "the dawn of a new day."(70) Agala dies with the unaccomplished responsibilities while the boy survives to start the new order. Denis and Hilda are not tied to the rope which signifies that they have been exempted from the traditional responsibilities and are allowed to continue the new order symbolically suggested in the baby in Hilda's womb. Moreover, Matilda's spirit seems to have been appeased by Denis' confession.

At another level, Agala's death in The Burning of Rags highlights the symbolic meaning of the play and that of the ritual (The burning of rags). When Denis' attention is drawn to the boy's rags that have been forgotten in his sitting room, it is as if he (Denis) is the one who undergoes an initiation. He suddenly becomes aware of what he really is and confesses after looking into the eyes of his dead father and his son: "I looked at myself... through their eyes. And I saw that I am nothing but a rag,... to be burnt after the ceremony is over."(69)

He says this because he has been a dreamer all along. As the Acting Head of the Department of Culture at the University, he theoretically attempts to prove his cultural orientation yet in his poem "the guard of wisdom" he dreams of an end to traditional values. He gives consent to the traditional circumcision yet wants to convince himself that he prefers circumcision in hospital. He does not care to explain

to Agala that he is partly responsible[7] for his wife's suicide. This is why Matilda's song (the song that her sister sang at her funeral) still echoes in his ears and it is heard when there is tension in the play. Perhaps it warns him of the impending calamity but he ignores it. It is only after Agala's dream that Denis explains the circumstances of Matilda's suicide. When Denis ignores the cleansing right that Babu suggests to him, Agala's conclusion is that Denis must be living in a world of his own, a dream world as it were, hence the self-realisation that he comes to at the end of the play is timely.

In The Burning of Rags Imbuga uses the dream to form the background of and to highlight important issues in the play. The dream creates the opportunity for the flashback which updates the audience on what would have been a missing link. The dream too links up the traditional and the modern and in it is contained Imbuga's message of cultural synthesis.

In view of the foregoing discussion, there has been a tremendous development of the dream motif in Imbuga's plays. In the earlier plays, Kisses of Fate, The Fourth Trial and The Married Bachelor, a number of dreams are referred to. These

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[7] Denis confesses much later that he watched Matilda die after a quarrel about a still-born in her past. He made no efforts to stop her from committing suicide.

dreams act as a forecast into the future. In the first instance, Matilda, Yona's girlfriend dreams that she is left crying at the airport as Yohana flies abroad for further studies. It turns out that while abroad, Yohana (John) gets involved in incest and this realisation drives Matilda into insanity. In the same play, Lena dreams that her daughter, Dorris, takes a parachute and jumps out of the plane but the parachute does not open up to let her out. The reality is that Yohana and Dorris have committed incest. In the second instance, Musa dreams that the baby his wife, Hellen, is expecting is a boy and must be named after his father, Makonde. Finally in The Married Bachelor. Denis dreams of a wrestling match between him and his father which foreshadows the main theme of cultural conflict. These dreams revolve around interpersonal relationships and family affairs and they are used to foreshadow the eventual fulfilment of some of the characters' fears and wishes.

In Betrayal in the City we encounter a live dream when Mosese, in the cell, talks to an invisible being in a reverie, quite telling on what his vision of an ideal society is. In the sense that the dream projects into the future, it is consistent with those in the earlier plays. But the enactment of the dream marks a development in Imbuga's use of the motif and testifies to the fact that he may have realised that the motif is potentially useful in varying the drama and exploring his themes.

Another development in Betrayal in the City is that Mosese's dream concerns wider issues than the domestic. He is, in fact, talking about a new political order. It can, as a matter of fact, be noticed that Imbuga's use of dream has developed both in content (from domestic to political issues) and in rendition (from mere reporting to physical articulation). But he still maintains the earlier streak in Jusper's dream which is reported and which we do not actually see live.

Man of Kafira takes what Imbuga has began in Betrayal in the City a little further. In the former, we do not only see Boss dreaming, we also see the people in his dream. The images of Sober and Drunk present us on one hand with the void in Boss' personality, while that of Lum-Lum on the other show us the torment in Boss' conscience. After the dream, Boss takes very decisive steps about his return to Kafira. He sees the forgiveness by Lum-Lum as a purgation from his squalid past. The dream in this instance, serves a psychological purpose and confirms that a man's actions are to a remarkable extent, influenced by the subconscious.

We can relate Boss' action after the dream to Jusper's reported dream in Betrayal in the City. Having been `haunted' by Adika, Jusper gets inspiration to fight harder for justice, the dream being a justification for that. The two obvious parallels between Jusper's and Boss' dreams are that they are about dead people and the fact that the dreamers see the dream

as a reason to take a specific line of action. The difference which presents a development of the style, is that Jusper's is reported but Boss' is live.

In terms of production therefore, Man of Kafira is a more challenging play to the producer because it requires some technical effects such as lights and sound in a theatre to enhance the effectiveness of the dream episodes. Boss' other dreams and delusions are reported and they reveal that his whole life is subsumed in dream. They also create humour in the play.

Game of Silence which is published after Betrayal in the City but before Man of Kafira is perhaps the most thrilling of Imbuga's plays in the use of the dream device. In it the whole story is rendered in the framework of a dream in Raja's mind. In the play, Imbuga has stretched the motif to the fullest as evidenced in three facts: the use of the dream as the framework of the story; the predictive strain revealed in Raja's dreams about home and things that later appear to us to have happened when he dreamt about them and the fact that the dreams deal with both domestic and political concerns in Raja's life.

In The Successor. Imbuga maintains the tradition of having enacted dreams in which the dreamer is confronted by a ghost and in the play, Chonda sees the ghost of his father. Imbuga

also maintains the streak of dreaming as a reflection on personal and political matters. For example, Chonda is haunted about the need to name a successor, a factor that leaves him a heavily troubled man. He eventually goes on and names the successor. This again repeats a style he has used before - the dream as a decision facilitator notably in Man of Kafira. What is noteworthy in The Successor is that the dream is interpreted not by the dreamer as Boss does in Man of Kafira, nor by the audience, but by a traditional healer. In effect Imbuga takes us back to the traditional belief that dreams have important messages and the understanding that dreams form another dimension to man's personality - the psychic dimension.

Finally, in The Burning of Rags, Imbuga uses the dream in all the other already mentioned instances, but also uses it as a device to introduce the play, the characters and the themes, in which case, he seems to be discovering new uses of the motif.

Focusing on the characters, we realise that the dreamers can be categorized into those who are haunted and those who are not. In the former category we get Jusper in Betrayal in the City. Boss in Man of Kafira, Chonda in The Successor Jumba in Aminata and Agala in The Burning of Rags. The last category include Mosese in Betrayal in the City and Raja in Game of Silence. We can therefore identify death as a

corollary motif to dream. Both operate in the metaphysical rather than the physical sphere. Dreaming occurs during sleep yet there is a saying that `sleeping is a sister to death.´ This depiction in the plays is therefore a deliberate recurrence.

We also notice that most of the dreamers are either intellectuals or political leaders, except for Agala in The Burning of Rags who is nevertheless a family leader. The choice of such characters as the dreamers is quite in keeping with Imbuga´s themes. These are people in key positions in the society and who cannot escape the responsibility of thinking about the nature of the society and the reason behind the `status quo.´ Furthermore, the more responsibility one has the more worries one may have and it is the worries that lead to dreams as we have indicated that dreaming is a thinking process. The leaders are conscious of their shortcomings and these are reflected through their dreams. Their being `haunted´ underlines the importance of the past as a determinant of the present.

The dream motif is thus an economical device in as far as the dreamer remains part of the action and is on stage. This enables the play to flow without disruption. The dream also accords the playwright a lot of flexibility: he can flashback, flashforward and even talk about the present. In that sense, it becomes a very convenient device for merging the past

happenings with those of the present as a forecaster of the future.

As a third strength, the dream gives background information about the characters. One of the examples here is Boss in Man of Kafira when he dreams about Lum-Lum. By giving us a glimpse of the characters' past, the dream enables us to understand the conflicts in the characters, their wishes and their motivations. Finally, the dreams also are a vehicle for exploring the themes in Imbuga's plays. In virtually all the dreams, concern is with the pressing issues either at the domestic, cultural or political fronts.

But although the dream has the virtues outlined, it has the disadvantage of making the play obscure, especially if the episodes in the dream are not clearly delineated. This would apply particularly to Game of Silence which is a series of dreams merging into one another. The complexity of the play, brought about by the extensive use of dreams, is likely to restrict the readership to the academics and especially to those who read the book purely for study purposes.

In a nutshell, we can say that Imbuga has categorically built up his use of dreams in the plays and explored the various opportunities available with the use of the motif to best discuss his themes and create credible characters. This

gives the plays an additional dramatic dimension and depicts the writer as a creative one.

But dreams have not been treated in isolation by Imbuga in his plays. There is a proximity of the dream motif and the madness motif. Some of the dreaming characters are also regarded as mad in some plays. We would like to explore how Imbuga treats the madness motif as a stylistic device and how the mad characters exhibit those traits, in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THE MADNESS MOTIF IN IMBUGA'S PLAYS

Madness is another stylistic device used in some of Imbuga's plays. This chapter seeks to analyse the device as a motif. It considers the nature of madness in Imbuga's characters in the context of probable audience and reader perception of these characters. In doing this, the chapter engages in examining what is `mad' in the specific characters and what is not. It also considers whether the madness is an objective reality or whether its perception would differ from individual to individual. Finally, it looks at the possibility of the madness resulting from extraneous forces impinging on the characters. In making the analysis, we shall refer specifically to Shakespeare's Hamlet in order to establish parallels with Imbuga's characters and hence be able to establish a credible base for examining Imbuga's use of madness.

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, (1978), the word `mad' has several meanings, some of them literal and others metaphorical. Basically, to be mad means to show "that one suffers from a disease of the brain or disorder of the mind," as caused by either physical injury or psychological depression resulting from traumatic experience such as the death of one's close relative or benefactor. Such madness is also referred to as insanity or derangement. An insane person is given to folly and is exempted by law from

criminal or civil responsibility due to his mental incapacity. The dictionary gives other meanings of madness as: the state of being "very foolish and careless of danger" and being "angry."

Webster's New International Dictionary, (1976), gives further insight when it defines `mad' as "completely unrestrained by reason and judgement" (senseless), "incapable of being explained or accounted for" (illogical or incomprehensible), "carried away by intense anger" (furious), "intensely excited" (frantic) and "marked by intense and often chaotic activity" (wild). Together with these definitions, we may also consider the expression "to drive one mad" which means "to wrong or annoy someone enough to make him go mad," (become irrational).

These definitions will form our basis of analysis. The characters identifiably `mad' and whom we are going to focus on are: Jusper in Betrayal in the City and in Man of Kafira, Boss in Man of Kafira and Raja in Game of Silence. In developing our analysis, we shall examine why other characters regard them as mad, whether they exhibit `mad' behaviour and the causes of this madness. We note that Man of Kafira is a sequel to Betrayal in the City and we therefore wish to acknowledge that time has elapsed in between the events in the texts and thus Jusper and Boss in Betrayal in the City are not necessarily the same in trait, age, situation and relationship

with other characters as those in Man of Kafira. We shall, however, seek to establish whatever links there are and show how the events in the earlier text correlate with those in the sequel and how they have shaped the characters. Significant to note in this score is that Boss is only portrayed as mad in Man of Kafira while Jusper is so in both plays.

The first we hear of Jusper in Betrayal in the City is from his father Doga, who is soliloquizing about the death of his other son, Adika. Jusper's Prolonged laugh from the stage is heard before Doga says:

> That is the voice of the brother of the silent one... When he heard of the death of his brother, Jusper was never the same again. He became wild at the funeral, singing songs of vengeances: they came and took him away, said he was dangerous... and had to be cooled down. When they brought him back... he was no longer the son we knew. (10) (emphasis mine)

While Jusper's laughter strikes us as strange, Doga's words give us his opinion about the cause of the strangeness, that is, the death of Jusper's brother. Although Doga does not expressly call him mad, we can infer that from the description of Jusper's behaviour at the funeral. Being "wild" and "singing songs of vengeance" conform to our definitions at the beginning of the chapter although these are also understandable signs of grief from one who has lost an only brother.

But if we are to take them as understandable signs of grief, Doga's words that he "was no longer the son we knew" when he returned from police custody give us an inkling that he has worsened; his grief has developed into something more ominous. We begin to ask why the parents consider him strange. The most logical conclusion we come to is that Jusper has been tortured in police custody and is even more embittered. It is a bitterness that borders on madness. At this point it becomes pertinent to deduce that Jusper's arrest, detention and probable torture is his turning point into madness much as it also entrenches him in overt hostility towards the perpetrators of his family's misery.

Although Doga does not expressly call Jusper mad, his words indicate that he considers him so. He is probably not explicit because his bitterness as a father makes it dreary to actually believe that his only remaining son is deranged. Jusper reveals to us that "my father calls me crazy,"(10) hence gives away what Doga is apparently trying to conceal. Considering that Doga is Jusper's father, we are bound to believe that he has made a genuine observation of the son and is convinced of the son's derangement.

Doga's devious revelations about his son's madness come up again when Jusper kills Chagaga. He says that they - the parents - "lack a name for his illness."(17) He is here euphemising about Jusper's madness and quite consistently refusing to call it madness.

But Jusper's killing of Chagaga cannot be taken as a result of only his madness. Rather, it is a result of that, as well as of his enmity with Chagaga who is an instrument of the oppressive powers. He seems to have premeditated the murder and is unapologetic about it. We get the latter sense from the fact that he goes and confesses to the crowd about what he has done. A normal person would consider such an act as murder. That Jusper does not, makes us question his sanity. This is particularly in the sense that he seems to have under-estimated the likely reaction of the crowd. Their turning round to stone him indicate that they do not condone the murder and probably consider his action an aggravation of an already bad situation.

From Jusper's initial appearance in Betrayal in the City, we notice that he is a character who vacillates between sanity and madness. Whatever he says, therefore cannot be dismissed wholesale but needs to be scrutinized for thematic significance. For example, his remarks "Jusper Present Sir! Justice Absent Sir! Jupiter Absent Sir!"(11) are comical but sensible. Imbuga is here using the parody of a class roll call to indicate that justice is lacking in Kafira just as Jupiter is far from the earth. Kafira is a repressive State in which even funeral ceremonies are censored. Jusper tells us for example, "coming to this ceremony is positively criminal except for close relatives like me."(11) Mosese portrays the repressiveness of the regime when he describes to Jere the

atmosphere at Adika's funeral:

> The atmosphere was tense...the service must not take more than ten minutes. The coffin should not be carried by students. Weeping in public is illegal for the academic staff. I couldn't bear it, so I told them my mind. The following day they came for me. (25)

This description gives us the impression that Boss' regime would like to control even people's emotions. Worse still, anyone who questions the repression faces incarceration and even death. Mosese, for example, is arrested for criticising the repression at the funeral. Ironically though, he is not charged with challenging the restrictions but with a trumped up charge of possessing illegal drugs. This indicates the extent to which the system is ready to manipulate the legal provisions to silence its critics. Adika's murder, Jusper's arrest, detention and most probably torture, and Mosese's arrest are all indications of a system bent on eliminating any voice which, as Jusper puts it, dares to ask "whether or not we are on the right train."(38) It is this kind of repression that incenses the likes of Jusper and Mosese to the extent that they become ardently anti-establishment and are thus regarded as abnormal for refusing to conform to the whims of the regime. When we consider Jere's remarks about Mosese that "when the madness of an entire nation disturbs a solitary mind, it is not enough to say the man is mad,"(55) we are reminded of Doga's statement that Jusper's illness lacks a name. In both Jusper's and Mosese's cases, their madness is a

reaction to repression. We would in fact say that they have been `driven mad´ by the unequitable state of affairs in Kafira.

Jusper goes on to mock the `status quo´ when he observes that the bird has trespassed by being brave enough to go to the graveside. By this comment, he emphasises that the majority of the people, fearful of their lives, would rather keep away instead of disobeying the impromptu law declaring the site a prohibited area. The bird´s action also symbolically satirizes the futile attempts of the system to keep Adika unmourned and seems to affirm that other beings of nature are ready to mourn if human beings are kept away. Jusper, as such, seems to derive consolation in the bird´s action in that if going to the site is illegal and a sign of defiance then he is not alone in doing so.

After making such a philosophically loaded statement, Jusper proceeds to address the grave as if it were a shooting target and he is the firing squad. While this appears mad, in the sense that it is frantic, it is actually a parody of the police operation that gunned down Adika and is a criticism of the indifference of the forces to the suffering they are used to perpetuating. Saying "you were serving your bloody nation"(11) is heavily ironical that such a service is by killing the citizens who compose the nation. Behind the facade of madness, therefore, we see him making a poignant point about injustice.

Jusper's imitation of the military squad resembles the "take-over" scene in which he guns down Mulili and declares "I did it for all of you."(77) By Jusper's action in the latter scene, at which there is no indication that people around him think he is mad, Imbuga points out the way to a political change to a system where misleading advisors like Mulili have no place. Although we appreciate that Jusper has a personal grudge against Mulili for the death of his parents, Mulili is by no means a desirable character. As evident in the final scene, he is a traitor who would have Boss, his cousin and political godfather, executed for crimes he himself has staringly perpetrated. Whether Jusper has shot Mulili for personal reasons or as he says "for all of you," we would agree that Kafira is better off without Mulili and Tumbo rightly comments of Mulili "until people like him are out, it is dangerous to seem to do things differently in Kafira."(48)

In this scene where Jusper shoots Mulili, he appears to be in full control of his faculties. We would expect, otherwise, that he would have shot everyone of the political leaders at the scene. The fact that he only shoots Mulili, and spares Boss, the head of state to whom all the blame is apportioned for the rotten system, points to us that he is advocating not for an overhaul, but for a guarded change, a readjustment rather than a revolution. In this scene, therefore, Imbuga manages to create a balance in Jusper as a character straddled between sanity and insanity.

We may then observe that Imbuga uses Jusper and Mosese, the two `mad´ characters in Betrayal in the City as his mouthpieces to criticise Kafira and the political system it represents. The mad, in real life are unrestrained people who would voice their opinions with least regard to their surroundings. They have a way of attracting attention from the public; they are daring and can give remarks that sane men would not. The use of such characters, therefore, makes it possible for Imbuga to level discreet criticism without appearing to cause deliberate offence. Yet even among those who would regard the characters as mad, the criticism is still understood. Imbuga seems to be exploiting the fact that the outrageous remarks of the mad would be tolerated in society even by those against whom they are directed. Thus the mad characters can also get away with what are otherwise offensive, if true, remarks.

In Jusper´s encounter with Tumbo, he manages to ridicule the planned visit of the president of a neighbouring country. He observes that the visit would ostensibly benefit the visiting president´s country and not Kafira which will be flooded with expatriates. He also makes a swipe at the pettiness of the development plan, a plan in which the changing of names is a prime article. This is an illusion to the euphoria of the immediate post-independence days when African leaders were keen on `africanising´ their countries and symbolized this by changing their names or even outlawing

the use of foreign names. Such gimmicks would endear the leader to the people and be authentications of his pride of his culture. But they were, in most cases, facile. In Boss´ case, the practice has been pushed to the extreme - he has adopted an unpronouncable name. The essence of Jusper´s argument is that the change of name has been counterproductive and would estrange rather than endear him to the populace. In any case it has no relevance to a development plan.

The envisaged presidential visit and the infiltration of the economy by expatriates is not only a betrayal of nationalistic economic policies but also a threat to the employment of nationals in Kafira. It appears, therefore, that Boss is ready to sacrifice his people while the `visiting´ president is trying to secure better welfare for his people. Jusper makes the valid point that an unemployed population is a potential revolution.

The talk with Tumbo culminates in the latter owning up that there is a lot that is wrong with the regime and that everyone knows what it is but no one is brave enough to challenge it. Everyone has been cowed into silence and conformity. Tumbo is one of those who prefer sycophancy to truth as long as the former assures them of their daily bread. It is these sycophants who build gulfs between the leaders and the citizens by blinding the leaders with empty praise and complaisant service. Tumbo´s conversation with Jusper reveals

all this. Jusper thus becomes a tool of eliciting such information and levelling criticism without receiving recriminations.

We are then treated to a glimpse of the kind of graft in the system when Tumbo declares Jusper the winner of the `playwriting contest´ before seeing the script and goes on, as if that is not enough, to divert a big portion of the prize money towards putting the record straight. Tumbo dictates to Jusper that the play is supposed to applaud the influx of the expatriates and mention the word "progress." This creates a big irony, these being the two critical issues in Kafira: the students have demonstrated against the influx of expatriates and there is hardly anything that can be called progress in Kafira. It is also ironical that Jusper, whose manuscripts have always been rejected by publishers because they are too blunt in their criticism, is the one to write the all important play, his `madness´ not withstanding. Jusper sees through Tumbo´s play and declares that he is but a second-hand recipient of the "fruits of independence."(38)

In this scene, it is only Regina who seems to think that some of the remarks are unguardedly critical and is hence on spot to offer ready excuses to Tumbo, who admires Jusper´s courage. To Boss later, Jusper appears to be a naive and uninformed student who is ready to appreciate the authorities´

point of view that student demonstrations do not serve any useful purpose. There is suspense in Jusper's meeting with Boss since we suspect that Jusper may be carried away into voicing dissent being the unpredictable character he is in other parts of the play. That does not happen, however, and we instead see criticism in the title he chooses for the play, a play that turns out to be an epitome of Imbuga's Betrayal in the City.

In the final rehearsal of the play, at which Boss is also present, Jusper claims that one of the characters has fallen ill. Boss, thanks to his soft spot for theatre, decides to play the part. As fate would have it, the props are also not ready and the guards are disarmed so that the guns are used instead. But the catch is in the fact that the actors holding the guns are dissidents who may as well use them against Boss. On realising that chance has worked to his advantage, Jusper takes complete control and orders the shooting of the beleaguered. He takes the gun himself and shoots Mulili, the most evil of the characters.

The device of the play-within-a play, which constitutes the `take-over' scene falls within, and can be better understood in the context of Revenge Tragedies. One of the best examples of its use is in William Shakespeare's Hamlet. In fact, Jusper is modelled on the protagonists of the Revenge Tragedies of the English Renaissance.

Hamlet has lost a father and feels that he has been wronged and so he is possessed by the desire to avenge the wrong. This desire is further sharpened by his father's ghost which urges him on. Likewise, Jusper has lost a brother and so turns angry, wild and `mad.' He will not rest until he has avenged Adika's death. He recalls one of the dreams in which Adika nearly hit him with a slide rule for shaking hands with the Sub-chief. Jusper kills Chagaga, the one who gunned Adika down. But he does not stop at that, he still feels that he should do more to assert that he has been grossly wronged. Thus he becomes a total deviant.

Hallet C.A. and Hallet E.S., in their study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs observe:

> Were the revenger to kill his victim immediately, the revenge form would be answered and the play's dramatic focus distorted by the resulting need to find a new centre of interest for the remaining acts. (86)

This would only be avoided by creating delaying tactics in the play to give the revenger time to identify his victim and to give the play time to build itself. It is during this period that the revenger's internal development is experienced so that there is enough ground for his `madness' as in the case of Hamlet and Jusper, for:

> Playwrights use the delay to cover the temporal gap between the advent of the desire to revenge and the violent act precipitated by it, while filling out the spiritual distance that lies between these two extremes of the hero's psycho by intensifying the madness. (86)

Meanwhile the revenger develops a psychological need for immediate retaliation once he identifies his target. Hamlet's target becomes his mother and his uncle, now Queen and King. While Jusper's is the entire political system.

The duo further say:

> Once the madness reaches its height, the revenger moves out of the realm of delay toward action. The mad act takes place in the play-within-the play. (89)

Hamlet arranges for the staging of a play which he makes a public affair but is meant to impinge on the conscience of the king and queen and make them guilty of the death of the late king Hamlet. Whereas Hamlet deviates from the conventions of the Revenge Tragedies of the English Renaissance, in this particular incidence, Betrayal in the City lives up to them:

> The play-within-the play takes place in a closed room. The room is controlled by the revenger who traps the victim within it and all other parties are excluded from it. (89)

Jusper's play takes place in a sealed-off room and he is the one who arranges the playing area. The guards are disarmed so that it is Jusper who is in control of the play; he has written it, directed it and helped stage it: "the play produced by the revenger must mirror his mind."(89)

The play-within-the play functions to obscure the truth about what Jusper is upto, obscurity being an asset in plotting the revenge. It is not always clear that Jusper is mad or sane, just as it is clear that Hamlet feigns madness to realise his goal. The suggestion here is that the revenger

withdraws from reality and the play he produces sets up a world that is distinct from the real world:

> The contents of this sealed-off world of the mind will naturally reveal a high degree of subjectivity... There will be... complete freedom to retaliate from the offence. No restraining forces that might block the revenger's will are invited to enter it. And justice will be done. Where in the real world, the crime had gone unpunished, in the play world guilt receives its due. (89)
> (Emphasis Mine)

The emphasis here explains what so far seems a contrivance towards the success of Jusper's play. First, we are aware that Jusper is commissioned to write a play but we are kept in suspense until towards the end of the main play. When the playlet comes up, the impression is that it is "produced in no time."(89) And even when it is staged, it only depends on chance for its success.

In the revenge tragedies, the disguise that the revenger assumes allows him to do things that he might not ordinarily do: "It gives him access to the important personage whose life he himself would end."(89) Likewise, Jusper who poses as a conformist (in his conversation with Boss), traps his victims before exposing the bitterness inherent in him. Although Jusper himself does not show that he is feigning madness, it is his blunt reactions that make people think he is mad, so he capitalises on people's attitude towards him: the disguise "differentiates the protagonist from his world and permits him to make observations...that would not normally be tolerated."(89)

Disguise therefore condones certain acts that would not ordinarily be acceptable. It is this mask that allows the revenger to commit murder in the play-within-the play. Jusper is referred to by his colleagues as a sacrifice: he has lost his brother, his parents and the backing of his fellow students, yet he is determined to "go it alone." He seizes the opportunity to dispose of Mulili, the villain. Thus, although he resorts to the same means that he is bitter against to combat his opponent, our sympathies are still with him and never are they with Mulili. But unlike the conventions of the Revenge Tragedies where the avenger "must render up his own life in atonement"(89) of the murder he has committed in disguise, Jusper passes on as guiltless and the audience agrees with his remark that he has done it "for all of you."(77)

The play-within-a play technique enables Imbuga to work towards the climax which brings together the protagonists and the antagonists in the final and purgative `take-over´ scene. One notices here that Jusper and Mosese on one hand, and Mulili on the other, have been kept apart throughout until this scene. This could be interpreted as a deliberate attempt by Imbuga to build the play to an explosive climax by letting the strongest forces converge once. The `take-over´ scene is reminiscent of the earlier scene when Jusper addresses Adika´s grave. He shows a lot of excitement on realising that his plans have come to fruition on an off-chance. But if his excitement is akin to madness, the fact that he garners his

rationality and is able to select who to shoot shows the oscillation between sanity and madness although the duality does not dwarf his symbolic significance as an agent of change.

Jusper's radicalism is shown in the red gown he wears. Arguing from the premise that the colour red is associated with communism, the gown marks him out, not only as one of the rioting university students, but also as a dissenter. Regina discourages him from wearing it on the grounds that it makes him look "more dangerous"(36) than he really is. She in fact, states that it is mannerless and shameful to wear it in the streets leave alone having it under her "humble roof." Like Doga who considers that Jusper is only ill, Regina also does not call him mad, but neither does she reassure him that he is normal. Rather, her speeches are underlain with insinuations that he is abnormal and that she would only consider him otherwise when he removes the gown. Thus, her discomfiture is indicative that his wearing of the gown is tantamount to behaving contrary to the daily norms.

In the encounter with Tumbo, Regina makes excuses for Jusper saying that he is a "spoilt child," "a little drunk," or "it is the way he was brought up."(43) These remarks are acknowledgement that Jusper is off-balance in speech and manner and hence the need to apologise for him. We cannot, of course, discount the fact that she has material interest to

protect from her acquaintance with Tumbo, although that does not devalue the impression that she does not consider Jusper fully normal.

Having considered Jusper's behaviour as it corresponds to the varying concepts of madness, we can validly observe that the character is mad, but not in the sense of one who needs to be put in a lunatic asylum. It is also necessary to point out that in Kafira those in priviledged positions consider their critics as mad. Jusper, Jere and Mosese, in Betrayal in the City fall into this category. In the conversation between Jere and Askari in the cells, for example, the latter seems to imply that Jere is mad when he says that "the place for lunatics is three doors down the corridor."(21) Jere is otherwise, not in the least sense of the word, mad.

With regard to these three characters in Betrayal in the City and with emphasis on Jusper who vacillates between sanity and madness, we can state that madness in Imbuga's characters is used as a stylistic device to criticise the system. Jusper is given the liberal chance of making comments on behalf of Imbuga. By creating such `mad' characters as his mouthpieces, Imbuga as an artist is ensuring that he criticises the political systems represented by Kafira without rubbing the authorities up the wrong way. This is a practice in self-censorship. In a repressive society such as Kafira, anagramatically standing for Africa, critics end up behind the bars as happens with Jere and Mosese. In this category would

fall any writer who criticises the authorities in his works. We notice that Jusper's manuscripts are rejected because they are too explicit in their criticism. This confirms to us that artists who wish to publish yet remain safe must adopt circuitous routes such as the use of mad characters, which is exactly what Imbuga has used in Betrayal in the City and maintains in Man of Kafira and Game of Silence. Fortunately, it achieves the double effect of also being a theatrical innovation.

Jusper's vacillation between sanity and madness contributes to the disguised facade of criticism. While the outrageous remarks he makes can be excused for his madness, their topicality makes them impossible to ignore and actually foregrounds them. Another contribution to the interplay is the creation of suspense. In the scenes where Jusper behaves incoherently, such as at the graveside and in the `take-over' scenes, we do not know what to expect of his next words and actions. The resultant suspense achieves the effect of sustaining the readers' and audiences' interest in the unfolding events.

In Man of Kafira, the sequel to Betrayal in the City we notice that Jusper is still `mad,' although he himself maintains that he has never been so. Regina also maintains that he was only called mad by those who "did not understand him."(44) She seems to suggest here that she understands him

and that in her opinion, he has always been normal. We, however, notice a contradiction when she says that Jusper "was alright, except when he was upset or highly excited. Then he became a little strange." Being "upset"(44) means being angry, and being "highly excited" refers to being frantic, which are elements of madness in our definition. And being "a little strange," although not defined, may be taken in some quarters to imply madness. What convinces us finally that even Regina believes Jusper is mad is that her generalisation that "we are all normal until we come face to face with a threat to our lives."(44) Jusper has certainly "come face to face with a threat" to his life and his creation, if we are to go by Regina's logic, warrants him being branded mad. As in Betrayal in the City, she tries to excuse his behaviour and to blame it on those who "laughed" at his ideas and "drove him mad."

We call to mind Baako in Armah's Fragments who is `driven mad' when he comes back to Ghana after the completion of his studies abroad. He finds corruption rampant in his country and calls for both social, economic and political change, but people only laugh at him and his ideas, because, as they say, "who needs what's in a head?"(Fragments 264) He is ignored and regarded mad. Madness here is a result of a deviation from the norms of a particular society.

While we could accept that `driving one mad' is not necessarily equivalent to making him insane, Jusper's own

persistence in trying to convince us of his sanity points to the opposite and is quite in conformity with the truism that he who spends his time trying to prove his sanity ends up being mad.

Despite the madness, Jusper in Man of Kafira still makes critical remarks about those in leadership and the society in general. When he charges that those who have branded him insane are actually the mad, since they are deaf to the `truth,´(67) we notice that Imbuga is using him to criticise prejudice, and making the point that even those we disregard are useful members of society and deserve at least some attention. But we may also observe that Jusper himself seems so bigoted that he probably makes it difficult for those in power to tolerate him. He accuses Jere, for example, of betraying the promise to make him a Minister without portfolio yet they fought the war of liberation together. He complains to Jere´s wife: "when Boss was in power, they locked me up and called me crazy. Now your husband is in power and he calls me crazy too."(62)

Jere might well be criticised for failing to honour his promise and be taken as an example of those leaders who perpetrate the evils they swear to eliminate on taking power. But on the other hand, we can rationally argue that Jere thinks Jusper too `mad´ if not too uncompromising. We appreciate, of-course, that it is ideal to stick to one´s guns

when fighting for a just cause. But the reality is that those in leadership have got other mundane obligations to the larger society, and not only to the aggrieved individuals like Jusper, and they cannot therefore please everyone at once. The fact that Jusper is so strident about the ministerial post debilitates his claim to be fighting for the larger society. In any case he was to be minister without portfolio, a position that is more titular than executive. But even if that would put him in an advisory position to the president, there is no evidence that he would necessarily perform better and not go the same way as the others. Jere's failure to honour the promise makes us wonder if Imbuga is of the opinion that artists had better be left to be the antennae of society rather than be in governance which will compromise them. On the other hand it can be argued that Imbuga feels that artists should be given a chance to grapple with governance and be critics from within not from without. They would help transform the societies towards transparency, in line with their criticism of malpractices.

In Jusper we see a forthright critic who, by virtue of being mad and the fact that he can bludgeon his way everywhere, manages to sound his criticism directly to those in power. In Man of Kafira, for example, he observes that "Jere has shaken hands with a hyena" for sanctioning Boss' return. Yet we know that it was Boss that initiated his own return and Jere is so far innocent. In any case Boss is put

in, awaiting trial. Jusper's comments can still be seen as valid, however, in the context that very few of the masses would be convinced of Jere's innocence. Jere's own efforts to protect Boss seems to incriminate him although pragmatically speaking, his action is meant to forestall any impulsive violence that he feels would dent the international image of Kafira. A relevant parallel in this regard is the assassination of Benigno Aquino of Phillipines in 1985 when he was returning from exile. The circumstances were not exactly the same as those in Man of Kafira but the blame Marcos' regime got and his eventual overthrow by popular unrest is the kind of thing that could face Jere if he fails to handle the case tactfully.

The fact that Jusper penetrates the cordon of the `askaris' in Jere's home and actually defies Jere is an embarassment for the head of state and holds him to ridicule before the whole world. Jere's desperate attempts to explain away Jusper's intrusion exposes to us the human vulnerability of political leaders during crisis. The picture is completed with Rama trying to persuade Jusper to go and talk to the seething masses by flattering him that they "trust" him as he has been their "hero all along."(63) We do not have evidence that Jusper is the people's hero and Rama's remarks appear to be simple flattery to get Jusper out of the way. Behind the comments though, we see her belief that Jusper deludes himself to be the people's hero. He refuses to go however and

continues to lash out at Jere. The adamancy is a character trait in him that Imbuga uses to make the point that criticism must be sustained if it is to have effect. And there is hope engendered in this reality that there are those in society who will dare voice dissent even when everyone else is acquiescent.

Regina aptly asserts the point in Man of Kafira in her response to Bin-Bin's question about the number of madmen in Kafira. She says they are "as many as there still are independent thinkers."(44) Her comment is a restatement of the fact that the single-minded are often treated as troublemakers. Yet in history, it is these kinds of people that have led to revolutionary changes in life. Such is Galileo who proclaimed the heterocentric theory of the universe (that the sun is the centre of the universe) when others believed firmly in the geocentric theory (that the earth was the centre of the universe). Regina's comment therefore puts forward the idea that equating independent thinking with madness is a mistake. In fact, it criticises the stereotyped treatment of all those who dare to think differently from those in the power corridors.

Her other comments "once mad, once crazy, always crazy"(44) can also be understood to imply that once one is critical one should remain so as long as the system is still unfair and brutal on those regarded as dissidents. The

treatment of critics reminisces of that of the Mau Mau fighters whom the white colonialists regarded as "terrorists," but who, in the eyes of the nationalists, were "freedom fighters." Posterity in such cases proves the mavericks right and gives hint as to why society should be more tolerant and candid.

Boss is another mad character in Man of Kafira. He is a parody of leadership in Africa and is allusive of the former president of Uganda, dictator Idi Amin whose reign was characterized by brutality and all manner of injustice and abuse of human rights. In order to comprehend Boss' dreams and madness, we need to acquaint ourselves with some aspects of Amin's era in Uganda as they are reflected in Boss.

The Weekly Review of November 9, 1979 quotes Amin as saying that he "felt it a complement when compared with the former German fascist," Adolf Hitler, that he was the "conqueror of the British empire" and that he had plans of regaining the presidency of Uganda as he had proclaimed himself the president for life.(4) Amin even claimed that he had been instructed by God to expel about 50,000 Asian businessmen from Uganda, a step he took but one which virtually crippled the Ugandan economy. Boss also considers himself a Hitler and believes that he is the greatest man Kafira has ever produced and states categorically that the world would tremble at the news of his death, an event whose manner of occurrence he claims to know. "I even know how my

life will end,"(33) he says. Whereas we know that it is only those who commit suicide that decide the manner of their own deaths, it is never honourable.

The stupidity of these claims, as those that God has assured Boss that Kafira awaits his return, mark him out as a lunatic. This is the more reinforced by the demands that the Pope's own representative pray for him. Such egocentric behaviour irritates the leadership of Abiara and convinces them that the fellow is mad. Regina for example complains:

> For how long shall we continue to sing him to sleep? Children wail in their loneliness just because we are here putting their father to bed. Boss has become a sick child in his middle age. I cannot stand him any longer. No I have endured enough and I am fed up. (40)

While Amin was alleged to be an eater of human flesh, Boss revels in "liver, tongue, kidneys, lungs and the breast of a brown gorilla."(26) Amin was understood to have been a believer that eating parts of those he had killed personally would exorcise him. And indeed he killed not less than three thousand Ugandans. Likewise in Regina's words, Boss had made Kafira "one great coffin in which the advocates of the truth lie."(41) The evidence of this is found in the murder of Adika, Doga and Niva in Betrayal in the City and that of Mosese, Archbishop Lum-Lum and Tumbo as mentioned in Man of Kafira.

Boss' madness is again illustrated in the irrationality not only of his delusion to return to Kafira, but also in his

readiness to answer questions from journalists and to address the public. This gives the picture of a man who has forgotten the ills of his past regime and apparently thinks the masses also have done the same, or one who cannot perceive what disaster awaits him should he come face to face with the populace. Such a man, we can conclude is mad at the least. Jere is in fact baffled by Boss' sudden return and demands which also put the latter in a very precarious position. He outrightly considers Boss mad and there is a complete breakdown in communication between them. The confusion that ensues is Imbuga's way of satirising them. Jusper's remarks that Boss should be "allowed to go and rub shoulders with the people "who will carry him shoulder-high to his chosen place of rest above the ground"(69) is loaded with sarcasm and irony revealing the kind of vigour with which Boss would be torn to pieces by the masses and actually heralds Boss' death at the hands of Regina. "The right place, the correct mood and an audience"(30) that Regina had wished for has presented itself and climaxes into a purgative revenge when she stabs Boss fatally and thus negates his hopes of a tumultuous death.

We appreciate that Boss is both a dreamer and a madman. But his death at the hands of Regina arises not from her desire to eliminate a dreamer or a madman: Rather, it springs from the desire to eliminate an undesirable element, both from the personal and communal points of view. Boss' death would have, otherwise, been significant as the death of a dreamer or

a madman if other examples of dreamers and madmen have also died or been killed. Then it would be necessary to consider the circumstances under which the death occur and to come up with credible conclusions. There is, however, no single other dreamer or madman that dies and Boss' is a lone one. Jusper acknowledges the death with the words insinuating suicide, "Boss has killed Boss,"(70) and with the double meaning that Regina is a boss in that she has taken control of the situation or that Boss has put himself into a situation that could only end up in his death. The death develops from his naive political leadership in Betrayal in the City, his reliance on malicious advisors, his mental derangement and his degeneration into a vegetable.

In Game of Silence, we encounter Raja, a more complex psychological case than Jusper. He is considered "dangerous and strange"(12) and is given to dreaming. His strangeness or what would be called madness, is embedded in his several dreams. Our discussion of Raja as a mad character therefore inevitably encompasses reference to his dreams for in deed the whole play is rendered in the framework of a dream as we have already discussed in the previous chapter.

Raja's strangeness is a result of his response to social factors around him as portrayed in his dreams. He is considered so dangerous that Bango is assigned to follow him and to record all he says and does. Bango's assessment is that

Raja´s dreams are unnatural and that people should not be exposed to his ideas: "It´s what other people may think he is saying. That is what we guard against,"(43) he says. Emma in the words: "When it comes to dreams, Raja, you are in your own class"(52) suggests that Raja´s inclination to dreams is extra-ordinary.

We get the impression that Raja is a social critic disoriented with, among other things, the prevalent class system. He questions the moral foundation of a society in which people are only respected if they come from the `right womb´(9) and feels ignored because he originates from an "inferior" class. In his dreams he advocates a more justified society which would prove that "books are not necessary for one to live a sober life."(19) One does not need high education to get access to the basic standard of living.

In one of the dreams, Raja recalls his daughter´s death from food choking. He attributes it to the discrepancy in economic status although it is dismissed by the authorities as "death by natural causes."(11) This is reminiscent of the escapist post-mortem results usually given in cases where the state has an interest. Like Jusper in reacting to Adika´s death, Raja also holds the girl´s death as a source of inspiration and an indelible reminder that the fight for justice must be sustained. He says:

> My daughter´s death made me feel like... many men. That is why the officials thought I was dangerous, because I had the energy and wanted to find out the answer to why... They set spies on my back. (12)

Raja has vivid and wild dreams in which his concerns are raised. He dreams, for example, that he is locked up, branded a `violent anti-establishment man,´ who suffers an "infectious disease" and a stroke of "political insanity" and is accused of encouraging the formation of the "bottom people´s party."(54) The strangeness of this particular dream is that when Raja comes back home he is actually confined in a mental-hospital prison where he is to be observed so that he does not influence other people´s thinking. This is exactly what also happens to Jusper. The fact that the picture unfolds vividly in Raja´s dreams implies that it is an all too familiar practice in his society that once one is in opposition, he knows exactly what follows.

It is also Imbuga´s way of criticising such judicial systems that are expressly moulded to serve the whims of fascist authorities. In effect, he condemns rulers who, because they feel that the citizens with a basic political awareness are a threat to them, plant spies after them (the dissidents). Such spies include Bango who reports, in one of Raja´s dreams: "...the accused was my special assignment, hence my submission that he engaged in mass psychological activities that can only be described as political insanity."(50)

What makes Raja´s dreams more strange and border on insanity is that the dreams portray him as one who is so

sensitive to his society that he even conjures up, in his mind, the reactions and attitudes of a cross section of people: (the judiciary, the authorities, the spies and the family members) towards those like him who are branded politically insane. The fact that these issues permeate his dreams and that he is always in one dream or another is enough evidence that he is not entirely normal. Once again he illustrates Imbuga´s use of `mad´ characters to examine social issues.

In our introduction we set out as one of our targets to establish whether the madness in Imbuga´s plays is conventional or not. Going by the definitions of madness outlined in the introduction, we find that the madness created falls into the category caused by depression. Jusper´s and Raja´s madness is a shock reaction to the traumatic experiences following the deaths of close family members and hence become militant against the forces responsible for the deaths, which in return regard them as mad. Jusper is otherwise in control of his faculties whereas an ordinarily madman would be acting under the impulsion of his mental derangement without much control over his actions or words.

The madness of Jusper and Raja could be regarded as a fleeting and intermittent one on the very ground that the characters fluctuate between normality and abnormality. By and large, though, they are mad as evident in their behaviour and

from what other characters say of them. But madness of Boss is quite undoubtable. He progressively degenerates from his privileged status as head of state in Betrayal in the City and the comfort of political asylum into a man obsessed with power hunger. He in fact retrogresses even from adult behaviour into childishness hence becoming not only mad but also foolish. This is demonstrated in his irrational decision to return to Kafira and his adamant attitude towards any attempts at dissuation. In general therefore, Imbuga has created characters who are recognisably mad.

Nevertheless the use of these characters in the plays is of thematic and stylistic significance. At the thematic level, Jusper and Raja come out as results of oppressive systems of government. But more important is that they remain critical and act as mouthpieces to the playwright's ideas. They are like sensitive antennae who will sense any anomaly in the system and loudly indicate them.

The playwright takes advantage of that and makes them say things that would otherwise be considered politically audacious and imprudent. They therefore become a kind of buttress for the playwright against censorship or political censure. Boss, because of his background, is some kind of anti-thesis to Jusper and Raja. But he does not elicit as much sympathy from us as the other two. His madness tends to come forward as a just punishment for his iniquities.

Out of these dichotomous situations, Imbuga manages to communicate that a similar phenomenon need not arise from similar circumstances. Whereas Jusper and Raja are mad because of repression, Boss is mad because of ambition. Both parties are results of psychological states and are symbolic of their class of people. But the interrelationship between them is also quite interesting. Boss is responsible for the madness of Jusper by virtue of having headed the Kafira regime in Betrayal in the City. His madness is therefore a kind of retribution by the playwright to compensate for that of Jusper. This achieves an internal structural balance much as it puts the two on the same plane of experience.

The interplay of sanity and madness creates suspense because the audience does not know what to expect from such characters. This makes the characters focal in the plays and they therefore contribute positively to the impact of the plays. The vacillations offer variety and entertainment making the characters remarkable. Acting Jusper on stage gives the actor a lot more manoeuvre. The actor finds a vent for critical expression on an unjust system.

We have demonstrated, among other things, that of the mad characters, Jusper stands out as having been modelled along the revengers of the English renaissance. His major character trait is adamancy and this is what Imbuga exploits to prove that criticism must be sustained if it is to have effect. The

device of madness helps create suspense in the plays because the audience does not know what to expect from the mad characters. This in effect sustains the audience's interest in the play. The madness motif therefore, is a deliberate thematic and stylistic device used by Imbuga to broach his themes and to explicate them without fear of any repraisal. It enhances the artistic quality of his works without compromising the issues raised.

On the other hand, one who criticises the use of mad characters in Imbuga's plays may point out that the elitism of the mad characters tends to create artificial impression that does not exist in reality. But Imbuga probably restricts himself to the elite due to the nature of his themes. The common man is so preoccupied with basic survival that he has no time for encounters with the leadership. In any case, Imbuga's comics that we analyse in the next chapter are ordinary characters, some of whom are stylistically similar to some of the mad characters.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE COMICRY MOTIF

Our aim in this chapter is to examine how Imbuga uses the comicry motif as a device to enhance the themes and theatrical appeal of his plays. We will in this respect focus on Mulili in Betrayal in the City, Bin-Bin in Man of Kafira. Segasega in The Successor and Agege in Aminata. We shall compare and contrast, then analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the device. But before doing this, we shall first briefly explore the nature of comedy.

Comedy, according to Webster's International Dictionary. is the "genre of dramatic literature that deals with the light or the amusing or with the serious and profound in a light, familiar or satirical manner." Essentially, comedy brings to the fore characteristics, incidents and ideas that give rise to laughter. Thus even serious matters can be dealt with in a comic style. Among the most commonly identified types of comedy are: comedy of ideas or satire; inconsistency of character; verbal wit and plot devices.

Comedy of ideas or satire as defined by Edward Wright in his Understanding Today's Theatre. refers to the "ability to be amused by the things we take seriously."(52) It is, in other words a criticism of life; inconsistency of character comes about when there is "a discrepancy between professed and real qualities in a character."(52) Verbal wit refers to the

humour contained in the lines delivered by a character. This includes malapropisms and punning. Plot devices "involve misunderstandings, cross purposes, inopportune or embarrassing occurrences and mistaken identity,"(53) among other things.

Although none of Imbuga's plays can be classified solely as comedy, he obviously borrows a lot from the genre. He uses especially aspects of comedy of ideas (satire), comedy of verbal wit and inconsistency of character. These aspects are evident to different degrees in the characters analysed in this chapter. We shall first focus on Mulili, in Betrayal in the City.

Mulili is perhaps the foremost character in whom we see comicry. The language he is given makes us laugh at and not with him. Immediately he comes on to the stage, the audience is struck by his ungrammatical English. His first remark at Adika's graveside is: "No ceremony! That the final." When Doga pleads with him to let the ceremony continue, he retorts to Jere: "Tell him what I does with stubborn old mens."(14) This 'dialect' marks him throughout the play and makes him a focal point not only because the language causes laughter, but also because it furthers the plot.

The instance in which Mulili grabs the university tender from Kabito and later executes the latter's death exemplifies his linguistic duality; he is made to use ungrammatical

language, but as if that is not enough, he is also made to misconstrue what others have said. He is therefore distorted through and through. This is symptomatic of what goes on in Kafira. The leadership is prepared to give out fallacious and doctored information and to misunderstand people so as to perpetrate its vengeance in cultivating a state of fear.

What Mulili is created into is not to be laughed at and dismissed especially because the playwright's aim is not to simply cause laughter, more important, it is to depict the decadence of the system. Mulili is poorly educated, yet because he is `Boss' cousin,' is entrusted with a big post in the government. In itself, this shows that people in Kafira do not necessarily get jobs because they are qualified; rather they get jobs because they have "tall relatives."

Mulili's language comes out in a comical manner when he attempts to use common idioms and ends up inverting them. The best examples are his "better never than late"(56) for `better late than never' and "a green grass in the snake"(62) for `a green snake in the grass.' These words are ironical for Mulili's relationship with his fellow characters establishes him as the green snake in the grass. The overall effect is that of a character who would continually embarrass his mentors.

By giving him the perverted English, Imbuga symbolizes and foreshadows the debauchery which is unravelled in the course

of the play. In him, Imbuga satirizes the leadership that is symbolically depicted as drunk with power, lacking in discernment and unreliable. This picture is enhanced by Mulili's appearance on stage carrying a bottle of beer from which he drinks time and again.

Mulili is also overdrawn and typified as an arrogant, sensitive political operative who would not hesitate to commit crime if only to emphasize his position and please his mentor. But despite his sensitivity to any challenge to his power, he is contrastingly not sensitive to the sufferings of the common man. Imbuga portrays this through rather vulgar humour when Mulili asks whether Jusper could have eaten Adika's corpse. This is a comment that would elicit rather restrained chuckles instead of the full-blast laughter Mulili's idioms cause.

Mulili's conflict with Kabito is an instance Imbuga uses to explore the character's corruption and induce more laughter and pity. This comes out when he charges that Kabito has called him a primary school kid when the latter has not said so. Imbuga capitalises on this to create an ironical scene where Mulili reports to Boss Kabito's alleged disloyalty. The scene ends up being a report to the audience of Boss' mismanagement of the economy. Thus comical effect results from the very fact that the audience laughs at Mulili's unintended revelation of Boss' misdemeanours.

This comical irony is maintained when Mulili returns to the meeting to report that Kabito has died in an accident from "driving under influential alcohol."(66) This claim constitutes what one could call a comical absurdity because Mulili´s hand in Kabito´s death is too obvious. It reminds us of the trumped up charges on Mosese and the stereotpyed or hypocritical naming of streets after the government´s victims. Thus Imbuga depicts the circus the government is and achieves satire. The hypocrisy in these instances is the more sharper and comical because the reader is aware of the machinations in operation.

An outstanding aspect of Mulili´s comic hypocrisy is its consistency. When he faces the gun in the `take-over´ scene he imagines that he can still wangle his way out. So he denounces Boss, repeating the evils he had inadvertently revealed earlier, but this time in earnest to exonerate himself. The comical impact of this arises out of the admixture of perceptions it causes. Boss is dismayed by the betrayal; Mulili is convinced it should absolve him and save his skin; Jusper does not believe Mulili and knows too well that the latter is wasting his breath; the audience is watching all this simultaneously as they laugh at Mulili´s futile pleas and awaits Jusper´s action. When Mulili ends up as Jusper´s target, his death is purgative but not tragic.

In summary, the comic in Mulili is brought out quite prominently through the language he is given which is the

first indicator of the corrupt personality that emerges in the course of the play. The language induces laughter and endears Mulili to the audience. It also creates in him an immediate appeal especially when he translates directly from the mother tongue to English. These are indications of his deficient mastery of English and by extension, his temporal command of the situation aptly terminated in the `take-over´ scene.

Unlike Mulili who establishes himself as a factotum by his actions, Bin-Bin in Man of Kafira is identified by the playwright as a `Jack of all trades,´ an identity that puts him in a position to interact with virtually everybody in the play, ranging from president Gafi, Boss(in exile in Abiara), the actors and the sweepers. Whenever he appears, Bin-Bin carries with him the aura of mirth and wit and hence differs from Mulili who drags the reek of terror.

Bin-Bin is depicted as a character of high intellectual ability and mental sharpness who is relied on by a cross section of characters. His talent for saying brilliant and sparkling things and his sudden appearance in some scenes is what makes us regard him as a comic character. Through him Imbuga makes use of comedies of verbal wit and inconsistency of character. Some instances in the text will illustrate the situation.

Bin-Bin´s sudden interruption of Osman´s play makes the latter refer to him as "nature´s greatest embarrassment in

Abiara."(14) But the lighthearted manner in which he dispatches his mission to replace the play with a wrestling match and his advice to Osman to alienate himself "from the miseries" of his profession(16) shows his own detachment and cuts him as a clever man. Furthermore his tip to Osman to recruit "death penalty cases" from the maximum security prison(16) far from only creating humour, shows how cunning he is. Here, he is able to bail Osman out of the predicament.

Bin-Bin is the brains behind certain events in the play and this is used to develop the plot much as he takes advantage of the duties he is assigned to make pertinent comments about the issues in the play. He reveals that Boss' presence in Abiara is "causing division among the people and that this is dangerous to Abiara's stability."(17) An apparently self-appointed presidential advisor, he suggests to president Gafi an "honourable way" of getting rid of Boss without denting Abiara's image. He suggests that Osman train and present the people Boss has asked for because "we know what Boss wants to hear and we should let him hear it."(19) Through this scheme, Boss is made a joke of and ridiculed hence the playwright achieves satire. That Bin-Bin is assigned the responsibility of doing this indicates the leader's vulnerability on the one hand and the lee-way the comic has gained in manipulating events, on the other.

Bin-Bin is used in the play to make very significant observations . For instance, he comes up with a syllogism

about Boss' madness and lack of reason. He says: "the man is acting as if he is mad and madmen have no sense of reason and an unreasonable man is as good as a man without a head." Gafi is impressed and even pays attention to Bin-Bin's account of the history of Boss' madness. It seems that Bin-Bin gets away with whatever remark he makes, most probably because the remarks are always tainted with humour.

It is also not accidental that Bin-Bin is the one who probes Regina for more information about Kafira under Boss. Regina supplies him with details of Jusper's supposed madness and her feeling that it is the authorities that `drove' Jusper `crazy.' She also tells Bin-Bin of the rumour that Boss was responsible for the deaths of many people including his prime minister Mosese. And when Boss' dream is actualised on stage, Bin-Bin is there to note that Boss is haunted by archbishop Lum-Lum's ghost. This episode reveals important pieces of information about Boss' character and links up events in Betrayal in the City and Man of Kafira. Bin-Bin in this particular instance, serves as that link. He is the only person from Abiara who has more information about their guest (Boss) and his overthrown regime. Bin-Bin identifies psychological frustrations in Boss' dream and concludes: "the process by which men are exiled is a disease... that they carry on their minds forever."(43) The statement echoes the point Imbuga is making and hence Bin-Bin serves as a persona.

Bin-Bin takes lightly what others consider serious issues. He does not see anything wrong with cannibalism even if Boss is rumoured to be a cannibal. This is his way of keeping off gossip and hence demonstrates his wit. But when left alone, he confesses to the audience that truth is "the greatest killer disease" and orders the workers to spray the room just vacated by the artists to undo the hangover of truth."(24) He reckons that after the spray the room has the smell of royalty and is now safe to be used by Boss. The implication here is that the leader's honesty has gone stale, undesirable and is a distasteful reminder of the past autocratic leaders who derailed the political systems. His action of spraying the room to recondition the air far from only achieving comic effect also symbolizes the need to overhaul political systems that have been hijacked by selfish and dishonest leaders like Boss, and to return them to the ideal path "the smell of royalty." We also notice that at this particular moment, Bin-Bin has been used economically as a stage hand putting an end to one scene and introducing the next.

The playwright puts Bin-Bin outside situations and makes him comment on them. In this way he is made to serve a purpose similar to that advocated by Brecht in his technique of alienation, Bin-Bin is present at the right place at the right time. For example in part two, if he didn't interrupt Regina, may be she could have stabbed Boss in his sleep. The interruption furthers the plot in that Bin-Bin is able to

confirm that Regina is dangerous, that she has "some dark secret tucked away on some remote corner of her troubled heart."(20) He reveals this to Gafi by equating her to a tigress waiting to pounce on an unsuspecting victim."(20)

Behind the mask of simplicity therefore, Bin-Bin makes intelligent comments about the people and the leadership of his society. In another instance, he appreciates the fact that he is called upon to spread Boss' golden-bed. This he performs gracefully on stage and lightheartedly says that it gives him a chance to "rub shoulders with the cream of state guests and" adds:

> Specialized white-collar job. You need a highly educated man to spread sheets on a bed like this one. That is how I got here... But you must agree with me that making a fellow man's bed can be very challenging. ...pure gold, no imitation. As for the cost of making it, don't ask me... It was all paid for in foreign currency by our leader, president Gafi. (24)

What comes out here is that Bin-Bin makes issues out of mundane and routine things as opposed to his lighthearted approach to serious issues. Nevertheless he ends up revealing the extravagance of the state: the golden bed is expressly imported to suit Boss' outrageous demands.

Bin-Bin's role of commentator in the play can be compared to that of the common man in Robert Bolt's A man for all Seasons. The latter comes in and out of stage to comment on

the action. He is part of the action yet manages to distance himself from it at times to provide the audience with certain pieces of information about the characters and events in the play. This is what Bin-Bin too does in Man of Kafira.

The essence of Bin-Bin as a comic also lies in his lines and actions that appear humorous yet present several ironies. For example, he flatters Boss and feigns concern at the latter's decision to go back to Kafira, yet the audience is already aware that he is the one who has contributed a lot towards that decision by stage-managing the prayer session where Grabio impersonates Cardinal Ojwang. But the flattery deludes Boss further and exposes his buffoonery.

Bin-Bin's interaction with most of the characters makes him end up as the mediator between them. This is what he does when he acts on Gafi's behalf to facilitate Boss' decision to return to Kafira. In order to keep up appearances he later pretends that it is a "difficult assignment" to "break the news"(54) of Boss' decision to Gafi yet he was assigned the duty of accelerating Boss' departure. He thus fulfils one of the characteristics of the comic as a versatile performer.

Bin-Bin seems to offer suggestions that serve to develop the plot. After mediating between Boss and Gafi, Boss still relies on him to ensure that Jere is informed of his return to Kafira and that arrangements are made for his security. He is

also called upon to ensure that a speech is prepared for Boss to deliver on his arrival in Kafira. Just as we have already observed, here too Bin-Bin serves to link Abiara and Kafira.

On the whole, Bin-Bin is entrusted with various roles because of the comicry element in him. While he interacts with different categories of people in the play, he displays wit and detachment. Through him the comicry motif is used to develop the plot and pass satirical remarks that are of thematic significance.

In The Successor, Segasega the comic is Emperor Chonda's food taster and joker. As the former, he has to taste everything that Chonda is expected to eat. This is an insurance that the Emperor is not poisoned. In this case he acts as the Emperor's security which, ironically, compromises his own safety. As a joker, he is expected to entertain the Emperor, mainly by cracking jokes, an entertainment that in effect gets on to the audience. His actions essentially entail aspects of comicry.

On the surface Segasega appears as if he is contented with his job, but the fact that he makes fun of it shows that he has some reservations about it. He lightheartedly says: "If my pay has been good, I should have bought a watch by now."(34)

He is taken for granted by the Emperor who calls him such names as: "blockhead"(31) and "a man without facts"(54) yet

we notice that the playwright depicts him as quite an intelligent person who makes certain core remarks about the society. For instance through him our attention is drawn to the question of social classes. When he says: "...the Emperor is no Emperor without Segasega, his old food taster... The big man is not big without the small man,..." he is underlining the importance of the small man and expressing the dialectical relationship between the powerful and the less mighty. This dialectic is that the idea of being `big´ is given meaning by the very fact that there are `smaller` people. It is otherwise not an absolute construct. Thus he says: "Two big ones cannot call each other big, but a small man will call a big man big. Big because the small man has made the big man big. The big man is made of the small man..."(32)

Here again Imbuga exploits syllogism as an element of comedy that is also akin to tongue twisting to comment on democracy and the power structure. The syllogism negates the Emperor´s idea that social power is inherited. Essentially this stands out as a remark directed at political leaders and the elite of all sorts who believe that their privileged positions are pre-ordained. Imbuga´s point here is that it is societies that create positions and there is nothing like a `god-chosen leader,´ for example.

Segasega´s kind of syllogism would not be expected from a "blockhead" hence this is only Imbuga´s technique of putting a

`common man´ as the vocalizer of an important point. Segasega´s point is even illustrated in his own job as the Emperor´s food taster. No `big man´ would mortgage his life for another `big man´ as Segasega essentially does for Chonda. The same way, it is the masses that do the donkey work that makes the `big man´ big. In this way, the author successfully presents us with the irony of life.

This syllogism that calls upon Chonda, specifically, and the world leaders, in general, to recognize the important role played by the `common man´ brings to mind the importance of such people as bodyguards standing as statues behind the leaders; they are some kind of shadows or projections of the leaders, shadows whose absence would certainly be conspicuous. The absence of a bodyguard would be seen as a lapse in security and an opportunist would probably attempt an assassination of the leader. Much as they are taken for granted, the guards create a psychological source of security. In the same manner, a politician behind whom there are no masses, is standing on sinking sand. What Segasega describes is, on the whole, a continuation of the "Top - Bottom" syndrome that we encounter in Game of Silence and which is later magnified in Aminata when the comic Agege cries out for equality.

Segasega´s use of syllogism is noted again in his game with a medal-like coin(30) that he and the Emperor are

supposedly the contestants. Even here, although the game is meant for the Emperor´s entertainment, it suggests to the audience that he is aware of the struggle for power that is going on among the Chiefs of Masero - notably Oriomra and Sasia. This is the key issue in the play yet Segasega presents it lightheartedly in the form of a game. This too, brings out the comic quality in him.

In the game, he criticises nepotism and tribalism. The side of the coin that faces up after he has tossed it suggests that the Emperor has won, but Segasega comments: "That is not fair. Tribalism, that is what you are practising. You and the Emperor belong to the same tribe, the tribe of medals."(30) By extension, through tribalism, undeserving people ascend power. In what could be interpreted as a devious criticism of hereditary ascension to power, as in the case of Chonda, he says: "The wind made the Emperor Emperor."(30) Although this is a remark out of a game of throwing up the coin to resolve the bet on who should be Emperor between him and Chonda, it ends up questioning the automatic ascension to power and sees it as largely providential that some people in the `royal´ families inherit power.

After witnessing Emperor Chonda´s dream (treated in great detail in chapter two), Segasega pretends that he does not know what Chonda is talking about. He tells Chonda: "your father´s head would be on your father´s neck and your father´s

neck would be on your father's shoulders and your father's shoulders would be..."(31) Segasega makes the dream light by turning it into a joke because, as he says, "I am not accountable for what I do while on duty. I am employed... to please you before and after you get upset."(31) The dream is the core of the play yet Segasega, in keeping with the requirements of his job, makes a joke of it. That is what makes him a comic.

Segasega's humour lies in the fact that it is deliberate since he creates jokes even out of serious issues like Chonda's nightmare. His carefree attitude can be compared to that of Bin-Bin. Both fulfil one of the characteristics of a comic: deriving humour from the lightside of life; seeing things in a different plane from the rest of the people; to them, everything is a joke. Through them Imbuga uses the comicry motif to draw our attention to the seriousness of those issues.

In a lighthearted manner, Segasega expresses his opinion about democracy and comes out as someone who has an idea of what good leadership should be. His social position and the fact that he interacts with the leadership certainly gives him a chance to study the political leaders. For instance, he decries the large palace "built before the birth of democracy."(53) In a democracy, he implies, the building of such a palace would most likely never be sanctioned.

Segasega is thus a free wheeling commentator who contradicts even the Emperor and makes comments about the people and the society without any inhibition. In real life, jesters like the mad, strike us as people who do not give a thought to what they say. Because of this `laissez faire´ oral manner, society tends to accept them for what they are and give lukewarm thought to their pronouncements, some of which are quite weighty. Imbuga capitalizes on this ambivalence when he creates the likes of Segasega and Bin-Bin. Thus a double entendre can be detected in most of Segasega´s jests.

Segasega is made to play a double-edged role in events surrounding Jandi´s banishment, return and naming as the successor. He holds Oriomra to test in front of the Emperor about his attempt to kill Sasia in a scheme to be the successor. Later when Oriomra´s scheme aborts and Jandi is pronounced the successor, Segasega openly endorses Jandi´s statement that it is the people to decide on a fitting punishment to the evil doers like Oriomra. Imbuga seems to foresee, through Segasega, that Jandi´s leadership will be the dawn of democracy in Masero. It is then that Emperor Chonda realises that there is more to Segasega than meets the eye.

Imbuga´s vision in the whole play revolves around the question of ascension to power. He examines the matter by giving a realistic and idealistic point of view. The reality

is that power hungry individuals would hijack the process of ascension and machinate so that they or their cohorts inherit power. To the playwright this is very unfortunate. He would rather see a situation where the rightful heirs succeed the incumbent. Thus Imbuga takes us through a feeling that Jandi has been eliminated only to "resurrect" him to our delight. As Brecht has it in his Caucassian Chalk Circle, the motherly should be let to nurture children and the farmers to tend the valleys. The sagacious and deserving should also be let to lead. Ascension to power must not be based on passive inheritance or clandestine manouvres.

Agege in Aminata is labelled `the village idiot and appears in tatters.´ He is called names ranging from `woman´ `idiot´ `porcupine´ to `imbecile´ by Jumba, the village elder. In lines that are laughable, Agege builds the picture of his position in the village:

> Everyday... Agege do this, Agege do that. Even in middle of dark night Agege do this. Now I refuse because even idiot need rest. Yes, all man is equal. Even me I am equal also. And some women too are equal also... Aminata is equal than Ababio... Now I am for respect and I respect you back. (9)

Agege runs errands and does odd jobs for people but expects nothing more than a shilling in return and therefore notes with glee that Aminata gives him upto five shillings. We have already noted that Aminata revolves around the theme of equality: Through Agege, Imbuga highlights that inequality

does not only exist among men and women, but also among people of the same sex. It is also through Agege that he magnifies his criticism of a class society. Agege too, fights for equality and puts up a strong case for himself.

This complaint calls upon the audience to regard Agege in a different light. His analysis of the situation indicates that he is not at all an idiot. He does not see how he can be abused and at the same time be called upon to perform musculine jobs. What makes him a comic is that through the complaint, he poses as if he is protesting bitterly but once a shilling is thrown to him, he will perform those chores instantly.

Agege is more of a free wheeler than Segasega in that he can break boundaries verbally and motionwise. He confronts the village elder and gets away with it. He constantly talks of too much fire in reference to Jumba´s antagonistic attitude towards Aminata. He is among the people who acknowledge Aminata´s contribution to the village and does not dismiss her simlpy because she is a woman. It is also significant that it is only Jumba and Ababio, Aminata´s detractors, who belabour the point that Agege is an idiot. This should be taken as their way of compromising with the truth he says.

In an ironic twist of events, the comicry motif is used to question the structure of society and those that deserve

respect. Agege calls the villain Ababio an idiot because the latter gets drunk on the day when his father's grave is being cemented and hence is unable to pay off those who have cemented it. Ababio is made the more undesirable because his sister Aminata outshines him even in responsibilities that legitimately belong to him. She buys their late father's coffin and pays school fees for Ababio's children. Agege is called `imbecile' for praising Aminata for these deeds. But the underlying irony is that he is capable of reasoning out and identifying those like Aminata who need to be respected. He thus comes through as Imbuga's persona.

Like Bin-Bin and Segasega, Agege is a free wheeler whose remarks are of thematic significance. When he charges in broken English that "I say also that Aminata is first son born of Pastor Ngoya," Imbuga uses him to suggest that people should be judged according to their worth not according to "tradition." In which case Aminata, the development minded woman, supersedes her elder brother, a drunkard and an irresponsible man.

Even Aminata sees sense in what Agege says and advises Ababio "to borrow a leaf"(55) from him. Others like Nuhu also appreciate Agege's personality. He tells Jumba: "his words do not smell the idiot you people say he is."(11) Agege's depiction, therefore, is Imbuga's technique of suggesting what the characters think of some of their fellow characters and

letting the audience judge the characters for themselves and to decipher the underlying implication. In which case the label "idiot" is only a mask for the development of the plot.

On the whole, Imbuga uses the comicry motif mainly through the lines he gives his comic characters and generally through the manner in which he depicts them. A number of unifying factors can be traced in these comics. The first conspicuous thing about Mulili is his ungrammatical language which depicts his lack of education. Imbuga uses broken language with Agege too. The logic in depicting Agege this way is that he is meant to be mentally unaccomplished; in fact an `idiot.´ The broken language is meant to mark him out from the other characters. The difference between Mulili´s and Agege´s cases is that Agege has neither the resources nor the need to be fluent in English, but Mulili has these, speaks English as a mark of prestige and is oblivious of the chain of grammatical errors he makes.

Agege is also marked out by the fact that he is the only of Imbuga´s comics in tatters. In this way, Imbuga conforms to the classical portrayal of comics and clowns by dress, although not necessarily tatters. But like the other comics, Agege is a factotum although the jobs they perform differ in each play. In Betrayal in the City. Mulili is the functionary for the system; he undertakes all the ugly jobs in Boss´ regime and operates as the ever peering eye trying to ensure

that everything is under control. In Man of Kafira. Bin-Bin, labelled a "Jack of all trades" is palatable, complex, polished and versatile. He does not consider any job above or below him. Thus he interacts with everyone and is ubiquitous. This makes him able to come across details about everyone and therefore becomes the most informed of the characters and a person to whom reference can be made. Notice how both Boss and President Gafi rely upon him for missions to be accomplished. And for his own knowledge, he interviews Regina about Kafira under Boss; he digs out information about Boss' madness and later, after Boss' dream, he quickly adds on to "the details,"(50) that Boss is a somnambulist.

Segasega has a more or less similar task. By virtue of being Chonda's food taster, he is everywhere Chonda is and is basically the Emperor's shadow. Being with the Emperor Chonda always means that he knows all the details about the Emperor, details some of which the others are not aware. For example, just as Bin-Bin witnesses Boss' dream and later jokes about it, so does Segasega witness Emperor Chonda's dream and jokes about it to the Emperor himself. He views what he is as a predestination.

Another similarity in Segasega and Bin-Bin is that both of them "brush shoulders " with the political elite although they are commoners themselves. The fact that Bin-Bin makes Boss' bed makes him share in that comfort. In a similar way,

Segasega eats the same food as Chonda. Not only that, they are heavily relied upon and their absence would be a conspicuous one. The Yoruba summarize this abstract in the epigram:

> Three exist where three are not;
> Commoner exists where there is no king,
> but a kingdom cannot exist where there
> are no commoners;
> Grass exists where there is nothing that
> eats grass, but what eats grass cannot
> exist where no grass is;
> Water exists where there is nothing that
> drinks water, but what drinks water cannot
> exist where no water is. 8

The association of the comics with the elite in Imbuga's plays does not only run through the plays but it also has something functional and fatalistic about it. Starting with Bin-Bin, we notice that the comic character functions as a stage hand in that he appears at points of scene change and performs mechanical jobs that prepare the set for the next episode. He also manoeuvres things in the course of the play and therefore determines the development of the plot. The best example is his management of the flattery and prayer for Boss where he arranges for a fake cardinal and solves a very difficult problem for Gafi's government. He is very instrumental in getting Boss out of the way by flattering him about his chances of reclaiming Kafira's presidency. These

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8 Ruth Finnegan: Oral Literature in Africa, (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976.) P.434

manoeuvres obviously imply that Bin-Bin is a very intelligent person and a man who can actually foresee the effects of his arrangements.

These anticipatory skills occur with Segasega who, as the Emperor´s jester, has to be able to create new jokes if he has to keep his job. This makes the job very demanding and the fact that he retains it implies that he is able to satisfy Emperor Chonda. Of Imbuga´s comics, Bin-Bin and Segasega stand out as people, who, by virtue of their jobs, have powerful mental abilities since they have to be creative all the time. They stand in sharp contrast with Agege who is on the other extreme. The association of Segasega and Mulili with the elite is fatalistic in that Mulili would have to go if Boss is overthrown - and in fact he is shot dead just in the presence of Boss, while Segasega would die first, should the Emperor´s food be poisoned.

With the exception of Mulili who is totally committed to his job, the attitude of the comics to their jobs and to life in general can be described as carefree or `withdrawn.´ This is again best illustrated by Bin-Bin and Segasega. The former makes light of what others consider serious. For example, he does not go along with Osman´s argument about the respect for human life; instead he tells Osman: "you have to change with the times,... be able to suspend your feelings" in certain situations.(16) He also makes issues out of mundane and routine things.

Through the speech he makes while spreading the bed, he invites the reader and the audience to look critically at what is otherwise taken for granted and to appreciate that there are commoners always behind the glamour of leaders. While Bin-Bin's jest creates humour, it also gives us insight into the playwright's attitude to life and the message in the play; that there is more to little things than we ordinarily care to acknowledge.

The carefreeness is also in Segasega whose job actually mortgages his life as has already been mentioned. This is a kind of job that only a carefree person can take, unless it is punitive. But if either is true, the job implies that Segasega has accepted that death is an inevitability and it does not really matter when and how it comes. This kind of disposition puts him at a level of perception above the ordinary, in which death is often feared.

The comics are used to create humour in the plays and to offer comic relief. But the methods by which this is achieved differ. With Mulili, we laugh at the language although he has no intention to amuse. Agege, on the other hand, appears to be deliberate in his attempt to amuse. But with Segasega, the humour results from a spill-over effect; his jokes are primarily meant to entertain the Emperor but they are inevitably shared by the audience. And for Bin-Bin, the audience is drawn into his schemes and laughs with him, sharing his points of view.

Bin-Bin also gets along very well with other characters in the play and is treated very cordially. This is unlike Segasega who is occasionally chided and insulted by Chonda just like Jumba does with Agege. However, the impression we get is that Chonda's `insults' are not really meant to demean Segasega but that they are acceptable between him and Segasega, being the close associates they are. In fact, the other impression we get is that Segasega, the only old man among Imbuga's comics, is aware of and occasionally gloats about his importance, just like Bin-Bin and Mulili, but unlike Agege who does not pretend to be anything more than what the playwright has designated him to be. Agege also differs from the other comics in that he is directly and immediately rewarded for the odd jobs he does and he receives the rewards with characteristic glee. Yet the promotion he gets towards the end of the play heralds some hope for him.

But even then, he still resembles Bin-Bin and Segasega in some respects. First, like Bin-Bin, Agege comes in as the usherer of a new scene when he announces the take over ceremony to the villagers. And at the end of the play, he appears to announce Ababio's death thus interrupting the events. This corresponds to Bin-Bin's interruption of Regina's attempt to stab Boss and Segasega's appearance to tell Oriomra what has happened at the shrine and Jandi's "resurrection." In all these scenes, the unifying element is death. All the comics somehow are at the relevant scenes,

which is quite in character with ubiquity. Even Mulili appears to announce to his colleagues Kabito's death, which of course, he is the one who has caused.

Finally, the comics strike us as characters through whom the playwright makes thematic comments. Through Segasega, he underlines the importance of the common man; through Agege, he delineates the theme of equality and respect; and through Bin-Bin, he criticises the extravagance of some Heads of state and also exposes certain psychological traumas that a deposed political leader goes through, among other things.

Imbuga's labelling of characters as `joker' or `idiot' is part and parcel of characterization. It appears to be an adoption of the trend in classical drama where clowns are directly identified by the playwright. The obvious challenge to the playwright here is to create a superjester or otherwise the character becomes a disappointment when the reader eventually discovers that the jokes are not after all striking. Agege ends up exceeding his limits as an idiot and ventures into making profound statements. His depiction is quite different from Segasega and Bin-Bin who maintain their carefree attitude throughout. Yet, whereas a number of fluctuations and inconsistencies are noted in Agege which make him incredible, it is appreciated that Imbuga has done this deliberately to achieve his aim of using a comic character to

highlight some of his concerns. The contrivance is therefore not necessarily negative.

On the whole, Imbuga's comic characters have a lot in common. But their differences are as outstanding. It does not seem that Imbuga wishes to create stereotypical comics; he varies them according to the demands of his scripts. The overall implication is that these comics are not characters for the sake of it: we are called upon, through the way they are moulded, to pay close attention to them, and as we do so, we pick out subtle elements of the play.

The development in the streaks noted in the comic characters follows no definite order. We start off with Mulili, the embodiment of the vices criticised but a factotum for the regime, deeply engrossed in his assignments. The next comic Imbuga creates is Bin-Bin who represents a totally different idea of the comic through his wit and detachment, yet part of the system. Segasega and Agege created in that order are comics also symbolic of the 'lesser' class from which they come. Their humour is also contained in their mode of behaviour yet they retain the streak of wit in Bin-Bin. A conspicuous difference noted in the last two comics is that their position in the plays is clearly delineated by the labels they are given.

The use of the comicry motif as a device is demonstrated in the comics, idiosyncratised by either broken language,

jocularity, tatters, humour of manners, ubiquity, odd jobs man, factotum and the fact that they easily win over the audience. They are of thematic significance due to the lapses of the authorial voice that is evident in most of them.

# CONCLUSION

The overall objective of the study was to examine Imbuga's use of the motifs of dream, madness and comicry as stylistic devices in his plays. We have demonstrated that these motifs enhance the artistic qualities of the works and the seriousness of the issues raised.

The dream motif serves the function of the flashback which is used as a stylistic device, and in other cases like Boss' dream in Man of Kafira. it acts as the other device of the play-within-a play. At the thematic level, the dream is also used to introduce contentious matters such as Yona's circumcision in The Burning of Rags.

Madness on the other hand, is used as a poetic licence for characters to say things that would be considered politically inauspicious and imprudent. In this way, the mad characters are made to appear adamant in their criticism. This licence by the playwright and adamancy of the characters even before the authorities is what has made us identify the mad characters, Raja and Jusper, more especially, as mouthpieces of the playwright's ideas.

In our investigation we identified Jusper's madness as a device that is complemented with the play-within-a play device; a technique that Imbuga seems to have borrowed from The Revenge Tragedies of the English Renaissance. The juxtaposition of the two in the `take over' scene gives Jusper

complete control of the situation making him able to trap the Head of State and the latter's cohorts. The device here serves to obscure the truth that Jusper is not only acting to change the political situation, but he is also avenging his brother's death. The same device, in our investigation, goes further to bring the antagonists and protagonists together and as Mulili denounces Boss, the themes of sycophancy and betrayal are illuminated. But when Jusper kills Mulili, the madness motif seems to allow him, as the revenger, to get away with the murder.

In our analysis, Jusper's vacillation between madness and sanity indicates a disguised facade of criticism by Imbuga because in his madness, Jusper deals with topical issues hence the device has a double effect: It is used for criticism yet it is also a theatrical innovation. The vacillation also creates suspense that ends up making the characters focal to the plot.

We regard Raja as both a dreamer and a mad character, having established that Imbuga uses the character as an experiment with absurdist style of writing. Raja's dreams and his neurotic nature when used as devices indicate the helpless situation of man, which is a result of oppressive systems of government. These characters also expose the antagonists as those who would readily brand those who oppose their ideas as mad.

The issues that the motif of madness raise, have a striking relevance to post independence Africa. The treatment of Jusper and Raja is exactly similar to that of political dissidents in Africa today. The two are incarcerated and regarded as mad although there is no legal backing for this. Through their situation, Imbuga criticises judicial systems that are moulded to serve the whims of ascist authorities.

The triptych onslaught is completed through the use of comicry. Just as the mad characters and dreamers articulate the playwright's vision, so do the comics, though in a dichotomous manner. On the one hand, those like Mulili do so by their inferior characters that indicate that the playwright is propounding the opposite idea. On the other hand, those like Bin-Bin, Segasega and Agege, all with alliterative names, do so by discreet often jest-like remarks. The thematic significance of the characters can, therefore, not be overstated.

But we have also established that they are integral to the development of the plot. This is particularly with reference to Mulili and Bin-Bin whose action, verbal or actual, propel the play to new episodes. This role is helped by the ubiquity of the comics. The fact that they are present at virtually all scenes, or at least the most significant, makes them inevitable participants in the same, and in the case of Bin-Bin, an eaves-dropper who later reports to us the ongoings

not otherwise exposed to us. Even Mulili does this to a great extent in as far as he misrepresents facts to Boss and later to the entertainment committee about Kabito.

We set out to establish that Imbuga uses the dreaming, mad and comic characters to make social commentries about the society. In doing this, we concerned ourselves with the credibility of the characters, the contention being that the dream, madness and comicry augment this credibility by bringing out what is not immediately apparent in the characters. The central idea here is that Imbuga drives his point home by presenting the characters the way he does. Further to that, we sought to evaluate the contribution of dream, madness or comicry to the success of the works. In this regard, they were treated as stylistic devices.

The dreaming, mad and comic characters in the plays strike us as people who not only view things differently, from the way the others do, but who also vary in behaviour. The mad characters are understood to behave the way they do because they are `mad.´ Their `madness´ becomes a `raison detre´ for their behaviour in the same way that dream determines the actions of the dreamers in the plays. The comics impress us as people in whom the playwright juxtaposes the mediocre and the mundane aspects in life with the sublime and the philosophical

The other uniting factor among the three categories of characters is that their behaviour springs from views different from those of the other characters. Madness and

dreaming are energised by a unique mental orientation which, in the context of the plays, makes the dreamers and madmen appear as deviants. Madmen's perception of reality is generally perverted; that of dreamers emanates from their subconsciousness; and that of the comics is motivated by the desire to highlight the lighter side of issues even when others consider those issues grave. For instance, while others think that cannibalism is an abnormality, Bin-Bin does not see anything wrong with Boss' being a cannibal. He also thinks that spreading a fellow man's bed is very important contrary to the regard in which such are always held. He thus comes through as anti-thesis to conventions.

This approach to things makes the characters stand out as unique. Imbuga emphasizes this by exploring more of their personalities. For instance, Jusper's `madness' is traced back to his brother's death. The `madness,' its effects and the other characters' attitude towards him are explored to a large extent. Boss' madness and dreaming traits are also dealt with in detail. Jusper and Boss are also among the characters around whom most of the action takes place. Jusper, who is the main character in Betrayal in the City, for example, also plays a significant role in Man of Kafira in which Boss a dreamer and a madman, is the main character. Mulili follows Jusper in order of importance in Betrayal in the City. Raja, a dreamer and a `madman' is also the leading character in

Game of Silence while Emperor Chonda leads in The Successor with Segasega the comic operating in his shadow and therefore being as much part of him as Bin-Bin is with Boss in Man of Kafira. This juxtaposition of the leaders and the comics points to the playwright's conviction that eliticism depends on commonality. It is a reminder to Segasega's remarks that the big man cannot exist without the small man.

The juxtaposition is reinforced by the pervasive presence of the characters which makes them focal especially during performance. This is helped by the fact that the comics utilize their parts to make poignant points in memorable ways. Mulili is made to do it through ungrammatical English, a style extended in Agege. Bin-Bin and Segasega do it through witty remarks, exemplified particularly by their syllogisms. It becomes clear then, that Imbuga creates the comic as an opportunity to experiment with language, an experiment whose effect is most visible in stage performance. In the process, he also achieves the effect of characterising his comics by their unique language.

During the process of this study, we have demonstrated that the motifs of the dream, madness and comicry are not used in a static manner but are manipulated to suit the themes expressed in the different works. For instance, we notice the variations in the use of the dreams. In the earlier three

plays, the dreams are not enacted but are merely reported to foreshadow the eventual fulfilment of some of the characters' fears and wishes. In the later plays, beginning with Betrayal in the City, we start to encounter live dreams that revolve around interpersonal relationships and wider social and political issues. In these plays, the use of the dream is more sophisticated in both content and rendition.

The next stage in this development is the use of apparitions. It becomes more vivid that the dream in such instances as Boss addressing the ghost of Lum-Lum, or Chonda dodging the wrath of his late father, serves a psychological purpose and confirm that a man's actions are to a remarkable extent, influenced by the subconscious. Imbuga consumates his use of dreams in Game of Silence in which the whole story is rendered in the framework of a dream. In The Successor, the dream is foregrounded to the extent that it precipitates most of the events in the play. A seer is also included to give meaning to the dream. Finally, in The Burning of Rags the dream becomes a very important and useful device for introducing the play, the characters and the themes.

Through our investigation and analysis, we have identified certain links among the motifs. Imbuga's plays are set in the world of the elite from which, he, of necessity, draws his main characters. We have observed that most of the dreamers and mad characters are either intellectuals or leaders. These

people are in key positions in the society and thus cannot avoid the responsibility of thinking about the nature of their society. But we have established that they do not have a monopoly in doing this. The other half of the ordinary people is symbolically represented in the character of the comics: Agege, Bin-Bin and Segasega, who may appear to treat the matters lightheartedly. But this does not demean the thematic significance of their comments. If anything, the juxtaposition of dreamers, madmen and comics only strengthen the plays.

The study has further identified the dream as a device through which characters and episode representation would be done economically. The dreamer remains on stage both when awake and asleep; this limits the need for changes. The dream framework also makes it possible to flashforward and return to the present without creating unwarranted disjunction in the flow of the play. This makes it evident that Imbuga consciously writes for the stage.

In a similar way, the interplay of sanity and madness makes the plays more potent. The vacillations offer variety and entertainment both in print and on stage, hence making the characters remarkable and memorable. The fact that they are tainted with madness makes it easy and acceptable for them to make virtually any statement about anything, and in this way

the playwright surmounts the problem of censorship. It can be inferred from this that Imbuga is aware of the political realities of the third world and believes that a writer on sensitive matters needs to adopt a style that protects him from reprisals. This is an effect achieved through even the comics whose critical remarks are dressed in humour.

As a whole, we have shown that Imbuga, as a committed writer, and through the characters he creates, actively participates in a search towards the resolution of conflict that abound in the society and hence attempts to point towards stability and harmony. It may rightly be argued that Imbuga does not explicitly suggest solutions and gives his plays the open ended form. But we believe that a writer need not necessarily be pedagogical to show his degree of commitment. The reader or audience may sometimes detect Imbuga's overall suggestion in some of his plays. In Betrayal in the City. for instance, Imbuga suggests, not a complete overhaul of the system, but a guarded change. This explains the survival of Boss as Mulili is shot at the end of the play. In Aminata and The Burning of Rags, he suggests synthesis of what is noble in the past and in the present.

The study, thus, becomes another addition to the library of critical works on Imbuga's plays. It is the first to address itself specifically to the stylistic intricacies of dream, madness and comicry in Imbuga's plays. The

interpretation of these devices is significant in the understanding of the artistry of the playwright in developing his themes.

But this is not the final statement, a number of areas could still be investigated. For example, a comparison on how Imbuga and other playwrights use the three motifs; how Imbuga's has been influenced by other playwrights; a study on Imbuga's themes and style in prose when he publishes Dust in the Wind; and the evolution of ideas and style in his "Kafira" series when the third sequel is published.

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