

**POWER, CORRUPTION AND LITERARY DEVICES IN NAOMI ALDERMAN'S
THE POWER AND OKEY NDIBE'S *ARROWS OF RAIN***

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**AN ESSAY SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND
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CERTIFICATION

I certify that this study was carried out by **Tioluwani Esther AGBOOLA (Miss)** with matriculation number **ART2100158** in the Department of English and Literature under the supervision of Prof. (Mrs.). A.O. Eruaga at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria.

Date. _____

Prof. (Mrs.). A. O. Eruaga
(Project Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents and loved ones, whose belief in my abilities and constant encouragement gave me the confidence to pursue this study. I also dedicate this research to all readers and students of literature, especially those interested in understanding the dynamics of power, corruption, and justice in society. May this work inspire critical thought and reflection on the forces that shape our world.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how power and corruption are portrayed in Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000). Although these novels come from very different worlds, one from a futuristic, feminist setting and the other from a postcolonial African society, both reveal how the abuse of power leads to moral decay and injustice.

In Alderman's *The Power*, women gain a new biological ability that allows them to dominate men, turning traditional gender roles upside down. However, this new dominance soon exposes how easily power can corrupt anyone, regardless of gender. In Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, power is shown through political oppression, censorship, and the silencing of truth in a corrupt postcolonial state. Together, the two novels raise an important question: is corruption caused by who holds power, or by the systems that allow power to go unchecked?

This study uses feminist theory (especially Judith Butler's idea of gender as performance) to analyse how Alderman questions gender and power, and postcolonial theory (drawing from Frantz Fanon's writings) to explore Ndibe's critique of leadership and institutional violence. By comparing both texts, the research shows that power, when not balanced by justice or accountability, always leads to corruption and oppression. The findings highlight that true freedom or equality cannot exist unless societies challenge the structures that sustain inequality and abuse.

Keywords: Power, Corruption, Feminist Theory, Postcolonial Theory, Gender, Authority, Injustice.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the interplay between Power and Corruption as thematically represented in Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000). It will also explore literary devices in both novels. Both novels, though written in different contexts and literary traditions, present compelling critiques of how individuals and institutions exploit power, leading to moral decay and systematic injustice. Through a comparative literary analysis, this study seeks to investigate how power dynamics function across cultural, gendered, political lines, and how corruption emerges as a direct consequence of unregulated or absolute authority.

The study also aims to highlight the universality of these themes. In Alderman's speculative feminist dystopia, the emergence of female dominance leads to a reversal of patriarchal oppression, only to reveal that power, irrespective of gender, can be equally corrupting (Alderman, 2016). Conversely, Ndibe's postcolonial narrative focuses on the silencing of truth and the abuse of state authority in a fictional African nation, revealing how corruption thrives in a society devoid of accountability and justice (Ndibe, 2000).

By interrogating these texts through the lenses of feminist and postcolonial theory, the study aims to contribute to existing literary discourse on power, gender, and

governance. It questions whether the problem lies in who holds power or in the structures that enable corruption - a question that remains highly relevant in both literary and real - world contexts.

1.2. Scope of Study

This study focuses on a comparative literary analysis of *The Power* by Naomi Alderman and *Arrows of Rain* by Okey Ndibe, with particular attention to the themes of Power and Corruption. The scope is limited to examining how these texts depict the acquisition, use, and abuse of power within their respective socio political and cultural contexts. Alderman's *The Power* is set in a speculative future where women develop a physical ability that gives them dominance over men, leading to a radical restructuring of global power hierarchies. The analysis will explore how this shift affects societal values and how power becomes a corrupting force even in the hands of the formerly oppressed (Alderman, 2016). The focus will be on character development, narrative structure, and symbolic representations of power and control. On the other hand, Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* is grounded in the postcolonial reality of an African nation struggling under military dictatorship. This part of the study will examine the abuse of political authority, the manipulation of justice, and the silencing of dissenting voices (Ndibe, 2000). Special attention will be paid to the experiences of Bukuru, the protagonist, and his conflict with institutional power.

While the novels come from different literary traditions - speculative fiction and postcolonial realism - this study compares them on thematic grounds. It does not aim

to address every element of the novels but rather to analyse how each text constructs, critiques, and deconstructs power and corruption. Secondary literature, such as journal articles and critical essays, will be referenced to support the analysis, but the core material will remain the two primary texts. The study will not extend into sociological or psychological readings but will remain within the framework of literary analysis, with theoretical guidance from feminist and postcolonial scholars.

1.3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and interpretive literary methodology, centering on close textual analysis and comparative criticism. The research aims to explore how Naomi Alderman and Okey Ndibe portray power and corruption in the *The Power* and *Arrows of Rain*, respectively, through character behaviour, narrative structure, symbolism and socio-political commentary. The study will begin with a close reading of both texts to extract and analyse key themes related to power acquisition, its exercise, its corruptive consequences, and also explore the literary devices in both texts. Particular attention will be paid to how the characters embody or resist power and how the authors depict institutional and interpersonal dynamics of control, injustice, and resistance.

This process draws from the tradition of New Criticism, which emphasises the importance of textual evidence in interpreting meaning, as described by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (1976). However, the analysis will also move beyond form to include ideological and cultural considerations. Given the differing

cultural and genre contexts of the texts, a comparative literary approach will be used to evaluate thematic similarities and contrasts. This method which will help highlight power and corruption — from Alderman’s feminist speculative fiction to Ndibe’s postcolonial realist narrative. The aim is not only to compare the authors’ portrayals but also to understand how socio-historical backgrounds shape their treatment of these themes.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

To deepen the analysis, the study will be guided by feminist theory and postcolonial theory.

Feminist theory: Feminist theory is a collection of ideas and concepts used to understand, explain, and combat gender inequality, emphasising the disparities in social, political, and economic power held by men and women. It examines how male dominance (patriarchy) is maintained by laws, culture, media, education, religion, and other institutions and attempts to identify means of ensuring gender equality. Feminist theory also examines identity, sexuality, intersectionality (how gender intersects with race, class, and other axes), and the representation of women in literature, history, and society. It is not a single monolithic theory, but a wide-ranging group of theories that are all contributing to the shared goal of improving the lives of women and advancing gender equality.

Some of the most influential writers who built feminist theory are Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Judith Butler, and Audre Lorde,

although there were many other important contributors. Judith Butler's concept of gender as performance, as articulated in her seminal work *Gender Trouble* (1990), provides a critical framework for understanding the subversive and transformative potentials - and limitations - of gender in Naomi Alderman's *The Power*. Judith Butler argues that gender is not a fixed or inherent identity, but rather a set of repeated performances, gestures, and behaviours that are culturally and historically situated. In this sense, gender is constructed through discursive practices and sustained through social rituals. Importantly, Judith Butler suggests that because gender is performative and not essential, it is subject to subversion, disruption, and reconstitution. Feminist theory is particularly useful for analysing *The Power*, a novel in which the biological reversal of gendered physical strength leads to the collapse of traditional patriarchal norms and the emergence of a new, matriarchal order. In *The Power*, women's sudden ability to emit electricity through a biological organ called the Skein functions as a literal and symbolic disruption of gendered power dynamics. Where once men were presumed to be stronger and more dominant, women now wield an uncontested biological advantage.

However, Alderman does not merely present a role reversal; instead, she explores how this newfound power reconstitutes gender identities and roles through performance and perception. Women begin to occupy roles traditionally reserved for men - soldiers, warlords, presidents, cult leaders - and in doing so, they adopt the mannerisms, attitudes, and violent assertiveness that patriarchal societies have

historically associated with masculinity. Thus, the novel performs a kind of Butlerian experiment: what happens when the cultural script of gender is flipped, and femininity is no longer associated with weakness, nurturing, or passivity? Judith Butler's theory reveals that the performance of gender in *The Power* is not inherently liberatory. Rather, it highlights how power can reshape gender performances in ways that reproduce domination. Characters like Tatiana Moskalvev and Margot Cleary demonstrate that once women gain access to structures of power, they do not necessarily challenge or dismantle systems of violence and control; instead, they often adopt them. The women in Alderman's world begin to perform masculinity as it has been historically constructed - through aggression, conquest, and political manipulation. This reflects Judith Butler's insight that while gender is performative and mutable, performances are constrained by existing social and institutional norms.

In *The Power*, the performance of femininity is re-scripted under the influence of physical dominance, resulting in a form of "new masculinity" that is enacted by women. This not only destabilises essentialist views of gender but also complicates the feminist hope that a reversal of power structures will automatically lead to greater equity and justice. Moreover, Alderman's use of the male journalist Tunde as a narrative device provides a reflective critique of the gendered gaze. As women begin to dominate the media, the military, and religious institutions, Tunde is subjected to harassment and objectification, paralleling the real-world experiences of many

women. His changing role in society dramatises Judith Butler's idea that gender identity is context-dependent and performatively sustained. Tunde's vulnerability in a newly matriarchal world emphasises that masculinity, too, is not a fixed essence but a performance shaped by cultural expectations and social relations. His journey from confident observer to a disempowered fugitive illustrates how gender roles are deeply embedded in power relations - and how shifts in power can produce new forms of marginalisation and trauma.

Ultimately, Judith Butler's theory helps interpret *The Power* not as a simple critique of patriarchy, but as a nuanced exploration of how gendered performances are entangled with power structures. Alderman's novel challenges the reader to consider the ethical implications of power and the extent to which any group - when given unaccountable authority - may become complicit in systems of oppression. The novel does not offer a utopian resolution but instead underscores Judith Butler's central thesis: gender is not what one is, but what one does, repeatedly, under social regulation. In this context, *The Power* becomes a speculative meditation on the fluidity of gender and the persistent dangers of power unmoored from accountability.

Postcolonial theory: Postcolonial theory is a scholarly discourse that explores the social, political, and cultural impacts of colonialism and imperialism, especially on previously colonised societies. Postcolonial theory examines how colonisation affected identity, language, literature, power relations, and knowledge systems, and how such impacts continue even after independence. Postcolonial theory also resists

the assumption of Eurocentrism and attempts to reclaim suppressed histories and honour native voices. Edward Said is often considered as the founding father of postcolonial theory in literary studies although there are several influential thinkers such as Frantz Fanon amongst others. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is widely considered the foundational text for his theory.

Frantz Fanon's critique of colonial legacies and institutional violence, particularly as articulated in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), provides a powerful theoretical lens through which to examine Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. Fanon argues that colonialism is not merely a political and economic system but a profoundly violent and dehumanising structure that reshapes the psyche of both the colonised and the coloniser. The aftermath of colonialism, he contends, leaves newly independent nations grappling with fractured identities, compromised institutions, and a ruling elite that often replicates the same structures of violence and oppression once imposed by colonial powers. In *Arrows of Rain*, these postcolonial anxieties and failures are laid bare through the political corruption, institutional decay, and pervasive silencing that characterises the fictional African state. Frantz Fanon's analysis of the "national bourgeoisie" - the class of elites that inherits power after decolonisation - is crucial to understanding the political dynamics at play in *Arrows of Rain*. Frantz Fanon describes this class as parasitic, lacking in vision, often more interested in personal enrichment than national development. This critique resonates in Ndibe's depiction of the ruling class, who exploit their positions to suppress dissent,

manipulate the judiciary, and silence the media. The government's treatment of the central character, Bukuru, reflects Frantz Fanon's insight that postcolonial states often perpetuate colonial modes of control through censorship, surveillance, and violence. Bukuru, a journalist who seeks to uncover the truth behind the death of a young prostitute and the complicity of powerful men, is not celebrated for his courage but punished for threatening the political status quo. His marginalisation exemplifies how postcolonial regimes often criminalise truth-telling and use state apparatuses to sustain silence, much like colonial administrations once did.

Moreover, Fanon's notion of institutional violence - violence embedded within the very operations of governance and law - helps explain the legal and moral bankruptcy depicted in *Arrows of Rain*. The judicial system in the novel is shown to be an extension of political power, not an independent arbiter of justice. Trials are staged, evidence is suppressed, and verdicts are predetermined. This reflects Fanon's claim that postcolonial institutions often remain tools of repression, inheriting the colonial state's function as an instrument of control rather than transformation. The silence that permeates the novel - particularly the silence of women and the poor - becomes a metaphor for the structural violence that denies certain groups the right to speak, to be heard, or to have their suffering acknowledged. In this way, silence itself becomes a political tool, reinforcing the hegemonic power of the elite. Fanon emphasises the psychological consequences of colonialism and its aftermath. The internalisation of fear, inferiority, and silence among the oppressed is a recurring theme in *Arrows of*

Rain. Characters like Iyese, the murdered woman whose death sets the plot in motion, and Bukuru, who wrestles with guilt, disillusionment, and trauma, illustrate the deep emotional scars left by a corrupt and violent political system. Their inability to find justice or redemption underscores Fanon's view that postcolonial societies must not only rebuild their institutions but also reclaim the dignity and humanity of their citizens. Yet, in Ndibe's novel, the political system seems to do the opposite - it strips individuals of agency, silences their narratives, and reinforces cycles of fear and repression. Furthermore, the novel engages with Fanon's notion that true decolonisation is not just the removal of colonial rulers but the radical restructuring of the society. In *Arrows of Rain*, such restructuring never occurs. The old order is replaced by disillusionment and apathy. Ndibe's portrayal of this failure serves as a sobering commentary on many African postcolonial states, where independence has not translated into genuine liberation. Instead, the violence of the colonial state is internalised and reproduced, leaving citizens alienated from their own governments. Ultimately, applying Fanon's postcolonial theory to *Arrows of Rain* reveals the depth of political and psychological decay that plagues the fictional nation. Ndibe does not offer easy solutions but instead invites readers to confront the uncomfortable reality that postcolonial freedom often remains incomplete. The persistence of corruption, institutional violence, and silencing points to the need for a more radical, Fanonian vision of transformation - one that dismantles not only the structures of power but also the ideologies that sustain them. In doing so, *Arrows of Rain* becomes not

just a narrative of political critique but a call for moral and social awakening in postcolonial Africa.

1.5. Review of Related Scholarship and Justification of Study

A growing body of scholarship has addressed the intersections of power, gender and corruption in both postcolonial and speculative literature. This section reviews relevant academic discourse on Naomi Alderman's *The Power* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, identifying critical gaps this study seeks to address. Alderman's *The Power* has generated substantial critical interests, especially for its feminist reimagining of gender and authority. Stephanie Genz and Benjamin Brabon argue that the novel subverts patriarchal norms by envisioning a world where women become the dominant gender through a biologically-induced electrical power. This shift, however, does not produce utopia; instead, Alderman portrays how power, regardless of the gender of its wielder, is inherently prone to abuse (51).

Abshavi Mojgan and Kargozari Zaman point out that the novel critiques the very notion of essentialist feminism, showing how institutional and systemic violence can be perpetuated by women when they occupy previously male-dominated spaces (822-825). Additionally, Tuhin Shuvra Sen contends that Alderman uses speculative fiction as a mirror to critique present-day gender inequalities and expose the corrupting influence of unbalanced power structure (135). Scholars such as Malgorzata Warchal and Alyson Miller have critically engaged with Alderman's *The Power*, offering perspectives that move beyond its speculative framework to interrogate the

sociopolitical implications of gendered authority. Warchal adopts ecofeminist and posthuman lenses to suggest that the electrifying Skein in women's bodies symbolises both liberation and monstrous embodiment, thus problematising any simplistic reading of the novel as feminist utopia (89-92). Alyson Miller, on the other hand, argues that Alderman's narrative critiques the replication of patriarchal paradigms through postmodern parody and representations of the "monstrous feminine", suggesting that the novel employs violence as a subversive tool against entrenched patriarchal ideologies (410-415). These interpretations enrich the understanding of how gendered power can devolve into new forms of domination, echoing Judith Butler's (1990) conceptualisation of gender as performative and socially constructed. In *The Power*, the disruption of gender binaries leads to emergent hierarchies, foregrounding the notion that power itself, rather than gender, is the true agent of corruption. Furthermore, Syeda Fizza Amir Shah et al. examine *The Power* through the lens of feminist critique, arguing that Alderman's work dramatises women's aspirations for equality and autonomy. Their analysis situates the novel within contemporary feminist discourse, asserting that the acquisition of power - albeit speculative - is symbolic of women's real-world struggles against patriarchal institutions (3-4). The implications of these critiques resonate with the gendered silences in *Arrows of Rain*, particularly in the experiences of characters like Bukuru and Iyese, whose narratives are circumscribed by authoritarianism and gendered violence.

Arrows of Rain has been critically examined within the tradition of postcolonial African literature, particularly for its indictment of military dictatorship and systematic corruption. The novel's protagonist, Bukuru, functions as a moral witness whose resistance to state violence ultimately exposes the cost of truth-telling in corrupt regimes.

Niyi Akingbe (2013) explores how Ndibe engages with silencing and censorship, drawing parallels between literary voice and political agency. Similarly, Molaria Ogundipe-Lesile (1994) notes the intersection of gender and state violence in the novel, emphasising the vulnerability of women and the complicity of corrupt institutions. Similarly, Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* has received considerable attention in postcolonial and African literary studies. The work of Edwin Onwuka emphasises the military as a 'virus' in African postcolonial governance, framing the novel's military characters as embodiments of political decay and systemic violence. In a related vein, Ijeoma Ngwaba, Oluwamayowa Gbadegesin, and Chiemela Ibeku (2022) delve into the intersections of silence, identity, and political repression drawing attention to how military regimes in postcolonial African states suppress dissent, especially among marginalised groups such as women. Their analysis, rooted in postcolonial theory, reveals the lingering effects of colonial legacies and institutional violence - a framework that aligns with Frantz Fanon's critique of colonial continuities in African political systems. Fanon's insights into the psychological and systemic scars of colonialism elucidate the dynamics of fear,

silence, and complicity in Ndibe's novel.

Hannah Arendt's (1951) theoretical reflections on authority and totalitarianism provide an overarching political framework for analysing the moral consequences of unrestrained power in both texts. Arendt warns of the ethical decay that ensues when power becomes absolute and is divorced from legitimacy. This insight is pertinent to the authoritarian regimes depicted in *Arrows of Rain* as well as the dystopian outcomes in *The Power*, where revolutionary change devolves into tyranny. The moral ambiguity that accompanies both male and female dominion in these texts supports Arendt's assertion that power, when unchecked, corrupts the very foundations of justice and human dignity. The justification for this study stems from the relative paucity of cross-cultural and intercontinental comparative literary analysis that scrutinise the themes of power and corruption through an interdisciplinary theoretical lens. While both *The Power* and *Arrows of Rain* have attracted individual scholarly attention, their juxtaposition reveals global patterns in the exercise and consequences of power especially when contextualised within gendered and postcolonial paradigms. This study seeks to illuminate how different societies - one futuristic and speculative, the other postcolonial and realistic - navigate the corrupting effects of authority. By doing so, it contributes to ongoing discourses on governance, gender dynamics, and the human condition in both African and global contexts.

This review of scholarship highlights the need for a more integrated, comparative

approach to understanding how Alderman and Ndibe portray power not just as a political or gendered force, but as a deeply moral and corruptible one. The next session presents the thesis statement that will guide this inquiry.

1.6. Thesis Statement

This study is a critical reading of Alderman's *The Power* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* that reveals the themes of power and corruption and they have been deftly explored with the use of various literary techniques which make the two works interesting.

CHAPTER TWO

POWER IN THE NOVELS

2.1. Introduction

The concept of power has long been central to philosophical, political, and sociological discourse. Scholars across disciplines have sought to define, categorise, and analyse its manifestations and consequences. In this study, power is approached through the lens of political philosophy, feminist theory, and postcolonial criticism to provide a framework for analysing Alderman's *The Power* and Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*.

One of the most influential theorists of the subject, Michel Foucault, reconceptualises power not as a commodity to be held but as a dynamic and diffuse network of relations. According to Foucault (1977, 37-38), "Power is everywhere" and functions through discourse, institutions, and social norms. He emphasises the relationship between power and knowledge, arguing that the production of knowledge is always entangled with the operations of power. This view is particularly useful in analysing Alderman's speculative world, where a new form of biological power reshapes gendered knowledge and authority. Max Weber, on the other hand, defines Power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests." (Weber 1978, 53) His definition captures power in its most pragmatic and observable form, especially as it plays out in state institutions and

bureaucracies — a view highly relevant to *Arrows of Rain*, where the State's power suppresses truth and individual agency.

Feminist theorists have further complicated traditional conceptions of power by emphasising its intersection with gender. Judith Butler (1990) challenges binary understandings of power as domination versus subjugation, suggesting instead that power also operates through performativity. Gender, she argues, is constituted by repeated social performances under the regulatory force of power. In *The Power*, Alderman literalises this idea, exploring what happens when women gain the physical means to disrupt the performative constraints of gender roles.

Bell Hooks (1984) offers a critique of power as it functions within both patriarchal and feminist discourses, advocating for a reconceptualisation of power as a tool for empowerment and collective transformation rather than domination. Her notion of “power to” instead of “power over” provides a moral framework for evaluating how power should be exercised, a theme evident in both novels as characters struggle with ethical dilemmas in the use of their power (92). Postcolonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon and Edward Said offer yet another critical vantage point. Fanon (1961) frames power within the colonial and postcolonial context as inherently violent, noting how colonial regimes exert psychological and physical control over subjects. This framework is essential for understanding *Arrows of Rain*, which depicts the residual structures of colonialism manifesting through state violence and the erasure of dissenting voices. Said (1979), in *Orientalism*, also emphasises how cultural

hegemony perpetuates power hierarchies, making the representation of the “Other” a tool of imperial control (43).

Together, these theoretical insights underscore the nature of power: as coercion, as discourse, as performance, and as resistance. They provide the critical tools necessary to interrogate how Alderman and Ndibe depict power within their respective narrative and socio-political contexts.

2.2. Power in The Power

Naomi Alderman’s *The Power* (2016) envisions a speculative dystopia in which the societal order in which women used to be the weaker vessel is completely overturned. Alderman imagines a world where teenage girls have the ability to generate and release electric energy from their bodies, granting them physical dominance over males. This phenomenon causes the systematic breakdown of global social, political, and religious structures. With this premise, Alderman seeks to examine the relation of gender with authority, violence and the power structure which operates unnoticeably in the world.

Alderman, who was mentored by Margaret Atwood, employs an epistolary frame narrative. The novel is framed as a manuscript from a male author, Neil, to a woman, Naomi, who gives some editorial remarks which replicates the ironic inversion of a woman being the author and the critic of male literature which has been the literary tradition for centuries. The novel spans over a decade, following the manner in which “skein - based” power reconstructs society — varied from family and gender roles to

warfare and state. It concludes in a global apocalyptic war with a rewriting of history revealing a matriarchy. This premise serves as the novel's core concern by accentuating and displaying the undemocratic frameworks of disempowerment and narrativization of power. The theme of power is illustrated through the main characters in the novel: Roxy, Allie, Margot.

As the child of a British gangster and a fourteen years old girl, Roxy Monke has one of the most powerful skeins (the organ generating electrical power) in the world. She is able to use her ability to rise to the top of the criminal underworld as a 'Roxy Power'. In the early part of the novel, Roxy is at home when two men break into the building. Their intrusion is sudden, violent, and planned to intimidate and harm. The men are physically larger and initially have the upper hand. They use their strength to threaten her and assert control over the situation. As one of the attackers moves closer, the story reveals an unexpected sensation in Roxy. The "skein," the biological organ in women that produces electrical discharges, awakens. The moment is described vividly, with a surge running through her muscles and heat building under her skin. Without thinking, she touches one of the men, sending a shock through his body. He reacts immediately—his muscles seize, his breath catches, and he loses his physical dominance. The second man, shocked by his partner's sudden incapacitation, tries to regain control. Roxy, now aware of her abilities, turns the shock on him too. The result is clear; he is also forced into submission by the power of the discharge. The whole encounter happens quickly, but its psychological impact is strong. The

attackers pull back in pain and confusion, while Roxy stands firm, having shifted the balance of power in the room (18-19).

This encounter highlights the novel's main theme: the changing and unsettling nature of power in situations of vulnerability. At the start of the scene, Roxy finds herself physically outmatched. The men have the advantages of size and physique, controlling the space and leading the interaction. In this moment, Roxy embodies the typical power dynamic of gender violence, with men as aggressors and women as victims. The activation of the skein flips this dynamic on its head. Alderman presents this shift not as a planned choice but as an instinctive response, similar to an animal's natural defense. This supports the novel's ongoing idea that power, at its most basic level, is primal and instinctive – unmediated by law, politics, or moral standards. Once the power is used, the balance of the scene changes immediately. The same hands that could cause harm become tools of control. Roxy shifts from defending herself to actively asserting her dominance, particularly in her second use of power against the other intruder (16-19). She also uses the power to get revenge on her mother's killers: having planned it out with her father, Bernie and her half-brothers, Terry and Darrell (54-56).

This escalation is important. It shows that power, once discovered, encourages not only self-protection but also the possibility — and perhaps the temptation — of revenge. Another instance of power in the novel is being demonstrated where a girl of about fifteen or sixteen shopping alone, gets into an argument with a man who

appears to be in his thirties. The scene takes place in a supermarket where Tunde, a university student, is shopping with his friend, Isaac. The content of their disagreement is not detailed, but the man raises his voice, gestures aggressively, and appears to invade the girl's personal space. In response, the girl extends her hand and releases a visible, controlled electrical current directly into the man's chest. He collapses on the floor, twitching and stunned, but not dead. The store falls silent. Customers freeze. A beat later, the girl turns calmly and walks away, leaving the man on the floor and the bystanders in shock (23-24). In this context, a man berating a younger woman, mirrors countless real-world encounters where women are intimidated or talked down to in public. However, the power dynamic flips when the girl uses her electrical ability to strike back.

The fact that she does not run, apologise, or wait for consequences suggests a growing confidence in her entitlement to act – a social license that women in patriarchal societies often lack. In the novel, Alderman also uses the Riyadh riot to dramatise the dual nature of power – as an emancipatory force and as a volatile capacity for misuse of power. The part in which Noor leads a group of women to destroy parked cars is one of the clearest examples of the novel's thematic concern: that power once acquired, does not inherently carry moral restraint. The scene opens with a statement of grievance and intent. Noor, addressing Tunde and his camera, says: "They do not let us drive a car here, but watch what we can do." This line is both personal and political. It refers to Saudi Arabia's long-standing ban on female

drivers (only recently lifted in reality) and positions her forthcoming act as a symbolic inversion of that restriction. Here, power functions as a tool for reclaiming agency in a domain from which women have been systemically excluded. Noor places her palm on the bonnet, the bonnet opens, the engine revving to a dangerous pitch, and then a white flash melts metal and ruptures the fuel line. The resulting explosion sends fire and smoke into the air. Other women join her, some igniting cars without even touching them, demonstrating a refinement of ability. Their destruction is offensive, strategic, and symbolic, signalling a slide into aggressive dominance. Power of the 'skein' from the beginning of the novel seemed like an instinctive and defensive power for women to protect themselves from the patriarchal society but later evolved to a controlled, offensive manipulation of power (58-63).

Margot Cleary also finds out that her daughter, Jocelyn (Jos) has this power. Jocelyn has recently been involved in an accident at school where she used her electrical ability against a boy, but Margot reassures her that she "hasn't hurt anyone, not badly," and that the boy was only "given a scare" (23). Through cautious conversation, Margot learns that Jocelyn has been able to use her power for six months – far longer than Margot expected. Jocelyn describes the early sensations as "funny" and "like static electricity" (29), something that began as a harmless, almost playful phenomenon among girls, fuelled by secret online videos and informal experimentation. Margot asks her daughter to show her what she can do. Jocelyn complies, and with a visible act of concentration, she channels electricity from her

palm into Margot's hand. Margot feels the jolt – controlled, deliberate, and potent – and realises the significance of what her daughter can do. (29-34). Allie is also one of the main characters in the novel that has and exerted the electrical power 'skein'. Her first awareness of her ability occurs in a quiet, suffocating domestic atmosphere of a dinner with her foster parents, Mr and Mrs Montgomery-Taylor. As Allie reaches for her fork, she feels an unusual sensation in her collarbone. Neither of the foster parent notices, but Allie is left with the clear, instinctive knowledge: something inside her has changed. The 'skein' dormant until now, has awakened. She begins to practice secretly, experimenting at night in her room. The first real-world test of her ability comes when she encounters Kyler and Hunter, two local boys who try to intimidate her with. She shocks them with precision, enough to hurt and frighten them without causing lasting injury. Later, she uses the ability against Mr Montgomery-Taylor himself. He claims to have seen her with the boys at the graveyard, calling her a 'filthy little whore', each word punctuated with a punch, a slap and a kick. He has been the architect of her suffering for years, using his position as guardian to exert total control over her. When she finally channels the power into him, it is no longer a test – it is retribution. She focuses on the current on his body until his composure breaks and he is left physically overwhelmed (35).

For the first time, she is in control, and he is the one afraid. Allie's life prior to the emergence of her power is defined by helplessness. Her first conscious use of power takes over this vulnerability. The electrical ability functions as a bodily rejection of

subjugation: her body now possesses the means to resist without relying on anyone else's protection. This is a moment of self-actualisation, generated from within (33-38). Furthermore, Alderman uses Allie's time in the convent as a microcosm of the novel's larger themes, charting the transformation of power from a personal gift into an instrument of spiritual authority. Allie evolves from a quietly observant newcomer to a figure who redefines the religious and social order of the Sisters of Mercy. The first turning point comes with the healing of Luanne, a frail fourteen year old girl prone to violent seizures. Luanne's condition, untreatable by doctors, marks her as vulnerable, and Allie's intuitive 'tingling' sense draws her attention. In the charged atmosphere of a lightning storm, Allie channels her electrical skein not to harm but to restore balance. By modulating her ability to deliver controlled energy, she halts Luanne's seizure. This act reveals the complexity of Allie's gift. In the convent's Catholic framework, miracles are divine acts mediated through the church. Allie's intervention bypasses the institution entirely. Her power is internal, bodily, and feminine – an affront to the male-centric hierarchy of priesthood (which birthed her title "Mother Eve"). It is in this context that Allie begins to refer to God as "she". In the Christian world, this is referred to as 'blasphemy'. By reframing the divine as female, she plants the seeds for a radical reordering of spiritual authority. The reimagining of God's nature becomes embodied in Allie's next major act: the baptism of the convent girls.

This act paved the way for the Sisters of Mercy to become divided. Some interpret

Allie's works as manifestations of God's will, fearing to oppose her lest they resist the divine. Others, like Sister Veronica, more rigid in their orthodoxy, see her as a dangerous heretic undermining the church's teachings. After the death of Sister Veronica, Allie addresses a group of girls and some nuns who have begun following her teachings after the baptisms. They now see her as a spiritual leader, someone uniquely connected to God. Allie tells them, "Do not be afraid, if you trust, then God will be with you. She has overturned heaven and earth for us" (Pp 83). This is a declaration meant to inspire courage, affirm loyalty, and position the changes in their world as part of a divine plan. Allie speaks openly of God as female – not as a metaphor but as a fact.

This is deeply radical in the convent setting, where the church has always spoken of God as male. The followers, however, embrace it because it connects directly to their lived experience of female power. In her speech, Allie frames the electrical ability they all carry as part of this divine upheaval (a sign of God's will). The 'overturning' of heaven and earth (50) refers to the dismantling of old orders: the dominated religious hierarchy and the societal structures that kept women powerless. By tying God's identity and will to female empowerment, Allie gives the movement a sacred legitimacy. This isn't just about physical abilities – it is about rewriting the religious narrative that has long underpinned gender inequality. Alderman uses these events to illustrate a central truth of the novel: that once power enters a closed system, it inevitably transforms not only who holds authority but the very ideas and symbols

that define it.

Tunde also witnesses another scene where some set of women that were meant to be 'trafficked' use their 'skein' power to free themselves from the bondage. Moldova is the world capital of human sex-trafficking. They traffick men but women most especially. One of the women gained her power from a fourteen year old girl, a bread truck driver's daughter. She usually brings food for them. The basement they were kept in by the traffickers is dark. They ask her for light but in turn, she takes the hand of one of the women (the woman who thought she was going for a good secretarial job in Berlin) and turns the palm upward. And in the centre of the woman's palm, the girl makes a little twist with the thing that had just woken up in her collarbone making the woman gasp and shudder. After having control over this power, she passes it from woman to woman. At this point, they believed a miracle had happened and God had rescued the "Children of Israel from slavery". They use the power to free themselves by killing one of the overseers and the other men in the house. This is another form of power used as a tool for resistance (92).

Ultimately, their rise to dominance mirrors the mechanisms through which men have historically consolidated authority: through violence, coercion, and control of narrative. Alderman explores power not just as vulnerability but as influence, control, and the power to shape reality. By giving these women physical superiority, the novel examines if power is inherently corrupting or if gendered usage incites abuse. The changes in self-regard as women acquire power are newly illustrated by Alderman.

Men are on the receiving end of the fear of harassment and assault. Women and men undergoing these changes demonstrate power's effects on the psyche — either enhancing or detracting self-worth. Cultural power shifts in the opposite direction as well. Ancient statues are revised as markers of female supremacy. Religious texts are edited to envision God as female. This corresponds to contemporary discourse on the patriarchal oversimplification of history and religion. While gender is at the forefront of the novel's action, Alderman employs the idea of power to examine more general questions of human nature. She is not making a case for women being inherently better or worse than men, but rather human beings, when presented with absolute power, tend to abuse it. The novel is a reflection not so much of male or female comportment per se, but of the corrupting impulses inherent in human systems. Alderman proposes that power is amoral, neither good nor bad in itself. It merely intensifies intention and ability. Combined with fear, trauma, ambition, or ideological zeal, power turns deadly. Combined with accountability, self-reflection, and collective responsibility, it can result in constructive change but the novel provides scant examples of the likelihood of this eventuality.

2.3. Power in *Arrows of Rain*

In *Arrows of Rain* (2000), Okey Ndibe confronts the operations of state power and its capacity for oppression, silence, and erasure. The novel is set in the fictional African country of Madia, a postcolonial state rife with political violence, authoritarian control, and institutional corruption. Through the experiences of the journalist

narrator and the mysterious vagrant Bukuru, Ndibe explores how power is consolidated through fear and sustained through the control of truth. The mood at B. Beach is preempted with the ominous image of a young woman's dead body on the beach, her face twisted into a monstrous smile. The lifeguard, Lanky, assumes his role as master narrator of what's to happen next, eagerly recounting, repeatedly to one set of witnesses after another how he came across the body. Lanky claims to have arrived at seven sharp and, in the thick harmattan darkness, hear the shrieks of panic from a drowning woman. Just as he was diving in, he saw what he described as a "ghost" rising out of the waves – Bukuru, the local "madman," who he and other people claimed had a romantic affair with the water spirit, Mammi Water. Lanky describes how he swam out to the drowning woman, struggling through the waves, but when at last he was able to pull her onto dry land, death had already "taken a seat" inside her body. More importantly, he announces that following the rescue effort, the woman smiled at Bukuru and proceeded to die (14-15). The crowd begins linking Bukuru to the death.

Bukuru, despite all these allegations remains unruffled and detached, displaying no visible interest in defending himself to the gossiping crowd. The arrival of the police officials transform suspicion into official accusation. Three murder detectives arrive, conduct standard scene work, and question Lanky who adds further incriminating details about Bukuru into his story. When Bukuru is questioned, he responds in awkward, evasive terms, saying only that he "tried to save her" and couldn't and that

she "had been raped" (36) by a group of men he saw from a distance. This charge, however potentially helpful, is undermined by the officers removing him from public hearing distance, and in a short time he is handcuffed and arrested. The subsequent press release frames Bukuru as a primary suspect, suggesting that he is likely the perpetrator of a string of rapes and prostitute killings along the beach. The police, hoping for a "fantastic scoop," issue a press release framing that the case is solved, making Bukuru the villain (21). This is emblematic of a state machinery more interested in projecting efficiency and decisiveness than the pursuit of the truth.

It also imitates the political propaganda of the regime in other parts of the novel, where public opinion is tightly managed to maintain the illusion of competence. Bukuru's status as a social outcast "madman" makes him vulnerable to slanderous charges. His unkempt appearance, unconventional speech, and lack of social guardians render him helpless to withstand both the crowd's rumour and prosecutorial bias of the police. This is typically an example of how the powerless has no say in a society dominated by those in power. Another theme of power being culminated in the novel is gendered power. The body itself – in clothes torn, earring gone, bloodied ear, and locked smile, nakedly carries the signs of male violence. The medic-legal evidence that follows confirms that she was raped, having sustained "multiple and devastating" injuries typical of violent, penetrating assault (28). This violence testifies to a gendered power dynamic where women, but particularly sex workers, are exposed to male domination as physical and sexual violation. The drowning is not a

random death, but the culmination of male supremacy over the female body: the men sexually use her against her will, and then kill her in silence, stripping her of her ability to testify against them. Her corpse is turned into an object of male brutality and domination (18-23).

In the courtroom where the trial is taking place, the action begins with Bukuru advancing, not only to refute the charges of rape and murder, but also to shift the focus of the court to a broader, more malevolent reality. His questions to Lati are innocently phrased initially, inquiring as to whether the officer was aware of previous cases of rape, especially those involving prostitutes who belonged to minority groups. Gradually, the questions are tightened up, requiring Lati to confess reluctantly that investigation into such crimes has a habit of falling out of public view when the suspects are connected to powerful figures in government. The most sensational twist comes when he names General Isa Palat Bello, the Head of State, as directly implicated in earlier rape cases (40-41). It is a stunning act of defiance: in a dictatorship where the president is seen to be beyond the law, even to suggest he has done something wrong is to risk treason. This action appeals to the jeopardy of judicial autonomy in the hands of an authoritarian government.

Under such a government, truth is something to be avoided rather than admired, and justice takes second place to the preservation of the illusion of stability. By naming General Bello, Bukuru performs an act of militant disobedience, fully cognizant that it will only hasten his own downfall. At that point, the trial is a stage upon which the

deeper conflict of *Arrows of Rain* plays itself out: a solitary, marginalised individual takes the courage to state a truth the powers that be are desperate to conceal, and the state responds in the only way it can – by silencing him (37-42). Another instance of gendered power and violence is depicted in the novel through the killing of Ashiki's sister, who was brutally hacked to death by her husband. Also, power exploitation is depicted through the character of General Isa Palat Bello. Okey Ndibe uses the character of Iyese (Emilia) to show how power is abused (gendered power). The act occurs in a hotel room where General Isa, having taken Iyese there with the pretense of giving her work, turns violent. Iyese tries to struggle, but Isa makes use of her body as a right, subjecting her to calculated violence. The language is free from romanticism; rather, it is harsh and blunt, emphasising the violation as both bodily aggression and an exercise of power, “the men pushed me to the bed. Then he stabbed my vagina with a dagger. I started bleeding. That's when he entered me with his penis” (137). It is not merely a sexual encounter – it is a political act, in which Isa employs his power to remove Iyese from agency and reduce her to a possession within his personal playhouse of power.

By the time Iyese is able to muster the nerve to report the rape to the police, institutional betrayal is swift and complete. The officers are courteous at first, but as soon as the name General Isa is mentioned, the atmosphere changes. Instead of taking her statement or opening an investigation, they dismiss her allegations and politely dissuade her from pursuing the case. Others make veiled threats of making trouble for

herself, and others just plain refuse to file a report. The officers ask Iyese if the General spends money on her and she affirms this. The officer in charge then said, “Chikena, he’s your sugar daddy. He can beat you” (132). It is clear that in this world, the law is not there to protect citizens from the ruling elite – it is there to protect the elite from the citizens. Institutions within Madia, especially the police, courts, and media, are not autonomous. They are tools that are employed by the ruling elite to legitimise their powers. Ndibe illustrates how these kinds of institutions lose their moral legitimacy when they turn subservient to political interests. The police will implement arbitrary laws, and the press will be censored or intimidated. This is institutional decay brought about by power used not to rule, but to control. Madia's power thus works to consolidate inequality. Ndibe's characterization of Madia draws heavily from the histories of real-life African countries, including Nigeria, where military dictatorship and autocracy have been the ruling conditions of political life (132-133). On pages (137–139), the narrative returns to Iyese after her rape by General Isa Palat Bello, and makes clear the ongoing, brutal price of his brutality. She is patently battered: her face swollen and discolored, her body bruised, her movements agonizingly slow. The violence General Isa inflicted on her was not only the swift, instant act of desecration but also an attempt at annihilating her spirit, leaving her forever conscious of his control of her life. As Iyese narrates what happened, the political nature of the attack is more apparent. Isa had not so much acted out of cruelty or lust for self – his assault was driven by the arrogance of a man

who feels he is superior to the law.

His position as Head of State gave him the impunity to strike so thus in overt contempt of law and morals, secure in his belief that there would be no repercussions. For Bukuru, the event serves to ratify his growing realisation of the state's moral decay: that those who govern believe themselves above the bounds that apply to mere mortals, and that their individual crimes are merely an expression of their political dominance. This is a close, hard examination of the abuse of power. General Isa's cruelty isn't random – it is a direct result of being at the head of an authoritarian system. His ability to hurt Iyese with impunity is facilitated by the same matrix of impunity that insulates him from any form of responsibility in the political arena. The assault is therefore simultaneously an act of personal mastery and political declaration: it goes on insisting that in this world, power is available to be deployed in the interests of those in possession of it, and the bodies of the vulnerable may be used, broken and discarded without restraint. The novel can be seen as a political allegory for a society in which the powerful persecute the powerless, and justice can never be served when the criminal is in power. On page 145, the novel reaches one of its most agonising and unsettling moments: the finding of Iyese and her baby by Bukuru after yet another brutal fight with General Isa Palat Bello.

When Bukuru enters, what he sees is one of virtually unspoken savagery. Iyese is again clearly battered, her body showing the marks of a recent beating. But the horror is worse next to her – her baby has been stabbed “Stepping closer, I saw a gash on the

baby's right leg, an ugly knife wound from which blood still flowed..." (145). The action is not only physically violent but symbolically so: Isa's brutality is no longer merely against Iyese herself but against the most innocent and vulnerable individual in her care. This scene illustrates the excess of corruption in power in *Arrows of Rain*. Isa's brutality on Iyese and her unborn child is not so much a personal act of cruelty – it is the logical conclusion of a system that has excluded him from accountability. In such a system, power not only protects the abuser from punishment; it encourages him to commit greater atrocities, confident that no law, institution, or individual can prevent him. The stabbing of the baby is also a gruesome symbolism.

It represents how the state will stop at nothing to eliminate the most innocent – the future of its own – just to preserve the comfort and dominance of those at the top. The baby, helpless and innocent, is a symbol of the people of the nation: helpless, disposable, and entirely within the control of leaders who see them as objects and not as lives worth living. In Isa's own eyes, the violence is not an isolated individual fault; it is the sharpest expression of a political culture in which masculinity is constituted by the ability to hurt and the resilience to avoid retaliation. Iyese's suffering, and that of her baby, are enabled by a culture of facilitators – police, judges, and political allies – who will ensure that the offense is not investigated, nor prosecuted.

Moreover, the novel critiques memory and historical narrative as forms of power. The regime seeks to control not only present discourse but also collective memory. By documenting Bukuru's story, the narrator symbolically reclaims the power of

narrative from the state. In this way, Ndibe highlights the role of storytelling as resistance. The widespread surveillance, the silencing of opposition, and the show trials are all characteristic of the mechanisms used by military regimes across Africa. With this context, it becomes clear that Ndibe is not merely creating a fictional regime, but drawing upon real systems of oppression. The historical references imbue the novel with a visionary sense of urgency—reminding us that power, when left unchecked, is ever-menacing. Such observations open the novel's theme of power from the political to the personal and cultural spheres. In *Arrows of Rain*, Madia becomes a space where colonial modes of domination – surveillance, silencing, and arbitrary justice – are internalised and perpetuated by African elites. The legal system in *Arrows of Rain* is depicted as a tool of oppression rather than justice. Trials are manipulated, evidence suppressed, and verdicts predetermined – all in service of maintaining the regime's dominance. Bukuru's eventual trial becomes a stage of revealing these corruptions, though it is too late to reverse the damage done.

Both Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000) have power as a central theme, but they approach it from diverse contexts and literary traditions. While *The Power* is a speculative dystopian novel of the future in which women gain the biological ability to dominate, *Arrows of Rain* is a realistic postcolonial novel set within the fictional African country of Madia, where dictatorship by the military, corruption, and censorship of journalists pervade everyday life of citizens. Despite these differences, both novels present power as a

performative, corrupting, and institutional power. Both novels also insist on the interconnection of individual agency and systemic power, reminding us of how individuals exercise power and are humbled by dominating structures. In both novels, power is more a means of oppression than a force for good. Alderman imagines a world where the dynamic of power between women and men is reversed: women suddenly gain the ability to deliver electrical shocks, and soon, due to this biological ascendancy, they dominate the world. Institutions come to reflect this new hierarchy, female soldiers commit war crimes, new matriarchal religions are established, and men are relegated to subordinate social roles.

Similarly, in *Arrows of Rain*, power is in the hands of a brutal military dictatorship where truth is suppressed, justice is distorted, and human rights are systematically violated. General Isa Palat Bello's regime represents unchecked political power that destroys individual freedom. Femi Adero, the reporter, and Bukuru, the derelict witness, are muzzled, excluded, and harassed for trying to reveal the truth. In both novels, the state becomes the machinery of violence, either through overt authoritarianism in *Arrows of Rain* or insidious militarisation and religious orthodoxy in *The Power*. Power is thereby figured not as an abstract principle but as a material machinery of domination that infuses institutions, bodies, and ideology. One of the most apparent similarities in the two books is the way they represent narrative control as power.

In *The Power*, Alderman uses a metafictional structure in which the book is presented

as a manuscript written by a man (Neil), submitted to a woman editor in a world where women are dominant. The editor's sarcastic comments throughout reveal how even storytelling is controlled by those in power. This inversion underscores the point that historical truth is decided by those in power, not by those experiencing it. In *Arrows of Rain*, this dynamic is more grounded but no less insidious. The state censors the press, falsifies records, and silences dissidents. Femi Adero's efforts to publish the truth about the regime are thwarted, and Bukuru's eyewitness account of past atrocities is discredited until too late. Power here is shown to operate through erasure of facts, of testimonies, of people. Both novels, therefore, suggest that truth itself is a casualty of power, and that control over history and over language is as important as control over the physical or the political. Alderman and Ndibe also address the manner that, when individuals are provided access to power, they are susceptible to moral corruption. In *The Power*, characters like Roxy and Allie (Mother Eve) begin with apparently justifiable motives such as protection, justice, reform, only to slide into self-preservation, manipulation, and cruelty. Their development indicates that power does not only change society; it changes people, generally for the worse. General Isa Palat Bello in *Arrows of Rain* is an embodiment of the complete transformation of one into a tyrant. His regime is defined by censorship, sex brutality, and abuse of state funds for his selfish ends. Even mid-level personnel and civil service workers exemplify corrupt behaviours, illustrating how authority trickles not only institutionally but also morally, destroying personal integrity.

CHAPTER THREE

CORRUPTION IN THE NOVELS

3.1. Introduction

Corruption has been an ongoing problem in political philosophy, sociology, economics, and literature since centuries. Corruption is essentially the abuse of the power given in trust for personal or group advantage, but its varieties and intricacies are many. Corruption is not solely bribery or embezzlement; it is any such fraud or dishonesty that breaches collective trust for personal or group advantage. Corruption is both a political phenomenon, discrediting justice, democracy, and institutions, and likewise, a moral one, discrediting the ethical underpinnings of societies. This section examines corruption from a theoretical perspective in two notable contemporary

novels: Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* (2000). Alderman's speculative fiction recreates a world where women suddenly develop the power to produce electricity, thereby turning patriarchal systems upside down. But instead of creating freedom, this shift replicates dominant hierarchies and produces new forms of corruption and domination. Ndibe's realistic novel is set in a postcolonial African dictatorship, where it reveals how totalitarian regimes manipulate truth, suffocate opposition, and oppress the vulnerable. Although both novels are set in different environments, one fantastical and global, one historical and African, both novels converge to the conclusion that corruption is a natural outcome of untrammelled power.

3.2. Corruption in *Arrows of Rain*

Corruption in Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* is portrayed as a pervasive and corrosive force that destabilises not only political institutions but also the psychological and social fabric of society. While power is the instrument through which control is wielded in *Arrows of Rain*, corruption is the lubricant that sustains that machinery. Ndibe depicts corruption as ubiquitous, seeping through every level of society, from government down to the judiciary, media, and even into the morality of people. The novel illustrates how corruption is not simply the act of bribery or stealing, but a more insidious corrupting of moral foundations. Set in the fictional African country of Madia, the novel delves into the lived realities of a people broken by decades of bad governance, abuse of power, and institutional decay.

Through a realist narrative imbued with political critique and personal tragedy, Ndibe dramatises the complex consequences of corruption in a postcolonial African context. At the heart of the novel is the character of General Isa Palat Bello, a military dictator whose leadership epitomises the authoritarian tendencies that characterise much of post-independence African governance. Under Bello's rule, the government is marked by systemic brutality, propaganda, and the manipulation of both public opinion and the legal system. His regime maintains power through fear, violence, and the suppression of dissent, with state apparatuses like the police and judiciary repurposed as tools of control rather than justice.

The morning after the body of the young woman is pulled from the surf, Bukuru, still dizzy from his first sight of death, walks into the headquarters of the Madia police and is greeted by a female press officer whose smile is so broad it appears pre-fabricated. She waves a single sheet of paper headed STOP PRESS, already filled with paragraphs that appeared more like a completed verdict rather than an opening hypothesis. The suspect, nameless, homeless, already labeled "mentally troubled" has, according to the release, "confessed"; he is, the same release continues, "believed to be responsible for the recent incidents of rapes and murders that had occurred at several city beaches" (19-20.) The officer's excitement is not the excitement of discovery but of packaging: she is handling the press as a commodity, a story gift-wrapped for immediate consumption. In that small fluorescent-lit room the entire process of justice is short-circuited. Evidence, investigation, the slow labour of

doubt are all pre-empted by the need to produce a reassuring narrative for the morning editions. The corruption here is not a matter of money changing hands; it is subtler and more corrosive. Words are detached from their referents and float free, becoming instruments of power rather than description. The police officer's performance is so effortless, so cheerful, that we understand this is routing: every day a story is born fully grown, wearing the mask of truth (20-22).

Another instance of corruption portrayed in the novel is the trial of Bukuru. In the sweltering courtroom, Justice Kayode, nicknamed "the Elephant", presides with theatrical irritability. Bukuru, the vagabond who claims to have witnessed soldiers raping the drowned woman, has been recast by the prosecution as her killer. The state's case rests on the testimony of Dr. Mara, a psychiatrist whose clipped sentences carry the borrowed authority of science. Mara concedes that Bukuru is lucid and coherent: nevertheless, he pronounces him "socially maladjusted," a phrase that transforms moral outrage into pathology. Bukuru asks the doctor whether a man who kills every dog because one dog bit him is sane; the doctor evades. The trial is not a search for truth but a ritual in which the state displays its power to define reality (26-42).

Every procedural safeguard is observed, yet the outcome is pre-ordained. This is corruption masked in due process. The forms of justice are emptied of content and paraded like a cadaver of life-support. When Bukuru blurts out that the head of state himself is a rapist and murderer, the courtroom explodes, not because the

accusation is unthinkable, but because it is unsayable. The corruption of language is complete, certain names cannot be spoken, certain memories cannot be admitted (26-34). Reuben Ata, Minister of Social issues, lives in a mansion that functions like a miniature state. A visitor arriving at nine in the evening must first push through a crush of women desperate to be admitted: three burly “screeners” who decide who is beautiful or desperate enough to enter. Inside the rooms are scented with cigar smoke and expensive perfume. Ministers sprawl on poufs while women, some of them barely out of adolescence, sit on their laps or stroke their necks. The band plays lazy blues, but no one is listening. Conversation is a low murmur of deals and gossip. Ata himself glides from cluster to cluster, distributing cognac and flattery, ensuring that every ambassador present will conclude that Madia is a country of unbridled hospitality rather than unbridled theft.

What is on display is not merely private indulgence but the systematic conversion of public office into private spectacle. The villa is financed, we learn, by a ministry whose official mandate is “social harmony.” In practice this means that Ata taxes the nation in order to stage nightly orgies for the elite. The women who die outside the gate – one who suffocated in the crush only five months earlier are collateral damage, unrecorded in any ledger. When Bukuru asks Ata what his ministry actually does, the minister replies with disarming candour; “I make sure the ambassadors see the most beautiful girls so they never send home a negative report” (108-109). Here, corruption is not hidden. It is flaunted and aestheticised. The entire political class is gathered in

one room, and the atmosphere is one of mutual congratulation: they have achieved the ultimate robbery – stealing the future of an entire nation while toasting one another with champagne (99-101). Another instance of corruption displayed in the novel can be drawn from where the Hunger Institute declared Madia as a "disaster in progress." Parliament demands the Minister of National Planning, Dr. Titus Bato, a man whose wiry build and slouching posture might lead one to believe him feeble were it not for the sneering curl of his lip. The press gallery is packed. Bato begins in airy contempt: the report is either "useless and untrue" or, if true, "good news" (170). Cornered into defining, he gives a grotesque syllogism: rising death rates will balance rising birth rates, thus keeping per-capita income intact.

The chamber erupts, but Bato is not disturbed; he has the serenity of the man who realises that words no longer carry weight. What matters is not persuasion but power: behind him are the generals, behind the generals the guns. The scene summarises the moral topsy-turvy at the heart of the state: a minister can rise in the legislature and proclaim that mass butchery is economically sound, and the only consequence is histrionic indignation. When protesters protest, they get machine-gunned, and the government statement reduces twenty or thirty killed to "four hooligans." Bato's performance is the natural consequence of a culture in which all public pronouncements are a lie calibrated to affect (151-154). Corruption here is not deviance from the system but is the system speaking in its own terms, indifferent to shame because shame has been privatised. The villa literalises the fusion of state and

private greed.

Government ministries are re-purposed as pleasure clubs, while the women, recruited, rationed, and discarded, embody how citizens themselves become negotiable currency. Major Isa Palat Bello, the same officer who raped Iyese and later murdered her, emerges on national radio as the new Head of State, promising “moral renewal.” Within days, ten army officers are executed for ‘treason,’ their trials summary and secret. Bukuru, who once loved Iyese and fled from the consequences, listens in a darkened room while Bello’s voice fills the room with talk of ‘cleansing the nation.’ The irony is vicious: the man who once dragged a prostitute into the sand now speaks of restoring virtue (161-162). Bukuru understands that his own silence, his failure to tell Iyese’s story when it might have mattered, has helped to author another chapter of corruption. The cycle of corruption is endless, each regime accuses the last of theft while perfecting the art. The nation is a ground of lies, each layer erasing the one beneath without obscuring it. The political body reconstitutes itself by devouring its own limbs and the people, relieved that the old thieves are gone, applaud their replacements not knowing that they are worse than the previous government.

Arrows of Rain reflects a shift in Nigerian literature from colonial concerns to a critical examination of contemporary realities, including “brazen corruption and social inequality in contemporary Nigeria.” Bukuru, the protagonist, is a once-promising journalist who becomes a homeless outcast, exiled by a system that criminalises truth and valorises silence. His fall from social grace is not due to

personal failure but rather his refusal to conform to a corrupt establishment. His trajectory mirrors the fate of many who seek justice or accountability within deeply flawed systems. Bukuru's narrative becomes a symbolic space where the novel interrogates how the state manufactures marginality and weaponises poverty to silence dissent. The novel's opening scene, featuring the murder of a prostitute on the beach, acts as a metaphor for institutional disregard for the vulnerable. What initially appears to be a random act of violence is eventually revealed to be entangled with high-level political interests, including those of General Bello.

The state's hurried efforts to suppress the investigation and fabricate a scapegoat, Bukuru, reflect the extent of corruption within the justice system. Niyi Akingbe (2013) highlights this as a gendered dynamic, wherein women, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged, are rendered disposable in a corrupt regime. The erasure of the prostitute's humanity and story speaks volumes about the moral collapse engendered by institutional corruption. The state's manipulation of memory and history further entrenches despair. Through controlled media narratives and staged trials, the regime rewrites its own crimes and reshapes public perception. Bukuru's trial is emblematic of this process, a theatrical performance designed not to uncover the truth but to validate the state's erosion of reality. In this way, Ndibe underscored how corruption operates not only through material exploitation but also through ideological dominance and epistemic violence. The suppression of Bukuru's voice is symbolic of the broader silencing of truth in postcolonial governance. Ndibe

also critiques the complicity of civilian collaborators in sustaining autocratic regimes. While the novel centres on military rules, it implicates broader networks of elite actors, including intellectuals, bureaucracies, and legal professionals, who enable the continuity of corruption through passive acceptance or active involvement. The moral erosion is thus collective, rooted in a culture where power is unaccountable and self-interest trumps social responsibility. Expanding on the critique of military rule, Edwin Onwuka, in his study *Reading the 'Military Virus' in Postcolonial African Novels: Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrow of Rain** in context, describes military dictatorship in postcolonial Africa as a 'virus' that infects the political and social fabric of the nation. In *Arrows of Rain*, Okey Ndibe mirrors this metaphor through the character of General Isa Palat Bello, whose regime epitomises the authoritarian traits associated with militarised governance brutality, suppression of dissent, and institutional manipulation.

Military figures represent a deviation from democratic values, substituting public service with personal aggrandisement and systemic oppression. Ndibe's portrayal of the persecution of Bukuru and the silencing of dissenters serves to illustrate the ways in which this 'military virus' erodes the ethical foundation of governance and civil society, turning state institutions into instruments of fear and injustice. Similarly, the novel depicts how autocratic leadership distorts individual identity and enforces silence, particularly among women and other marginalised groups. Ndibe's novel shifts the narrative focus from colonialism to contemporary issues of corruption,

military brutality, and political imbalance. The silence imposed on women, such as the unnamed prostitute whose murder catalyses the plot, reflects a broader pattern of gendered repression under autocratic rule. Ndibe analyses how ordinary people become complicit in corruption, sometimes through necessity. The police take bribes, journalists self-censor, and even Bukuru stays silent for years. This is a society where morality is compromised in the interests of survival. The lines between victim and perpetrator are blurred. This moral dissipation is one of the most disturbing aspects of the novel, resonating with how corruption is often a culture rather than just a political problem. Ndibe's criticism of corruption is an imitation of real African contexts, and Nigeria is a good example. Life in the 1990s in Nigeria was marked by dictatorships of the military, censorship, and corruption. Scholars like Chinua Achebe, in *The Trouble with Nigeria*, had argued that failure of leadership was the key problem in the country. Ndibe adheres to this belief, using fiction to depict the lived consequences of corruption-governance.

In essence, *Arrows of Rain* is not merely a political novel; it is a psychological and existential study of a society on the brink of collapse due to institutionalised corruption. By weaving together the individual and the systemic, the novel presents corruption as both a symptom and a cause of broader social disorder. Ndibe's work ultimately serves as a warning and a call to action. It suggests that without ethical leadership, institutional reform, and collective awakening, societies risk descending into cycles of violence, alienation, and moral disintegration.

As the narrative makes clear, the true cost of corruption is not only political instability but also the dehumanisation of a people stripped of dignity, agency, and hope.

3.3. Corruption in *The Power*

Naomi Alderman's *The Power* (2016) offers a provocative exploration of how systemic power, once shifted, can replicate the very structures it initially sought to dismantle. The novel clearly illustrates that wherever power is concentrated, corruption will result. The adage "absolute power corrupts absolutely" becomes a theme in the novel. Power results in privilege, privilege results in hierarchy, and hierarchy requires enforcement, usually through violence or coercion. The novel is one of the most subversive works of contemporary feminist dystopian literature. Girls and women everywhere suddenly develop a 'skein', a natural organ that allows them to send powerful electrical currents out of their hands. This discovery flips the physical and social hierarchy that has ruled patriarchal domination for so long. On the first glance, Alderman's universe appears to offer a reversal of oppression, a redeemer ideal wherein the women are free from masculine brutality. But as the novel goes along, it becomes clear that Alderman is not so much concerned with wallowing in female dominance than in exposing the corrupting effect of power itself. Women who seize power as politicians, prophets, generals, or gangsters, inevitably recreate the same repressive systems that were imposed on them.

Violence, intimidation, and authoritarianism flourish not because women are corrupt,

but because power corrupts when unchecked. The novel thus raises important questions: Can power ever be wielded justly? Does empowerment always result in exploitation? The novel depicts corruption as pervasive, systemic, and circular. Along the paths of Margot Cleary, Allie/Mother Eve, Tatiana, Roxy Monke and even Tunde's individual experiences, the novel depicts corruption in politics, religion, military regimes, crime organisations, and in personal relationships. Each of these examples show how power, once institutionalised or unchecked, decays into exploitation and brutality. In doing so, Alderman punctures the utopian myth of gender reversal, calling for corruption to be seen as an issue of institutions inherent in power itself.

Margot Cleary, an American politician, is an image of political corruption. At the start of the novel, she is depicted as a realistic mayor who is faced with the mysterious outbreak of the 'skein'. Her decision to shut schools after reports of girls electrocuting boys in playground fights seems deeply rooted in the interest of public safety. But her ambition eventually takes over her integrity. The turning point comes with her daughter, Jocelyn, who possesses the strong power 'skein' though it is at times unstable. Margot subtly pressures her daughter, Jocelyn, to reveal her talents publicly, meanwhile exercising plausible deniability. By transforming her daughter into a political symbol, Margot begins her descent into corruption: she sacrifices intimacy and honesty for ambition. Then, she manipulates scientific research on 'skein defects' exaggerating risks in order to unify politics and eject opposition.

During one of the pivotal events, Margot manipulatively leverages fear among the population to demand tighter control, portraying herself as the individual who can 'restore order' to a society destabilised by gendered violence.

Alderman's depiction of Margot shows that power corrupts not because of individual morality but because political systems reward manipulation and fear-mongering. Margot's journey follows real-world political corruption, in which politicians use crises – real or staged – to consolidate power. Her rise demonstrates the way corruption begins one small step at a time in the form of necessary concessions until virtue is consumed by ambition. Alderman shows how political systems themselves incentivise manipulation. In this sense, Alderman's critique is not of individual character but of systemic vulnerability. Power corrupts because institutions reward corruption.

Where Margot represents political corruption, Allie (later Mother Eve) acts out the corruption of religion. Allie's beginning is traumatic: a foster child abused by her adoptive father, Mr Montgomery-Taylor, finds the 'skein' as a survival tool. Fleeing violence, she recreates herself as Mother Eve, a prophet who interprets the 'skein' as a gift from God. When Allie escapes, she realises that the only means by which she can ever truly be safe is, as a voice within her suggests, "to own the place" (50). She then heads to a convent, takes on a new name, Eve, and begins to preach a new theological doctrine founded upon this new power. However, when one of the nuns catches her suspecting her of being an imposter and refusing to embrace her new

religious message, Allie kills the nun, to herself justifying that without killing her enemies, she can never feel secure. Instead of religion traditionally being a proscription of peace and love, Allie is more motivated by the elimination of those who do not believe her. Early on, Allie's work is liberatory. Her sermons focus on empowerment, justice, and healing for women long oppressed by patriarchal figures. She rewrites scripture to portray God as female, contending that women have always had the spark of divinity within them. For those who have been marginalised, her words are affirming and radical. Yet as her popularity grows, Allie's messages shift from empowerment to control.

She begins to rewrite scripture not as interpretation but as dogma, suppressing dissent and setting herself up as the sole mediator between man and God. Her charisma becomes authoritarian. At one pivotal moment, she informs followers that questioning her is questioning God, establishing herself at the top of a rigid hierarchy. The corruption is mainly the institutionalisation of religion. What begins as a grassroots movement of resistance evolves into a church with coercive and obedient structures. Alderman critiques religious institutions, even those established on genuine faith and justice succumb to corruption when power is centralised. Mother Eve's church is likened to real-life examples: the Catholic church abuse of power, the rise of cult leaders who exploit belief for personal agendas, and modern-day televangelists who equate divine blessing with financial or political support.

Alderman depicts the fact that religion is not the problem, but its vulnerability to

corruption once it becomes institutionalised. Allie, once a victim seeking freedom, now an authoritarian prophet, illustrates how trauma and ambition combine to warp spiritual belief into exploitation. Also, the theme of corruption can be drawn from the character of Tatiana Moskalev, the President's wife. She is a victim of her violent husband. When she gains power, she capitalises on the situation to kill him. Her liberation seems justifiable but later on, her subsequent rule degenerates rapidly into authoritarianism after she takes over her husband's political seat. Meanwhile, the women sold into sexual servitude in Moldova rose to the position of power and founded a new country, Bessapara. The leader of this new country, Tatiana Moskalev, starts to let power distract her from her aims of creating a freer country. At a party, when a young man cuts her off, she breaks a bottle of wine on the ground and makes him lick up the wine (and several shards of glass). A female ruler would most likely be more merciful and forgiving than a male ruler, one would assume. Alderman disagrees with this, however, as Tatiana's cruelty is triggered by her new found power. Margot constructs training camps for girls to learn their power under government programs, and subsequently constructs an army out of the girls. She then teams up with Tatiana Moskalev, who will sign an agreement with the army in exchange for American support for Bessapara. With the support of the international community, Tatiana Moskalev is able to institute quite a host of laws that curtail men's freedoms with little global opposition. Power thus becomes a self-serving phenomenon, which will allow institutionalised discrimination and oppression of the masses who would

seek to overthrow it. And Margot is so contaminated by wishing the camps to thrive that she closes her eyes to the injustices done to a community she does not belong to. Tatiana order mass-scale killings of political opposition, takes over the army, and authorises sexual assault of men in detention as a control mechanism.

Violence is then normalised during her time in office, and the 'skein' power is remolded as a tool of terror. Men are being raped in front of audiences which can both be classified as both physical and political dominance. Tatiana does not only replace patriarchal violence but replicates it in reverse. Instead of tearing down abusive hierarchies, she turns them around to establish a regime where men experience fear once experienced by women. Alderman thus takes down the assumption that women's rule would be more just by nature. Tatiana's government is a flashback to the dictatorships of Stalin through Pinochet, when authoritarian savagery was employed, such as mass murders and rape, in order to intimidate. Alderman illustrates through Tatiana that authoritarianism is not masculine rather, it is a structural possibility wherever power is unchecked. Tatiana is the very expression of the notion that "the oppressed, once empowered, often replicate the systems of oppression." Her characterisation is a reminder that corruption comes in cycles, feeding trauma and recursing violence from generation to generation. Roxy Monke is the novel's most fascinating character simply because she embodies the contradictions of corruption at a grass-roots level. Roxy is neither a political, religious, nor head-of-state character such as Margot, Tatiana, or Allie. She begins life as a young woman from a criminal

family, daughter of a London gangster. Her life is marked by violence from the outset: intruders break into her home and kill her mother in front of her.

In this rush of the moment, Roxy discovers she possesses the power of her 'skein', killing the intruders with it. Her dad, Bernie Monke, presides over a vast crime empire founded on drugs, extortion, and violence. The skein provides Roxy with a special asset in this patriarchal universe. Whereas other women in the family are excluded or used as pawns, Roxy is indispensable, evoking respect and fear. At first glance, she embodies a revolutionary exception: a woman who can hold her own on the same violent terrain as men. But Alderman is careful to show how this empowerment is undermined by the systems in which she exists. By using her skein in her father's crime lord regime, Roxy inevitably funds the very system that exists through exploitation and violence. Her relationship with Darrell Monke, her younger half brother, also illustrates her complicity in corruption. Darrell envies as well as resents Roxy's power, and he attempts to control her even as he is reliant on her abilities. Their relationship is a tense partnership of coercion and intimacy. At times, Roxy is controlling, but she is also bound up with the patriarchal logic of the criminal network. Darrell takes advantage of her loyalty, using her as both a tool and danger. This tension underscores the fact that corruption is not merely institutionalised but also extremely personal: trust, love, and lust alike are all redirected by the presence of the skein. With growing power, Roxy begins to expand her father's empire, extracting obedience from subordinates and destroying rivals with violent force. What began as

a measure of protection against trauma became a way of domination.

Roxy's descent eventually encapsulates the novel's bigger argument that corruption is not exclusive to political elites or religious personnel. It thrives both in the streets, homes, and romantic relationships where power is claimed but not answerable. Her story proves that individuals' power, when exercised within corrupt systems, will reproduce corruption and not eliminate it. At the end of the book, Roxy, who started as a victim seeking justice to be served, is now an enforcer of the same systems she shrank from at the beginning, her story being a microcosm of Alderman's larger warning: power corrupts absolutely everywhere and not only in governments but also in the underworld of crime. Also, When Roxy discovers Bernie had her mother murdered, she expels him from the crime organisation and takes its place herself. Bernie and Darrell will not let Roxy have it, however, so they kidnap her and have surgically removed the biological source of her powers (a muscle women develop known as a skein) in a horribly painful procedure.

They transplant her skein into Darrell so that he may utilise the power she once wielded. Bernie and Darrell are so against losing any of their power that they employ despicable means of doing so. Power therefore contaminates even those who already hold it since they are provoked against losing power, therefore leading to corruption. Tunde is subjected to the same injustice. While he is covering Bessapara, Tunde sends research and material for a book to another reporter, Nina, whom he dated very briefly. As the worst begins to happen to men in Bessapara, Tunde must go into

hiding and is reported dead. He then hears on the internet that Nina has stolen all he had sent her and presented it as her report. The power Nina has gained, and the knowledge that Tunde was never going to be able to refuse her action, allows her to plagiarise his life's work in full without a qualm.

The portrayal of corruption in Naomi Alderman's *The Power* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* confirms that corruption is not political or social but a very human phenomenon that transcends geography, culture, and even gender. The two novels illustrate how corruption takes root in institutions of power and how, after taking root, it nourishes spirals of violence, injustice, and exploitation. By juxtaposing Alderman's dystopian vision of gendered power with Ndibe's realist depiction of postcolonial tyranny, one can trace the course of a shared intuition that corruption is unavoidably linked to how individuals and institutions secure control. In Alderman's *The Power*, corruption is actualised through the exploitation of a newly found biological advantage. What begins as an empowering force, the skein that gives women the ability to control electricity, soon becomes a means of oppression.

Allie (Mother Eve) and Roxy illustrate how the lure of unrestrained power leads to the formation of new hierarchies that are the old forms of oppression in new garb. Alderman is suggesting corruption is not male or female but something that arises from human frailty and ambition. Her tale shows that if individuals are put beyond reproach, they cannot help but utilise their rights for political or individual benefit. Corruption in *The Power* is thus not merely political but existential: it challenges the

existence of human beings' relationship with power. In Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*, corruption is even more directly linked to politics and political institutions. The military dictatorship of the novel thrives on stifling opposition, manipulating truth, and subordinating citizens to objects of terror. The fate of Femi Adero, the journalist who wrestles with speaking truth to power, and the silencing of hundreds of victims document the gruesome cost of system corruption.

Unlike the idealised thought experiment of Alderman, Ndibe grounds his work in the postcolonial African nations' political and historical context, where the ideals of independence were quickly lost to dictatorship, military dictatorship, and institutionalised oppression. And by unflinching realism, the novel argues that corruption seeps in not only because of those who exercise it, but also because of the passivity and silence of those who suffer it. Critically, the two novels compel readers to critically consider the meeting place of power and morality. Alderman's novel demonstrates that corruption is not inherently attributed to patriarchal organisations but to power in general; women, once empowered, simply reenact the very same practices they previously criticised. Ndibe, on the other hand, reminds us that such historical truths as dictatorship, censorship, and the monetisation of truth cannot be dismissed as abstractions and continue to influence the everyday reality of many individuals in many societies. Together, these remarks suggest that corruption is not a remote thing but an imminent, global reality.

CHAPTER FOUR

LITERARY DEVICES IN THE NOVELS

4.1. Introduction

Literary devices are special methods that writers use to make what they are writing more profound, beautiful, and meaningful. They are ‘tools’ of literature which help authors to shape words so that they convey more than mere facts. Simply put, they make writing stronger, more creative, and memorable. Literary devices are what makes novels, plays, and poems less boring and more interesting. Literary devices fall into two categories: Literary techniques and Figurative language. Literary techniques are the choices an author uses in order to tell a story. They include; foreshadowing, flashback, stream-of-consciousness, e.t.c). Figurative language on the other hand is the use of language that is not literal to create imagery or comparisons (e.g., metaphor, simile, personification, e.t.c).

Literary devices were not developed by a single person but were built up over centuries of literature. It was Aristotle (384-322 BCE) who initially set the stage in *Poetics*, where he discussed items such as mimesis (imitation), catharsis (emotional effect), and metaphor as important literary devices (Aristotle 23). Thereafter, Roman orators like Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Quintilian (35-100 CE) expanded the list of figures of speech, including hyperbole, alliteration, and personification (Kennedy 47). During the twentieth century, the Russian Formalists, Viktor Shklovsky in particular, emphasised that literature is defined by its ‘devices,’ arguing in *Arts as Techniques*

that writers use them to defamiliarise everyday experience. Modern theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida took their cue by examining how devices make meaning and ideology. Aristotle can be regarded as the founder of literary devices since he is the earliest to analyse them.

4.2. Literary Devices in *The Power*

In Naomi Alderman's *The Power*, literary devices are central to constructing a world where gender roles are inverted and power relations of authority, violence, and agency reimagined. Devices such as imagery, figurative languages, symbolism, foreshadowing, and irony are not merely enriching the literary texture but also highlighting thematic explorations of power, gender, and corruption throughout the novel. In this chapter, the recurrent literary devices in the novel are categorised and examined below, showing how they contribute towards shaping meaning and sustaining narrative progression.

Foreshadowing: This is a literary device in which a writer provides clues or hints of things to come in the plot, creating suspense and building narrative tension to keep the reader engaged. Alderman skillfully employs foreshadowing in a bid to generate suspense and suggest the inevitable collapse of patriarchal structures. The very first hints are found in sentences such as 'a long red scar running up his arm... patterned like a fern' (18), foreshadowing evidence of female violence on men's bodies. The remark 'this is not the first time, and it will not be the last' (15) foretells the heightening of power struggles directly. Also, 'the storm will break ... they'll hear

thunder rolling in' (76) portends a future world upheaval. The forecast materialises in 'the earth is ready ... it wants it' (293), leading to calamity. On page 103, Allie's words, 'the old order is dying... a new one being born,' encapsulates the revolution as inevitable. On page 262, the foreboding remark 'what happens here will not stay here' widens to global collapse. Finally, 'the storm gathers in the corners of the sky' (271) seals the doom of the old world.

One of the most persistent devices in *The Power* is Imagery, which appeals to all senses to convey the physical transformation of society. In writing, **Imagery** is the application of specific, descriptive words to engage the reader's five senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) in order to develop a mental picture or sensation for them. It is a powerful literary tool that can help connect the reader to the text by tapping into their own experiences and emotions, enhancing the writing to make it more forceful and compelling. Visually, Alderman gives us dark impressions such as 'a long, red scar running up his arm... patterned like a fern, leaves and tendrils,' – which fuses the natural with the grotesque, depicting the organic yet destructive quality of power, 'long electrical arcs passing between them, even though she doesn't think she ever told them to do that' (55), 'clouds are blue-purple, the light is hazy, the lightning strikes one, two, three times on the face of the ocean' (76), 'a concrete pillar is trapping her leg ... her right leg is crushed to bloody meat' (164), 'a single glance is enough ... Darrell prepped for the implantation' (222), 'the marks of pain across his body, livid and dark, blue and scarlet and black' (246), and finally, 'the sky, which

had seemed blue and bright, clouds over, grey to black' (271).

These images not only make the supernatural occurrences tangible but also refer to the bodily cost of violence. Tactile imagery is built into these descriptions: 'the dusty-sweet smell of the Hoover... the carpet is sodden, thick with a red stain' (19) – which evokes both domesticity and violation, 'her body wants something, and she is denying it ... the itch of it ... like just not passing water' (70), 'water gushing down the stone stairs ... carpet sodden now' (110), 'the air syrupy ... it's going to hit 104 in the shade' (162), 'the emptiness that comes after is worse ... like she's dead but is still too alive' (221), 'his knees are pulled up to his chest – no room to stretch' (252), and 'the skein pulsing and curling in Darrell's chest' (274). Each haptic detail highlights the corporeal character of power, grounding virtual violence in bodily sensation. Olfactory imagery is equally evocative, drawing out sensory associations of power: 'the scent of orange blossom... a wind gusts up' (22), 'the smell of ripe fruit, sweet and succulent.' 'The smell of high summer' (52), 'a marine scent, salt and green and pungent' (97), 'something smells of gasoline' (164), 'the smell is strong and sweet' (216), 'the stench: burning flesh, rotting food, faeces, dogs, sour vomit' (253), and 'a scent like rotten fruit' (272). These offensive, sweet odors highlight the contrast of power as desirable but harmful. Auditory imagery heightens tension and dramatises violence: 'her mum shrieks... it sounds like metal in a bad engine' (17), 'a sound like eggs frying' (62), 'a sound like popping candy as the branching limbs of the sargasso plants smoulder' (97), 'a sound like thunder ... masonry falling ... the creak in the

concrete' (165), 'a whining sound from the drill ... the beep of the red-zone alarm' (194), 'a low, croaking laughter ... the crackle of light between her palms' (35), and 'the low, liquid stillness spreads through the room and into Roxy's bones' (290).

The sound range of both mechanical beeps and natural thunder brings the violence close and into the viewer's ear. Then the Gustatory imagery provides a shocking bodily texture to the prose: 'the taste welling under her tongue is of bitter oranges' (18), 'the crystals exploding in her brain' (56), 'a hot, sweet tea ... the taste of blood bubbling from her brain' (18), 'a lozenge of ice lodged in his throat' (170), 'a mouthful of glass ... blood and meat on the shard' (224), 'the taste of metal in his mouth from the jolt' (222), and "bitter oranges" in the air during Darrell's kill (282). These flavor descriptions metaphorically evoke corruption, trauma, and death.

Figurative language is the application of words and expressions in a non-literal manner to convey vivid imagery, trigger emotions, and describe deep concepts beyond their straightforward meanings. It strays from literal meaning to offer richer, more imaginative relations, mostly utilised in creative writing and poetry, as well as even ordinary speech, to enhance communication as stronger and more interesting. These are typical instances like metaphors, similes, and idioms that use comparison and creative application of words to influence the audience and produce a unique effect. Alderman uses metaphors, similes, and personification profusely to carry her descriptions to a plane above literal reality.

Metaphors employed are 'the knowledge is as good as freedom' (16), 'her dad's

body is a castle for her' (51), 'the great eye of the ocean gazing at the sky' (97), 'the lights fizz and blink out' (95), 'the snake meets the tiger; the jackal greets the scorpion' (207), 'he is the willing sacrifice that will atone for all the others' (250), and 'power seeks its outlet' (271). Each metaphor emphasises the magnitude of political and personal stakes.

Similes are equally potent: 'her mum shrieks... like metal in a bad engine' (17), 'he falls forward like a felled tree' (54), 'the sky is pale blue-grey as a pebble' (79), 'scars like a Sunday roast ... pink and brown and raw red and black' (106), 'the strand of meat ... jumping and squirming like it wants to get back inside' (221), 'his cock comes up like a salute, like a traitor' (260), and 'like the earth saying: I'm ready for it' (292). These comparisons sensationalise pain of the body and nature, linking human experience to natural and mechanical imagery.

Personification humanises impersonal forces: 'the blade winks at her, silver and smiling' (17), 'the machine clicks forward ... Come on, it says' (69), 'the power crackling in the air ... waiting to wheel at a secret signal' (114), 'the electorate turned out to be goddamned liars' (161), 'the moon, a yellow-clouded fingernail of light between the trees' (246), and 'the storm gathers in the corners of the sky' (271). Here, Alderman personifies weapons, storms, and machines to bring out the sentience of the violence.

Symbolism is the use of a thing, a person, situation, or even an activity to represent something greater, an abstract theme, beyond their literal interpretation. Symbolism

weaves through the narrative, infusing richer meaning into a return of the same objects and imagery. The primrose drawing symbolises innocence corrupted and the taunting killer's signature. The cupboard is both symbolic and actual hideout and a symbol of patriarchal imprisonment. Allie's cross and crucifix symbolise a Christ-like reversal of mercy, turning a sign of salvation into one of retribution. Other symbols follow other stages of transformation. The grey fox pacing Allie is a protective totem of determination. The lamp post drained by Margot symbolises the electricity grid as patriarchal order.

The Convent garden, Moldovan basement, South-Carolina beach, serves as a baptismal sign of renewal. The lightning storm itself symbolises divine presence and power of awakening. The concrete pillar crushing *a leg* indicates patriarchal weight, while the eye tattoo on the palm symbolises omniscient monitoring and the new form of woman power. The cage symbolises male vulnerability, the oil drum for false refuge and the moon for cyclical violence (264). At the end of the novel, the gathering storm symbolises apocalypse, the rainbow scar becomes a distorted covenant, and the ark signifies survival and destruction.

Another dominant literary device in the novel is **Irony** which refers to a situation where there is incongruity between expectation and reality occurs when the literal meaning of a word is opposite to what is stated, thereby demonstrating an incongruity, that is, a situation in contrast with what is real or true. Irony permeates the narrative, often with brutal satire. It is ironic that 'the cupboard ... a place of safety' becomes a

room of terror (16). Likewise, a convent, normally sacred, is transformed into a factory of violence (46). ‘The storm, a thing of beauty’ (163) is ironic, given its destructive aftermath. Towards the end of the novel, women chant ‘freedom’ while replicating oppressive hierarchies. Men who were once the oppressors are now jailed like animals. The bitterest irony concludes the novel: ‘Here it comes’ heralds rebirth, but rebirth into still another cycle of domination.

An **Allusion** is a brief, indirect reference to a person, place, event, or other work of art that the author assumes the reader will recognise and be familiar with. It is a form of figurative language that rather than actually describes something, employs shared cultural knowledge to infuse, complicate, and add ironical comparison to a text. Allusions connect *The Power* to larger cultural and historical literature. Allie's bearing of the cross is a reference to the crucifixion of Christ (37-45), and her own transformation into ‘Mother Eve’ (10) is an allusion to biblical Eve. The lightning storm that ‘splits the sea’ (76) is in reference to Moses parting the Red Sea. Also, Allie's reference to ‘the meek inheriting the earth’ ironically twists the Sermon on the Mount. The rape camps mentioned on page 194 cite real atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda. And finally, ‘the ark’ (Here it comes) evokes Noah's Ark, though in this case it saves the conquerors only, not humankind.

Motif is also another literary device incorporated in the novel. In literature, a motif is a recurring image, idea, word, or symbol that contributes to a story's deeper meaning, often adding to the overall theme. Where a theme is the underlying abstract idea, a

motif is a concrete or tangible item – a recurring object, action, sound, or phrase, for instance – that readers can recognise and that moves them toward an understanding of the story's general message. Repeated motifs hold the strands of the novel together. Electricity as such is the most dominant motif – recurring in arcs, jolts, hums, and sparks along each section throughout the novel. The motif of water runs all the way from ‘the dripping tap’ (110) to ‘the flood tide’ (272), signifying rebirth and destruction. Hands recur: hands clenching, hands sparking, hands reaching (throughout the novel), insists on control and intimacy. Scars motif, whatever the mode of inscription – carved, burnt, tattooed – recurs from the beginning to the end of the novel, indicating power inscribed on the body.

Onomatopoeia in books are words that imitate the sounds they represent. The literary term, in Greek origin ‘name-making,’ creates an effect of sound through the sound of speaking the word itself so that readers can ‘hear’ what is happening or what the thing is more acutely. Among them is ‘buzz’ which at once evokes the sound of a bee, e.t.c. Onomatopoeic descriptions make violence scenes real: ‘zzzt’ of electricity (64), ‘crack’ of bones (31), ‘pop’ of smouldering plants (66), ‘whirr’ of a political machine (70), ‘beep’ of the alarm (103), ‘crackle’ of torture light (62), and ‘boom’ of thunder (208). Such sound effects increase immediacy and position the reader in the sensory world of events.

Stream of consciousness is a literary technique which attempts to replicate the natural, unintermittent flow of a character's thoughts, feelings, and sensory

observations as they occur in the mind, often in the form of unshaped, non-linear stuff. Stream-of-consciousness dramatises psychic breakdown. Roxy's recollections fade in ellipses and fragments. Allie's interior monologue careens between prayer and command. Tunde's camera-eye perspective breaks down into images, noises, and smells. Margot's consciousness fluctuates between public speech and private horror. Darrell's inner monologue breaks down into hysteria. The thoughts of the nameless men stutter between survival and despair. And finally, the end of the novel breaks down into fragmented sentences, echoing global rupture (112-302).

4.3 Literary Devices in *Arrows of Rain*

To read *Arrows of Rain* is to be immersed in a slow, deliberate rainfall of language, gentle at first, then suddenly sharp enough to draw blood. Ndibe does not simply employ literary devices as ornaments; he allows them to breathe, ache, and testify within the narrative. His craft is not a catalogue of techniques but a coherent poetic structure, where form mirrors the politics, grief, and stubborn hope that the novel dramatises. One of the most striking features of Ndibe's style is his use of **Sensory Imagery**. The novel's scenes are layered with vivid sensory impressions, what might be called a "sensory palimpsest." The ocean "makes eternal love to the shore," its roar described as "a belch from an old, far-away world". Readers taste salt water, feel the sand's coarse tactility, and inhale the "musty, doughy" stench of a drowned man (16-17). Even in the prison yard, air thick with the odour of "unflushed faeces" is juxtaposed with the "heady perfume" of bougainvillea and hibiscus (58).

Beauty and horror sit so tightly together in these passages that they become inseparable, enacting one of the novel's central tensions. Figurative language functions in the text as more than aesthetic decoration; it becomes a moral lens. Death is personified as an intruder that "enters the woman's body and takes a seat" (15), while Bukuru's mind is described as "a tragic puzzle that becomes messier the harder I try to disentangle its knots" (53). These metaphors function as indictments of violence and corruption.

Even courtroom moments are transformed through figurative force, with a judge's gavel tracing "an arc, koi!" (42) – its onomatopoeic sound exposing the fragility of order. Silence, repetition, and naming are also used as political devices. Refrains such as "Perhaps... Perhaps... Perhaps..." or "Objection! Objection!" (30-41) are not mere stylistic flourishes; they dramatise the cost of silencing voices under dictatorship. Naming itself carries symbolic weight. Iyese is forced to split into "Emilia" to sell her body, preserving her "true" self from violation. The narrator's withheld name, revealed later, wounds rather than consoles, turning the question of identity into an accusation.

Irony is a literary device, originally used in Greek tragedy, in which the full significance of a character's words or actions is evident to the audience or reader but not to the characters. It is built into the very structure of the narrative. A minister of social development hosts orgiastic parties in the name of "harmony." A Western-trained doctor discovers his vocation only after being stranded in a village with

“neither drugs nor doctors” (103). Crowds who once celebrated a coup with “alleluias” later find themselves herded into police trucks. These reversals, foreshadowed through recurring images of rain, sirens, and drowning, make historical inevitability felt viscerally rather than abstractly.

Ndibe also relies heavily on **Juxtaposition** which states the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect to expose contradictions. Courtrooms meant to embody solemnity are interrupted by a madman speaking to ants. An editorial board relishes bawdy jokes while an ashiki plant wilts in silence. In prison, sunflowers bloom beside “faeces, urine, vomit, blood” (48). Such contrasts do not only describe injustice, they enact its absurd logic.

Proverbs, dirges, and call-and-response rhythms thread through the English narrative. A grandmother warns that “the death that kills a puppy first blinds him,” while market women banter in lively Pidgin: “Who crazy? Na you be crazy!” (90). These moments anchor the story in an oral tradition that resists erasure by colonial modernity. Symbolism operates on both physical and emotional landscapes. The sea is not only water but memory, erasure, and judgment. Cities are described as “human bazaars where shame had no odour” (130). Objects, such as an eagle-shaped copper earring, a pillow soaked with blood, or a boulder warmed by exile, carry cumulative meaning, forming a symbolic archive within the novel.

Ghosts in *Arrows of Rain* are not spectres of the supernatural but embodiments of historical trauma. Iyese’s veil becomes “a cloud of blood” (162), and Tay Tay’s rape

echoes Iyese's death, marked by the same whistled tune. These revenants collapse linear time, insisting that the past continues to dictate the present. Exile and fragmentation are explored through inward metaphors. Bukuru sees himself as "a stream cut off from its source" or "a coin so worn that the inscription has disappeared" (180). Writing becomes his resurrection, the "scratchy song of pen and ink" serving as a heartbeat denied by dictatorship. In the final image, words travel "seven seas and seven wilds" (82), circling back to the grandmother's dirge and the ocean's roar at the novel's opening.

Ultimately, every device in *Arrows of Rain* serves a single ethical purpose: to hold both characters and readers accountable. The sensory richness prevents detachment, irony implicates, ghosts demand testimony, and silence becomes unbearable. For Ndibe, style is not the clothing of truth but its very bone and sinew. His literary devices are not decorative – they are the means by which history itself speaks.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

This study examined how power and corruption are portrayed in Naomi Alderman's *The Power* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain*. Through close reading, feminist theory, and postcolonial theory, the research explored how individuals and institutions misuse power and how such misuse leads to injustice, violence, and moral decline.

In *The Power*, the sudden rise of female dominance overturns traditional gender roles. However, instead of building a fairer society, the women in control begin to repeat the same patterns of oppression once used against them. This shows that corruption does not come from gender itself, but from unchecked and unbalanced power. Judith Butler's idea of gender as performance helped explain how new forms of gendered behaviour emerge when power shifts hands.

In *Arrows of Rain*, Ndibe exposes the deep corruption within a postcolonial military dictatorship. Through the struggles of Bukuru and the silencing of victims, the novel shows how political leaders, police, and the justice system use their authority to maintain control and hide the truth. Frantz Fanon's ideas helped in understanding how colonial violence is passed on and repeated by new African elites.

Both novels, though different in setting and style, reach a similar conclusion: when power is not regulated by justice, empathy, and accountability, it becomes a tool of oppression. The comparative analysis revealed that corruption is universal, it exists in

futuristic societies and in postcolonial nations alike, and it appears whenever power is allowed to operate without limits.

5.2 Findings

From the analysis carried out in this research, the following major findings were made:

1. Power is inherently corrupting when it is absolute or unchecked.

In both novels, the group that gains dominant power begins to misuse it, showing that the problem lies not in who holds power, but in the absence of accountability.

2. Gender does not guarantee moral leadership.

In *The Power*, women—traditionally viewed as victims—become oppressors when given superior strength. This challenges the assumption that power would become kinder or more humane simply because women are in charge.

3. Corruption thrives where institutions are weak.

Arrows of Rain demonstrates how courts, police, the media, and leadership fail to protect the truth because they are controlled by the oppressive state. A corrupt system produces corrupt outcomes.

4. Silence is a tool of oppression in both texts.

Victims in both novels are silenced—through fear, violence, shame, or political pressure. Their silence allows corruption to grow stronger.

5. Power shapes identity and behaviour.

As shown in *The Power*, characters begin to perform new gender roles once social

power shifts. Their attitudes, choices, and moral codes change with their positions of authority.

6. Postcolonial societies often repeat the violence of colonial rule.

In *Arrows of Rain*, the ruling class behaves like the former colonial powers—using force, censorship, and fear. This supports Fanon’s argument that postcolonial states sometimes inherit and continue oppressive systems rather than dismantle them.

7. Both novels argue that power without accountability leads to injustice.

Whether in a futuristic world or a postcolonial nation, the outcome is the same: abuse, fear, inequality, and the loss of humanity.

5.3 Recommendations

These two works encourage us to read beyond borders. Comparing African postcolonial literature with global dystopian fiction opens up new ways of seeing how writers use stories to confront corruption and injustice.

Students and scholars could extend this kind of study to other writers to see how different traditions handle the same urgent themes. Both novels underline the need for systems that keep power in check. Strong institutions, a free press, and fair courts are essential to prevent the abuses we see in the stories.

Governments must also create spaces where the voices of the vulnerable are heard, so that stories like Iyese in *Arrows of Rain* or the exploited women in *The Power* are not silenced or distorted. These books are not just meant to be read; they are meant to be wrestled with. They ask us to reflect on our own societies and our own roles. Silence,

indifference, or complicity, small as they may seem, can allow corruption to thrive. Both novels call on us, as individuals, to resist, to question, and to hold leaders accountable.

At their core, *The Power* and *Arrows of Rain* are warnings as much as they are works of art. They caution us that corruption is not inevitable, but it becomes so if people stop paying attention. Through story, they hand us a responsibility; to imagine better, to resist injustice, and to refuse the silence that allows corruption to endure.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has shown that although Naomi Alderman's *The Power* and Okey Ndibe's *Arrows of Rain* come from very different worlds, one imagined, the other rooted in Nigeria's political history, they speak to the same truth; wherever power goes unchecked, corruption follows. In *The Power*, Alderman begins with a spark of hope. Women, long oppressed, suddenly inherit the ability to change their circumstances. Yet what seems like liberation quickly becomes another story of domination. The novel reminds us that power in itself is neither good nor bad, it is what people do with it that matters. Without responsibility, even the dream of justice can collapse into violence and oppression.

Ndibe, on the other hand, sets his story in a society crushed under dictatorship and the weight of silence. In *Arrows of Rain*, corruption is not hidden, it is everyday reality. Through Bukuru's haunting testimony and Iyese's tragic story, we see how governments can turn against their own people, silencing truth and erasing memory.

For Ndibe, corruption is not just an individual flaw; it is a system that thrives when institutions are weak and when fear keeps people quiet. When read together, both novels highlight a sobering reality: corruption is not limited to one place, one time, or one group of people. It is a human problem that grows wherever power lacks accountability. Alderman shows it in a speculative world, while Ndibe shows it in the rawness of lived experience. Both remind us that justice is fragile, and it takes constant vigilance to protect it.

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