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Ameh Dennis Akoh

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CONTEXTUALISING CHANGE IN NIGERIA'S LEADERSHIP QUESTION THROUGH THE FILM MEDIUM: A CRITICAL READING OF JETA AMATA'S *BLACK NOVEMBER*

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Abstract

*Change is dynamic; it is ever occurring in any given circumstance. It explains the popular saying that, 'there is nothing that is permanent in life except change'. However, change is positive when it is progressive; and negative when it is retrogressive. Over the years, Nigeria, as a country, has been in search of credible, dependable, focused and result-oriented leadership. This explains the need for regular intellectual discourses on the leadership question that the country has been grappling with. There is no arguing the fact that, no matter the personal, educational, psychological, economic, religious and cultural background of a leader, the constitution of his/her power base will have determinate effect on his/her approach to leadership. This is because leadership is all about using people to achieve predetermined group objectives. In fact, the contemporary Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has become a veritable platform to interrogate the leadership question in Nigeria. Consequently, this study examines Jeta Amata's **Black November**, a film that portrays a volatile community in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria ravaged by crude oil exploration and exploitation activities of a multi-national oil company. The people fight against the evil machinations of corrupt government and oil company officials that collude to impoverish them. The submission is that only transparency in the policy actions of leaders, at all levels of governance, will mitigate incessant youth restiveness in oil producing communities. Furthermore, the film medium remains a viable option in managing change in Nigeria's search for credible political leadership.*

Introduction

Over the years, Nigeria, as a country, has been in search of credible and people-oriented leadership. This underpins regular intellectual discourses on the leadership question that the country has been grappling with. There is no arguing the fact that, no matter the personal, educational, psychological, economic, religious and cultural background of a leader, the constitution of his/her power

base will have determinate effect on his/her approach to leadership. This is because leadership is all about using people to achieve predetermined objectives.

The contemporary Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has become a veritable platform to interrogate the leadership question in Nigeria. This study examines Jeta Amata's *Black November*, a film which portrays a community that is ravaged by the oil exploration and exploitation activities of an oil multi-national in the volatile Niger Delta area. The people fight against the evil machinations of corrupt government and oil company officials that collude to impoverish them. The submission is that only transparency in the policy actions of leaders, at all levels of governance, will mitigate incessant youth restiveness in oil producing communities. Furthermore, the film medium remains a viable option in engendering change in Nigeria's search for credible leadership.

Conceptual Framework

It is necessary to briefly define the key words: contextualising, change, leadership question, Nollywood films, and critical reading, in order for us to establish our conceptual framework.

- a) **Contextualising**: To contextualise means to put something in a given perspective and look at it from that direction. It is like looking at a substance through a prism.
- b) **Change**: To change is to alter the look or state of something. Change is dynamic, in the sense that, it is ever occurring in any given circumstance. The President Muhammadu Buhari-led government came into power using the change mantra in the 2015 electioneering campaigns. As the saying goes, "nothing is permanent in life except change". For one to make progress in life, one must engender change – physically, structurally, economically, philosophically, intellectually, and so forth. Change becomes positive when it is progressive; but negative when it is retrogressive.
- c) **Leadership Question**: This is an issue that has bedevilled the Nigerian state. Ironically, the country has been faced with leaders that are not altruistic; they think of "self" alone. Thus, governance is not geared towards providing the basic necessities of life for the people: food, shelter, clothing, and critical infrastructure. The reality is that the generality of the people now live in abject penury, with great disaffection, because of the leadership deficit. How do we get out of this? This is where the leadership question becomes relevant.

- d) **Nollywood Films:** These are films produced by filmmakers in the Nigerian film industry. From its humble beginning in 1992, Nollywood has become a major contributor to the nation's economy. Graduating from the use of VHS format films in 1992, as exemplified in *Living in Bondage* directed by Chris Obi-Rapu and produced by Kenneth Nnebue of Nek Video Links, films are now produced on formats that are in tune with global best practices. It has been such that Nollywood films can now be entered for international film festivals around the world.
- e) **Critical Reading:** This refers to in-depth analysis of a film, taking into consideration its aesthetics: sight, sound, motion. It means carrying out a study that is an encapsulation of the narrative of the happenings in the film and the underlying motivations of such actions and approaches. In this study, we will do a critical reading of *Black November*, using the narrative approach.

The Leadership Question in Nigeria

Leadership is the means of direction applied by someone (a leader) to guide others (the followers), with the aim of attaining set objectives. Robert Appleby defines leadership as, "the ability of management to induce subordinates to work towards group goals with confidence and keenness" (117). Elsewhere, we had posited that leadership is

the process where a person (the leader) directs the work or behaviour of a group (the followers) towards the accomplishment of predetermined goals. A leader then is the one, who influences the actions of the group members. He is the most influential and exemplary person in an organization, who provides direction, guides group activities and ensures that the group objectives are attained. (Ayakoroma, Theatre Management 40-41)

Ideally, leadership positions are characterized by *authority* – the right to give orders and make others obey; *power* – the ability to act the way you wish, and not being susceptible to any external influences or manipulations; *responsibility* – guiding the activities of a group towards predetermined goals; *decision-making* – taking decisions in the best interest of the group and act accordingly; *expertise* – having sound knowledge of what the group is doing; and *delegation of duty* – having the liberty (or be willing) to assign duties to subordinates. Furthermore,

certain factors determine the selection of leadership style, namely: size of the entity, degree of interaction, personality of members, goal congruence, level of decision-making, and the state of the system (see Ayakoroma, *Theatre Management* 45-46; 50-54).

However, as the adage goes, “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown.” A leader is bound to face certain problems no matter the leadership style of that individual. Such problems could be attributable to the approach to leadership, the followers, or the social setting. The problems, which are by no means definitive include, religious differences, ideological differences, communication barrier, exploitation, unequal opportunities, inhumanity, conflicting interests or goals, disrespect for constituted authority, sycophancy, and corruption (Ayakoroma, *Theatre Management* 54-59). These have persistently militated against governance in Nigeria since independence, hence, the leadership question.

Most Nigerian leaders, traditional and constitutional alike, emerge under very questionable circumstances. Unarguably, if any leadership is predicated on shaky foundations, there are bound to be problems. Before now, in Nigeria’s political history, military juntas just seized power through *coups d’état* without due regard for the will of the people or the rule of law. The situation has also been worrisome under the present democratic experiment, in the sense that political god-fathers impose their cronies on the people. It is not surprising then that the leadership question has been a recurring decimal in Nigeria. Corruption has gradually become endemic; and attempts by successive administrations to fight it have been very feeble. Even the current effort by the President Muhammadu Buhari-led administration has drawn flak from generality of the public; that it is only directed at the opposition.

Talking about corruption, Nigerians will readily remember the oil windfall and Petroleum Task Force (PTF) scams of the 1980s; the frauds in various pension schemes (including the police and military pensions) and the Pension Transition Administration (PTAD) deals; the Halliburton scandal; sundry contracts inflation and fraudulent legislators’ constituency projects; the power sector scams; the fertilizer scams in the agriculture sector; political thuggery and election rigging; ostentatious lifestyles by political leaders; the Boko Haram arms deal (popularly called, “Dasukigate”); and the rot in the judiciary, among other corrupt tendencies. All of these and many more too numerous to list have been occasioned by unmitigated leadership deficit. Happening to people who produce the wealth of the nation, and are have nothing to show for it, one can imagine the pent-up anger which erupts at the least provocation.

Unarguably, transparency and accountability on the part of leaders are antidotes to the cankerworm of corruption. Our leaders are not answerable to the electorate, probably because they believe that whether they are voted for or not, they will still find themselves in power through the back door. Where they are appointed into office, they feel they owe the masses no obligation; that they are only answerable to their 'principals.' This explains why legislators could get contracts to construct access roads, sink boreholes, or provide electricity, as constituency projects, and they collect the money without executing such contracts. This is with impunity because those who could have called them to order are equally guilty. It is a vicious circle that continues to impact negatively on the masses. Once leaders are accountable to their followers at every point in time, then excesses could be checked.

There is no gainsaying that leadership failure has affected every area of the country's life. The discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in 1956 at Oloibiri, in present day Bayelsa State, made all tiers of government to gradually abandon agriculture for the oil wealth. The groundnut pyramids in the north, the cocoa exports, and oil palm produce slowly vanished over the years. Malaysia came to collect oil palm seedlings from Nigeria to cultivate in their country. Today, that country has become the largest exporter of palm oil in the world. The leadership deficit is also evident in the various levels of neglect in the manufacturing, power, transport and aviation, health, textile industry, education, culture and tourism sectors, just to mention a few, in spite of the huge budgetary allocations yearly.

As a point of fact, diverse issues concerning the leadership question in Nigeria have been extensively examined by different scholars, including *Culture, Leadership and Accountability in Nigeria*, edited by Olu Obafemi and Barclays Ayakoroma, as well as *Literary Perspectives on Culture, Leadership and Accountability in Nigeria*, edited by Barclays Ayakoroma. For instance, it has been argued thus:

The quest for the authentic and dependable roots to building and strengthening national institutions and structures run by credible, responsible, visionary and transparent leadership is one of the most elusive tasks and challenges facing our nation today. The argument recently credited to the effect that what is necessary for national development are strong institutions. However, in current thinking voiced by creditable public intellectuals and social

theorists, it has been commonly advanced that we also need strong leadership to drive those strong institutions. (Obafemi and Ayakoroma, "Introduction" 7)

In this study, therefore, we are looking at the leadership deficit in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria, which has brought about utter neglect of the people, at the federal, state, local government and community levels, in spite of the huge oil revenue the region generates into the nation's economy.

Understanding the Setting of *Black November*

It is pertinent to briefly examine the background of Jeta Amata's *Black November*, because the film is based on the Niger Delta struggle. This will provide the prism for a critical reading of the film. We had posited elsewhere that the various militant groups in Nigeria influence the ideological inclination of the people to a large extent. On the part of the Niger Delta, we had averred thus:

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), which was the brainchild of the late environmental activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, appeared to blaze the trail in the Niger Delta. The heartless execution of Saro-Wiwa precipitated a chain of reactions that has reverberated to the present day. The Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality of the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), the Ijaw Youths Council (IYC), and the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA), popularly known as the Egbesu Boys of Africa, are some of the youth groups that have been formed to protect the communal interests of the Ijaw. (Ayakoroma, *Trends* 182)

It is worth noting that, after the actions of militant groups like Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw Ethnic Nationality of the Niger Delta (MOSIEND), among others had abated in the Niger Delta, a new militant group, Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), emerged to threaten and continue with hostilities and bombing of oil installations in the Niger Delta, just as they have taken up arms against the Federal Government, pressing for a fair deal for the people of the region, most especially in the allocation of oil blocs. For instance, the group had given a two-week ultimatum to multi-national oil companies to vacate the region,

reiterating that it was committed to its threat to cripple the nation's economy. Although the Federal Government reacted by also threatening to treat them like 'common criminals and saboteurs', members of the group were not deterred as they carried out more attacks, blowing up of pipelines, as well as killing security operatives. They expressed unhappiness over alleged marginalisation, injustice, hardship and poverty going on in the country while a few persons controlled the nation's commonwealth, stressing that the Nigerian Government was selfish and that they will do everything possible to resist it (John, "Expect More Attacks..." 9). The implication of the renewed attacks by the Avengers was that while the Federal Government projected a daily production of 2.2 million barrels of crude oil in the country's 2016 budget dropped drastically. Put succinctly, crude production in Nigeria, which was the highest in Africa, dipped down to about 990,000 barrels per day ("Avengers: Nigeria Loses ₦10bn Daily" 10).

Similarly, a Niger Delta militant group, the Concerned Militant Leaders (CML), claimed responsibility for an attack on Onitsha River in Anambra State, where eight soldiers were feared dead; an attack in Nkpor where three persons were killed; as well as the burning of a police patrol van. The group maintained that their actions were in a bid to show the Federal Government and security agencies that they should not underrate the activities of the Niger Delta militants. CML also claimed it was working in conjunction with NDA to cripple the nation's economy (John, "Militants Reject" 4, 5). Meanwhile, NDA in a statement signed by its spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Murdoch Agbinibo had promised that it would not kill or kidnap anybody. It also warned other militant groups in the region to desist from killing soldiers and oil workers, in order not to incur the wrath of God in their mission, which is to liberate the people, and not kill. The group also added that the heavy military presence in the region would not tempt it to kill in order not to derail from its agenda. The group advised the public to be weary of fraudsters who parade themselves as representatives or spokespersons for the group (Okpare "We Won't Kill" 6).

However, militants under the aegis of the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force in their threat to destroy some selected national formations on 6th June, 2016, urged the occupants of Aso Villa, National Assembly and Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) to vacate the premises in order not to be caught in their resumed war against the Nigerian government. Their threat was targeted at vital government institutions as well as national assets in cities, such as, Lagos, Abuja and Kaduna built with oil and gas resources from the Niger Delta region. They had planned to fire missiles simultaneously at such targets to show their seriousness about actualising the breakup of the nation, as predicted by the United

States of America (Okpare “Militants Threaten to Bomb” 16; Folaranmi and Osuyi 6). As it were, discordant tunes emerged from the ranks of the Niger Delta militants following threat by Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF) to launch and test its missiles from Tuesday, 7th June, 2016, to signpost its intention of breaking up the country. This was just as NDA claimed responsibility for the wave of attacks on oil installations in the country, and disassociated itself from the planned missiles launch of JNDLF, requesting that it (JNDLF) should key into its own project of crippling the country's oil production without bloodshed (Odiegwu 6).

Despite Federal Government’s order for ceasefire to allow the National Security Adviser (NSA), General Mohammed Babagana Mungono-led committee have dialogue with NDA, the militants rebuffed the peace moves by the Presidency and continued with bombing of oil installations in the Niger Delta region. The Presidency had reached an agreement with governors of the Niger Delta States that the military should vacate communities in the region except the waterways; but the blowing up of Well RMP 20, belonging to Chevron, in Warri North Local Government Area, indicated that the militants were not ready for a ceasefire. They maintained that they will not negotiate with any committee, saying if the government went ahead to discuss with any group, it would be at its own risk (Folaranmi 6). Furthermore, President Muhammadu Buhari’s Democracy Day address on 29th May, 2016, read in part:

The recent spate of attacks by militants disrupting oil and power installations will not distract us from engaging leaders in the region in addressing Niger Delta problems. If the militants and vandals are testing our resolve, they are much mistaken. We shall apprehend the perpetrators and their sponsors and bring them to justice. (Folaranmi, “Soldiers, Militants’ Showdown” 24)

In the face of the incessant attacks on oil pipelines in the region, the Federal Government deployed armed soldiers in seven gun-boats that stormed Oporoza, the traditional headquarters of Gbaramatu Kingdom in search of the ex-militant leader, Government Ekpemupolo, known as, Tompolo, and members of NDA. Before the invasion, NDA blew up NNPC pipelines Warri, Delta State; Nembe, Brass 1, 2, 3 in Bayelsa State; and Bonny in Rivers State. In a letter he personally signed, Tompolo extricated himself from the NDA activities, as he appealed to them to sheathe their swords and embrace dialogue to solve the crisis

in the region. But the spokesperson of the NDA, General Agbinibo, was to later criticize Tompolo, accusing him of taking sides with the Federal Government in his desperate efforts to please President Buhari (Folaranmi, “Soldiers, Militants' Showdown...” 24).

Nonetheless, in the wake of renewed heartless attacks on oil installations in the Niger Delta by militants, the Ijaw National Congress (INC) pleaded for ceasefire. The socio-cultural organization urged the military and NDA to suspend all hostilities to create room for dialogue. It condemned the use of violence by the Avengers and government in settling scores, enjoining the aggrieved youths and the military to embrace peace and stop using the Nigerian economy (oil and gas) as the theatre of war (Orosewotu 6). Former Governor of Abia State, Dr. Uzor Orji Kalu, also added his voice to those trying to find a way of settling the conflicts by calling on government to extend an olive branch to the aggrieved Niger Delta militants just as he appealed to the Avengers to ceasefire as bombing of oil installations will not solve the challenges facing the region. Kalu suggested that to curb the menace, government should call stakeholders in the region to a round table to identify the way forward, including investing in critical infrastructure in the region, compelling oil companies to give back to their host communities in form of employment, wealth creation and environmental protection, and giving the Niger Deltans the right of first refusal in the award of contracts for the protection of oil pipelines and installations in the region since they are more familiar with the terrain in the creeks (“Dialogue with NDA” 10).

Incidentally, all the militant groups seek for relevance at every point in time. For instance, there were cracks in the camps of the militant groups. It degenerated, as one of them, the Reformed Egbesu Boys of Niger Delta, unilaterally declared cessation of hostilities. Meanwhile, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) raised a seven-man team, tagged, “Aaron Team 2”, composed of Henry Odein Ajumogobia, SAN (Rivers), Ledum Mitee (Rivers), Timipa Jenkins Okponipere (Bayelsa), Bismark Rewane (Delta), Sen. Florence Ita-Giwa (Cross River), Ibanga Isine (Akwa Ibom) and Lawson Omokhodion (Edo State), to negotiate with the Federal Government. This was just as it charged NDA to drop its defiant posture and embrace dialogue. The Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) of the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF) had indicated it had accepted the window created by the Federal Government for dialogue; but NDA maintained that it was not part of the negotiations. *Vanguard* reports had it that, government negotiators had penetrated many of the militant groups for them to declare cessation of hostilities and embrace dialogue. Many of the militants were furious, alleging that some powerful forces had hijacked the

struggle and were merely using them as bargaining tools to the detriment of the region (Amaize, Agande & Brisibe 1).

The Reformed Egbesu Boys of Niger Delta was also at loggerheads with NDA and JNDLF over their positions. While it was on the same page with JNDLF on cessation of hostilities, it disagreed with it on the release of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu and National Security Adviser (NSA) to former President Goodluck Jonathan, Col. Sambo Dasuki (rtd), both under detention. Consequently, they warned those they described as, ‘old generation of Ijaw activists’, namely, Government Ekpemupolo (alias Tompolo), Ateke Tom, General Boyloaf, General Africanus Ukpaparasia and others, not to meddle in the peace process. The leaders of the group, General Tony Alagbakeriwei and Commander Ebi Abakoromor, in a statement, said:

We align ourselves with the unilateral declaration of cessation of hostilities on oil and gas assets in the Niger Delta by various militant organisations. We are in total support of the Federal Government option of dialogue, taking into cognizance the numerous appeals from both local and international platforms. In as much as we have considered this option, we wish to reaffirm that the Ijaws have never been a conquered people. (Amaize, Agande and Brisibe 2)

Espousing its stance on true federalism, the militant group averred thus:

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm the Ijaw position of true federalism within a restructured state and the Federal Government should immediately activate the necessary platform. We warn the Federal Government to be sincere and committed to the peace process and to state that any deviation would lead to resumption of hostilities. (Amaize, Agande & Brisibe 3)

It will be recalled that, on 12th May, 2016, the spokesperson of NDA, General Agbinibo, had stated that by October 2016, NDA will display its currency, flag, passport, its ruling council, and its territory to the world. Somehow, many militants and Niger Deltans do not share such aspirations. Nonetheless, other demands of the group included implementation of critical

aspects of the report of the 2014 National Conference, specifically, 60:40 percent ownership of oil blocs in favour of oil producing communities, proper funding of the Amnesty Programme, trial of APC members allegedly indicted for corruption, unconditional release of the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, and effective take-off of the Nigerian Maritime University (NMU), Okerenkoko, Delta State (Amaize, Agande & Brisibe 3).

As a point of fact, the Niger Delta activist and founder of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ken Saro-Wiwa, was executed on 10th November, 1995. Thus, it could be construed that the film, *Black November*, draws its title from that incident. According to *Wikipedia*, the film was premiered at the Kennedy Centre, Washington, DC, on 8 May, 2012, and was also screened on 26 September, 2012, during United Nations General Assembly. It was said to have had such an effect on United States congressmen, Bobby Rush and Jeff Fortenberry that they sponsored a joint resolution aimed at pressurising the Nigerian government and Western oil companies to clean up spills in the Niger Delta.

About the Film, *Black November*

Written, directed and co-produced by Jeta Amata, *Black November* opens in Warri, in the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria, where a gallows is being prepared for the execution of a young female activist, Ebiere Perema (Mfong Amata). The scene changes to Los Angeles, California, USA, where in a Gestapo-like operation, members of the United Front for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta People of Nigeria, led by Tamuno (Enyinna Nwigwe), cause mayhem, taking Tom Hudson, the Managing Director/CEO of Western Oil, a multi-national oil company in the Niger Delta (Mickey Rourke, with Mark Kubr as his Stunt Double), and other innocent persons, hostage. Their demand is the unconditional release of Ebiere, who had led the struggle. They are told point blank that the United States Government does not negotiate with terrorists.

There is a flashback, which gives the background of the plight of oil producing communities in the Niger Delta. They produce the crude oil that feeds the entire nation; but they live in abject penury; they hardly see any government presence; but they suffer the hazards associated with oil exploration and exploitation – gas faring, oil pollution, oil spillage, neglect by oil multi-nationals, exploitation by local chiefs, and so on.

An unfortunate oil spillage occurs and gullible villagers scramble to scoop the fuel not minding the dangers or likely fuel explosion. The Police try to intervene but to no avail. As it is to be expected, there is a devastating gas

explosion, ironically caused by a security agent, who should protect the lives of the people. Officials of Western Oil negotiate with the people to pay compensation to the affected families. However, the village chiefs, Chief Kuku (Zack Amata), Chief Gadibia (Isaac Yongo), Chief Kokori (Emmanuel Okhakhu), and Chief Sam (James Luper Sokpo), see it as an opportunity to embezzle a greater chunk of the money. The situation gets out of control as the jobless, unemployed youths find solace in kidnapping oil workers. In the face of the incessant kidnapping, Ebiere, who had just returned to the village after her studies abroad, tries to mediate.

In one of the sequences that follow, there is celebration in the oil company camp; but the celebration is short-lived as the youths storm the company and take some of the workers (played by Dave Pavinski and Robert Sandler) hostage. The militants go to the extent of blowing up the critical oil installations. The MD of Western Oil, who was born in Nigeria, sees the need for peaceful negotiations. He requests the youths to lay down their arms and give peace a chance. But Ebiere, who had tried to mediate, finds out too late that she had been betrayed. In the shootout that ensues, several young men and some security operatives are killed. The villagers give the dead mass burial which further exacerbates the restiveness.

On the heels of the senseless killings, the Chiefs meet, where Chief Gadibia (Isaac Yongo) decides to return his share of the looted money back to the community because of guilty conscience. Unfortunately, he is found dead the next morning, a development that attracts reprisals from angry youths. Chief Gadibia's son, Peter (UC Ukeje), leads the protest to avenge the heartless killing of his father. The youths go after all the chiefs in the community: Chief Kokori (Emmanuel Okhakhu) confesses and he is arrested; while the Head Chief Kuku (Zack Amata), fails in his escape bid, as his car refuses to start. He finds himself locked inside the car, helplessly, as the angry youths set it on fire.

In the usual military crackdown, soldiers invade the community, maiming, raping, shooting and killing hapless villagers. For Pere Militan (Robert Peters), he watches helplessly, at gun point, as his wife is brutally raped by a randy soldier. Ebiere is arrested and put on trial for manslaughter; and she pleads guilty. In prison, she accepts liability for all the actions and inactions of the youths. Thus, while others are freed, she is sentenced to death by hanging. She is pregnant and delivers in prison.

The people are undaunted as they agitate for the unconditional release of Ebiere. On the day set for her execution, the people continue the protest, this time, carrying caskets; but she is still taken to the gallows. Meanwhile, in Los Angeles, California, USA, tensions are high. The militant group is ready to carry out the

threat of killing the hostages. The security operatives eventually use deception – a fake press release that Ebiere has been released. There is jubilation among the people and the militants, as they freely put down their weapons. They find out too late that it was all a decoy: Ebiere is executed, just as they are arrested to eventually face the full wrath of the law for attempting to overawe the system.

***Black November* and Contextualising Change in Nigeria's Leadership Question**

Having looked at the narrative structure of Jeta Amata's *Black November*, it is pertinent to highlight a few areas in the context of change in Nigeria's leadership question. The film vividly portrays the gross underdevelopment in the Niger Delta region. This is in spite of the fact that the region is the proverbial "goose that lays the golden egg". It shows the blinding effects of poverty; the people scoop fuel from burst pipelines in utter disregard of the imminent dangers. Ironically, such pipelines are sometimes intentionally vandalised by the youths from host communities in order for them to scoop the fuel. At the end of the day, they all perish from the gas explosion, as shown in the film. These are situations that could be averted if the oil multi-nationals respond quickly when there are reports of such spillages or burst pipelines. For instance, in the film, Mama Ebieren (Barbara Soky) accused Western Oil of not taking action when a complaint on the burst pipeline was lodged with them. The clean-up of Ogoni land from perennial oil spillages, which had been politicised, is a clear case in point. The question is: Must we wait until there is a tragedy before we take preventive measures? This is definitely a reflection of leadership failure, which needs redress.

Furthermore, every time there is any gas explosion, the oil company executives, the indigenous managers, and the local chiefs will be more interested in what financial gains accruing to them, especially when compensations are to be paid. In the film, the chiefs decide to share a greater percentage of the compensation paid for the gas explosion, to the detriment of the development of the community. To perfect their evil machinations, they also offer the company's community relations officer, Gideon White (Fred Amata), the same \$50,000 share of the money. When Chief Gadibia (Isaac Yongo) decided to return his share of the looted funds because he felt remorse over the blood spilt and the agitations by the youths, the other chiefs conspired and eliminated him. His murder propelled the youths to carry out jungle justice. This scenario is reflective of the events that led to the hanging of the "Ogoni Nine", including Ken Saro-Wiwa, which shook the Niger Delta and indeed the world, and changed the face of militancy in the region. Many oil producing communities are still experiencing the same

problems; and there is need to for the relevant authorities to ameliorate them so that the restiveness will not continue to affect the production or supply of oil and gas.

There is also the question of integrity on the part of leaders. When the actions of the restive youths went out of hand, the Management of Western Oil solicited for Ebieri's intervention. Seeing that she commanded the respect of the youths and that they could not bribe her, they pleaded with her to mediate. Unfortunately, they had ulterior motive, with the connivance of the relevant security operatives. While they wanted Dede (Hakeem Kae-Kazeem) and his boys to lay down their arms and agree to negotiate, the security operatives were fully armed, and were bent on exterminating the militants. Thus, Ebieri realised, too late, that she was the pawn on the socio-economic and political chessboard. This may explain why Tompolo refused to report for questioning by the Police, when he was declared wanted.

Black November reflects on some extraneous factors why some youths resort to militancy. Tamuno (Enyinna Nwigwe) was a loyal police officer, who led an operation to stop his people from carrying out a planned protest in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. In the line of duty, he had to live with the bitter experience of seeing his sister, Hosanna (Jane Unogwu) shot by a trigger-happy police officer. On the other hand, Pere Militan (Robert Peters) watched helplessly, at gun point, as his wife was mindlessly raped by one of the soldiers. For Peter Gadibia (UC Ukeje), his father, Chief Gadibia (Isaac Yongo) was murdered by the other chiefs in order to silence him, especially as he had wanted to return his share of the loot. He decided to embark on a vengeance mission to prevent future occurrences. Put succinctly, the bitter experiences in the film by the above persons, respectively, necessitated the extreme positions they took.

The film also reflects how militants always draw on the power of the mass media. According to renowned media theorist, Marshall McLuhan, *the world has become a global village*, due to the power of the media. Members of the United Front for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta People of Nigeria, led by Tamuno (Enyinna Nwigwe) realised that for their cause to receive global attention, they needed to carry out an action that should shake the world. They found their way to the United States of America, and perfected their plan to abduct the Managing Director of Western Oil, Tom Hudson (Mickey Rourke). In doing that, they ensured that a reporter from an international news agency was on hand to capture the whole scenario. Of course, with the use of modern technology, they communicated directly to the authorities concerned and expressed their demands. This underpins the view that the media makes the event.

One major ideology reiterated in the film is that an individual cannot overwhelm the American state. This is because of the strong institutions that have been put in place. No matter what happens in Hollywood films, America is always shown to be victorious (Ayakoroma, *Trends...* 32). In the face of the terrorist action where Hudson, other motorists and passersby were taken hostage, as well as the abduction of Hudson's daughter (Kristin Peterson), the security services maintained that the United States of America does not negotiate with terrorists. At the end of the day, a media decoy was used to secure the freedom of all the hostages, unhurt, including Hudson; while the militants, Tamuno, Pere and others, were arrested. In other words, the film seems to posit that, any militant action against the American state will always end in ignominy. The question is: can we say the same of the Nigerian state?

Black November is also a model in film production, which provides salient lessons for Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry. The scenes supposedly shot in Los Angeles, California, are exemplary. The roads, the vehicular movement, the response of the police to the terrorist action, the approach of the security operatives, the facilities in the control room, among other aesthetic elements, contrast sharply with what obtains in our local production approaches or film aesthetics. It is therefore a call for film directors to look beyond the surface and change their approaches to productions to meet the challenges of global best practices in film production.

Conclusion

In this study, it has been noted that change is dynamic, as it is ever occurring in any given circumstance. From independence, Nigeria, as a country, has been in search of credible leadership. No matter the personal, educational, psychological, economic, religious and cultural background of a leader, the constitution of his/her power base will always have determinate effect on the approach to leadership. This is because leadership entails using people well to achieve predetermined objectives. The contemporary Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, has become a veritable platform to interrogate the leadership question in Nigeria. Jeta Amata's *Black November* portrays a volatile community in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria ravaged by crude oil exploration and exploitation activities of a multi-national oil company. The people fight against the evil machinations of corrupt government and oil company officials that collude to impoverish them. The conclusion is that only transparency in the policy actions of leaders, at federal, state, local government and community levels of governance, will mitigate incessant youth restiveness in oil producing communities. Thus, the film

medium remains a viable option in managing change in Nigeria's perennial search for credible leadership; and Jeta Amata's *Black November* is a veritable contribution in that direction.

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Filmography

Amata, Jeta. *Black November*. Script: Jeta Amata. Cinematography: James Michael Costello, Tommy Maddox-Upshaw. Editors: Debbie Berman, Lindsay Kent, Adam Verney. Starring: Mbong Amata, Hakeem Kae-Kazeem, UC Ukeje, Fred Amata, Nse Ikpe Etim, Zack Amata, Mickey Rourke, Kim Basinger, Sarah Wayne Callies, Vivica A. Fox, Ann Heche, Persia White, Akon, Wyclef Jean. Producers: Bernard Alexander, Jeta Amata, Ori Ayomike, Marc Byers, Wilson Ebiye, Dede Mabiaku. Company: Wells & Jeta Entertainment. Year: 2012. Language: English. Duration: 95mins.

CHANGE IDEOLOGY IN FEMI OSOFISAN'S *ONCE UPON FOUR ROBBERS*

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Abstract

*Over the years, Nigeria has been clamouring for the desired change that would serve as a spring board for socio-political and economic development of the nation. For the desired change to be possible, everybody needs to be involved in one way or the other. Moreover, issues that retard progress and development in the society must be done away with. It was in this guise that the then military government of General Yakubu Gowon in a bid to fight social ills and crime in Nigeria promulgated a decree that, armed robbers should be punished by public execution. This was meant to deter would -be armed robbers from the act. While this decree lasted other people in the nation were also involved in heinous crimes against the nation. Osofisan's dislike of what was going on in the nation made him to voice his opinion through the medium of drama. In **Once upon Four Robbers**, he decries the killing of armed robbers through public execution. He goes further to proffer solutions that would bring progress and development in the country. He submitted that, all and sundry must be change agents if Nigeria must progress and develop. This paper, therefore, analyses the change ideology of Osofisan as presented in **Once upon Four Robbers** in managing the development challenges of Nigeria. Marxist and postcolonial theories are adopted as the theoretical foundation for the paper. Marxists hold that the working class masses are the real makers of history. The images contained in **Once upon Four Robbers** are crucial signals of the playwright's ideological standpoint. The paper concludes that for the desired development to be possible in the country everybody must develop a change of attitude and put the country first above all other considerations.*

Introduction

Once Upon Four Robbers is a play that was written in a reaction to the decree promulgated by General Gowon's administration that made armed robbery punishable by public execution. The play, which is set in a market place, is

structured into a Prologue, Parts One to Three, an Interlude and an Epilogue. The storyteller presents the play in the traditional African folktale style of performance in which the storyteller begins by acknowledging the people present. This is meant to establish a good rapport with the audience. This kind of opening will make the play authentic at home and may also be a means of communication between characters, often replacing dialogue or function as a soliloquy, intimating to the audience the singer's hidden thoughts and traits. They may bolster up a character to confront a dreadful obstacle, create a spell, or induce a trance (Ukala 285). Osofisan is displeased with the wanton murder of armed robbers and wants us to have a rethink about the whole issue, or else, robbers and violence as well as other social vices will continue to reign in the society.

The play, which centres on four robbers whose names are: Angola, Major, Hasan and Alhaja, begins on a mournful note with Alhaja sobbing over the killing of her husband, Alani, the leader of the robbers who is convicted for armed robbery and executed. Alhaja sings a slow dirge for her late husband as the robbers vow to revenge. Hence, the robbers do not only boast of their previous successful raids at UAC, Mapo, and Customs and so on, they become a nuisance to the society and a thorn in the flesh of the state. The state security apparatus is incapable of putting them under control, while the death penalty decree only worsens the situation. One of them wonders about the essence of the death penalty decree. It, therefore, means that there are many sides to the issue of armed robbery. What Osofisan is saying in essence is that armed robbery and other forms of criminality in the nation are not the real problems in the society. What, then, are the real problems? *Once upon Four Robbers* provides the answers to these issues. Osofisan, in the play indicts the state and the society for the menace of armed robbery and other social, political and economic crisis in the nation. It is on this note that the playwright calls for the needed change for the rejuvenation of the nation.

The Concept of Change

The word "change" remains very controversial as it is used differently in different fields and contexts, each of the application differ from the other(s). However, change can be looked upon to mean a shift from one state, stage, or phase to another; a variance from routine or pattern, especially a welcomed one. The concept change can also mean to exchange, substitute or replace something. In the view of Ernest Davies; change has to do with "an alteration or replacement of an existing phenomenon, idea, value or mode of doing something or in which

something exist into another; which is preferable to the former” (503). All these perspectives, though differently conceived, point to the same direction.

In philosophy, the concept of change as postulated by Robert Baird refers to “a speculative world view which asserts that basic reality is constantly in a process of flux” (qtd. in Okoli 72). Baird refers to this as ‘concept philosophy’. To Okoli, reality is, indeed identified with pure process and concepts such as creativity, freedom, novelty, emergence, and growth are fundamental explanatory categories for change. This metaphysical perspective is to be contrasted with a philosophy of substance, according to which a fixed and permanent reality underlies the changing or fluctuating world of ordinary experience. Thus, while substance philosophy emphasizes static being, change (process philosophy) emphasizes dynamic becoming.

Change manifests in different realms; a most widespread of which is revolution. In the view of Bessie Head “It is preferable to change the world on the basis of love of mankind. But if that quality be too rare, then common sense seems the next best thing” (qtd. in Irele 11). This view is a justification for radical change that must be sought when change leaders attempt to implement change from afar without attending to the emotional undertones of their community/society. While the above position identifies that change can take violent undertones, it does not, however presuppose that violence is a necessary attribute of change. But note must also be taken that change does not occur without pains.

According to Paul, “Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better” (27). This is because, too often leaders engage in one-way communication or ‘coercive persuasion’- a process that precludes debate and in which questioning is regarded as a form of revolt or resistance. This is what Paul refers to as ‘Linear Change Approach’.

There is another perspective of change which a Peruvian writer, Mario Vargas, cited in the Encarta Premium sees as: “A liberal dream of a better world, knowing the dream must ultimately be unattainable. Communism believed it was attainable and felt any means to reach it were justified. To this perspective, change is rather an illusion that is better imagined than attained. This, perhaps, is why desirable change is difficult to attain even among the most civilized societies, including Nigeria.

However, it is worthy of note that change is not predictable or sequential, it is rather a complex process involving hearts as much as minds. From all indications, the only thing that is constant and permanent in life is change.

Change is the only episode, phenomenon or decimal that is constant in human life; and thus, remains a basic law of life.

Concept of Ideology

Ideology is one of the most equivocal and elusive concepts in social and anthropological studies; not only because of the variety of theoretical approaches which assign different meanings and functions to it, but also because it is a concept heavily charged with political connotations and widely used in everyday life with the most diverse significations. However, in every society, there exist culturally unique ways of thinking about the world which unite people in their behaviour. This body of cultural ideas that people share is referred to as ideology. Ideology manifests in three specific categories: beliefs, values, and ideals. Beliefs give a people an understanding of how the world works and how they should respond to social and environmental forces. Values position a people to understand the differences between right and wrong or good and bad; while ideals serve as models for what people hope to achieve in life.

According to Larrain:

Ideology has a negative or positive meaning. On the one hand, ideology may be conceived in eminently negative terms as a critical concept which means a form of false consciousness or necessary deception which somehow distorts men's understanding of social reality. On the other hand, the concept of ideology may be conceived in positive terms as the expression of the world-view of a class. To this extent one can talk of 'ideologies', in plural, as the opinions, theories and attitudes formed within a class in order to defend and promote its interests. (13)

Larrain's view implies that ideology has both positive and negative undertones. Positively, it expresses the ideal world view of a class; while in its negative manifestation propagates false consciousness that tends to misdirect a people's understanding of their real world. Thus, change ideology in Nigeria would be the aspiration to attain an egalitarian society which must be built on the beliefs, values and the ideals which the people hold dear. Whether these ideological components have been adopted by change leaders in Nigeria in their bid to effect desired change for the nation remains a matter of public debate. This is because Nigerians have for a long time remained disillusioned with successive dispensations as each fails to give a clear direction on the policy framework of its

‘change agenda’. In a communique at the 19th Delegates Conference of the Academic Staff Union of Universities it was opined that “the disappointment of Nigerians stems from the fact that we have a government whose leadership promised change but which is not practicing transformation (fundamental change)” (35). What this portends is that change in Nigeria’s political life remains exclusively what the change leaders can do for the people as opposed to what the people expect to achieve. This coheres with the position of a French statesman, Jacques Delors in a speech to the United Union Summit, cited in David Killam & Kerfort, A. that: “You can’t be a true idealist without being a true realist” (77). This view is characteristic of the type of change championed by leaders in Nigeria, which unfortunately is self-perceived change which the populace deserves. However, fundamental change is not an individual desire but that which must appeal and be accepted by the people as a whole. This is why David Forgas opines that; “Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than in the one where they sprang up” (135).

In Nigeria, change remains the most contentious word, particularly in the socio-political lexicon. The Nigerian contemporary society owes much to past uprisings against repressive governments, stagnant or restrictive economic conditions, and rigid class divisions. This has made the clamour for change endless as emergent change advocates and leaders have often replaced one evil with another, as through harsh recriminations, self-serving leadership, or betrayal of the people- the excesses of which sometimes lead to opposing counter-revolutions. This, perhaps, is why Dike contends that, “Social changes manifest in a shift from regions to states, from farms to cities, from agriculture to industries, and from power shift from north to south” (n. page). These changes, Dike adds; “is not been for the benefit of the common man”. This seems to be the application of change in Nigerian political, cultural and economic lexicon. Nilgun Okur in his affirmation to the imperatives of change holds that; “Life is making us abandon established stereotypes and outdated views, it is making us discard illusions” (3). What this implies is that if the problem of political leadership is the greatest our civilization faces, a related problem of almost equal significance is that of innovation and change. This has been the greatest concern of Nigerians for several decades in which the overwhelming direction of Nigerian socio-political structure has been toward studies of social stability and adjustment. The emphasis upon order and cohesion, upon problems of social statics has been so great as almost to destroy an interest in the dynamics of change. It is, therefore, a matter of considerable importance, not to say elation, to note recent signs of a re-awakening of interest in problems of socio-political and cultural change. Change in this sense

must, however, be distinguished from revolt or a rebellion, which may be either a failed attempt at revolution, a violent expression of grievances with limited purpose, or merely a change in allegiance.

Nigeria's politics is characterized by the desire to change an incumbent leadership often accused of one evil or another. According to Babatunde Fashola, change is "an act of restoring ownership of Nigeria to the Nigerian people" (par. 2). He adds that; "the change advocated for by the APC means, installing a government that would be accountable to the sovereign for its performance and responsive to the wishes and demands of the citizens" (par 3). Again, Michael Nwokocha quotes Muhammadu Buhari as saying, "change is not a mere slogan but the beginning of a new political era and socio-economic order" (2). Nwokocha identifies the cardinal objectives of the Buhari's change mantra to include amongst others:

Creation of a new political culture and consciousness for Nigerians, facilitation of Nigeria's economic development and economic paradigm shift from mono-cultural economy to diversification into the non-oil sector. Others are: job creation, enhancement of security, entrenchment of nationalism and patriotism in the society, inculcation of attitudinal change, promotion of value re-orientation, moral regeneration, civic and national orientation. (4)

This has remained a leadership culture in Nigeria as successive dispensations have continued to have evolved far-reaching radical reforms and transformations, to put the country on the part of progress and development; but is never realisable. Nevertheless, while taking note of these enormous hope and expectations, Nigerians are still groping in abject poverty both of mind, character and resources. The reason for this may not be far from the view of Karl Marx, quoted by Roberts Warren when he opines that; "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances, and that the educator himself needs educating". Marx's submission points to the fact that change leaders have their individual perception and direction of change which may be only self-appealing as opposed to collective vision; and as such the change advocated and initiated by such change leaders may negate the desired change the society aspires for.

With the belief that drama is the product of the writer's thought processes and an excellent tool of propagating ideas and sensitizing men to dream and

aspire in their society, the dramatic construction of Femi Osofisan serves both social and political causes that could be used to hatch and realize revolutions. His dramatic ideology is one that has the power to destroy in order to reconstruct. This quality of Osofisan's, is strongly diluted with Marxist ideology. This is because according to Ken Smith cited in Nelson Obasi and Orjinta Ikechukwu; "any person seeking to change the world in a socialist direction, the ideas of Marxism are a vital, even indispensable tool and weapon to assist the working class in its struggle to change society" (36). Why this makes it obvious to admit that Osofisan could be classified as a Marxist dramatist who demands social change in favour of the oppressed and down trodden masses in the society as most of his plays express, he is not, however a consummate Marxist. This is because the change advocated for in Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* is double pronged. That is, from both the working class and the ruling class. The change ideology of Osofisan, according to Sandra Richards; "is in pursuit of social reconstruction; he considers writing to be a dialogue between the writer and the society, believing that people create social conditions and people can change social conditions for the better" (12).

Synopsis of *Once upon Four Robbers*

Femi Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* was borne out of the dramatist's strong dislike for General Yakubu Gowon's decree that armed robbers should be punished by public execution. Set in the market place, the play is built around four characters namely Angola, Hassan, Major and Alhaja. These four armed robbers are displeased with the fact that their boss executed by firing squad.

The primary intention of the government of Gowon was to force robbery to a halt through the public execution of robbers to serve as deterrent to others. However, the reverse is the case in Osofisan's play. The robbers after watching their boss get killed know that the government wants them but rather, they are poised to revenge the death of their boss and in fact, step up their robbery skills however they can. This then makes the government's promulgation an exercise in futility. The play, is therefore, built on the premise of the above as Osofisan wishes to let the government know that the solution to the problem of armed robbery is not by killing robbers through public gun fire, but by finding a way to make government an all-inclusive affair. Osofisan wishes to drive home the point that government needs to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor; government should discourage the idea of the rich getting richer while the poor get poorer and oppressed.

The playwright feels the major causes of armed robbery are unemployment and hunger, which are caused by embezzlement of public funds, the squalid spending habits of our egregious *contractors*, middle men of all sorts, while the masses suffer through lack of hospitals, impossible markets, deathtrap roads, overcrowded schools and so forth. Osofisan is convinced that, unless the government solves these problems among others, armed robbery will continue. In fact, to confirm hunger as one of the reasons for robbery, Major, one of the robbers in the play says, “forgive us. It is hunger that drives us” (31).

The play builds to its climax when Aafa gives the robbers a charm that will help them not to get caught as far as they stay together, or united, do not steal from the poor and do not kill. This means the robbers are licensed to steal in the midst of nothingness. In the end however, the robbers are caught and have to face a death penalty which is the usual public execution. The song Aafa gave them in different verses is sung and they clash with the soldiers at the execution ground. The stage vibrates on the incantations of the robbers and the orders of the soldiers. There is high level of confusion until everything comes to a freeze.

Concluding the play by freezing everything on stage is intended to pose a question in the hearts of the audience; should armed robbers be killed or not? Osofisan’s position is however very clear on the matter, he feels the solution to armed robbery and other social vices is not by sentencing robbers to death but by addressing the basic needs of the masses in the society through equitable distribution of the nation’s resources. The playwright wishes to make a statement that; in a country where everybody is guilty of one crime or the other, corrupt judges should not pass death sentences on robbers because they are guilty of bribery and corruption too.

Change Ideology in the play

Osofisan, in this text, indicts the state and the society for the menace of armed robbery. Osofisan believes that man is not naturally depraved but that man is a victim of the stringent socio-economic policies made by government. Such draconian policies make it difficult for man to realize himself as an upright and responsible being. Survival, therefore, becomes a game of the fittest and only the bravest can survive in a nation like Nigeria. To this end, he uses the medium of drama to canvass for the needed change for the betterment of society. Osofisan believes that these four robbers are the products of an unjust society where the wealth of the land is unevenly distributed. The oppressors keep getting richer and richer and the oppressed keep getting poorer and poorer. The poor are human beings too. They have needs like the rich. Should they remain silent in the face of

this injustice and resign to fate? Instances of dehumanization and corrupt practices that impinge on progress and development abound in the play. The playwright sees the armed robbers as poor people who are made poor by the social, political and economic realities of their lives. The robbers are the poor people that need to eat and survive. This idea is projected in the statement of Major, one of the robbers that: “Forgive us. Its hunger that drives us” (20). This statement is made when the robbers attempt stealing from Aafa to no avail but are rather held by the spell. Aafa then counters Major’s hunger statement in this way: “As it drives other people. But not into crime” (21). Osofisan is making a philosophical statement on the state of life in Nigeria. According to him, we live in a society where the poor get poorer while the rich get richer. He is of the view that, this is not supposed to be, but because the rich will stop at nothing to ensure that he does not leave his wealthy position even if through corrupt means the situation of the masses deteriorates.

The playwright feels the end of armed robbery and of course other vices will be feasible when the rich or those in position of authority in the society or the government decide to provide jobs for the unemployed youth. It also means those in positions of authority must live above board and do the right thing for the holistic development of the nation. This, to him, will be possible when the government starts putting in place and enforcing programmes that would eradicate poverty. Osofisan, through sarcasm, comments on the non-availability of employment opportunities in the country as being one of the reasons why crime is on the increase. When Major reveals that, they steal only from the rich, he was countered by Aafa that, they would not go away with their act because the rich are powerful and they are responsible for everything:

Aafa: Foolish... Get up you two, Allah is not likely to hear your prayers.

Fools, all of you. You steal from the rich, so where will you hide?

The rich are powerful.

Aafa: Where will you run? They make laws.

Major: Yes, and they build the law courts.

Hasan: Train the lawyers.

Angola: They own the firing squads.

Aafa: So why not give up? There is enough employment in the country.

(21)

The kind of employment that exists in the country, according to the playwright, is the type that demeans. This can be derived from the words of the characters in the play:

Major: Yes. The rich also own the servants.

Aafa: And you cannot be servants? You? You? (*Looks at them in turn*) And you self-styled Alhaja?

Alhaja: (*in "illiterate accent"*) 'wanted urgently: four boy and a one girls.

Standard six an adfantage but not compulsory-position-

Hasan: (*same game*) 'service boys. Waiter! Attractive salary.

Major: Five naira per week. (22)

At the point of public execution of the robbers, they explain the rationale behind their actions as manifest in the following excerpt:

Hassan: Yes, Ahmed? What excuse do you think I owe you? Everyone has his dream. Everyone has a point at which the dream cracks up. I have sworn never to be a slave in my own father's land. All I wanted was the right to work, but everywhere they only wanted slaves. (90)

From the above excerpt Osofisan presents a picture of the kinds of jobs that are available in the nation today; which are unattractive, demeaning and discouraging. But he, however, warns that this should not be an excuse for armed robbery. He expresses this in an African proverb which goes: 'half bread is better than none'. According to him, it is better to accept to be a servant to the rich and powerful than be executed through armed robbery by the firing squad owned by the rich. He advocated for measures that would be put in place to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. To him it is the wide gap that exists between the two groups that breeds armed robbery and other crimes in the society. He thus sees no difference between a man who uses his position as a government office holder to commit crime and an armed robber. The government staff's action and attitude to public fund is the cause for the upsurge of armed robbery cases in the society. It is in this regard that the playwright questions the rationale behind the execution of armed robbers when the office thieves are left untouched:

Angola: Right, Aafa, so the journey ends. At the Bar Beach, in some market place, at the outskirts of town. What does it matter? For those not in privileged position to steal government files, award contracts.

Hasan: Alter accounts-

Angola: Swear affidavits

Alhaja: Grant sick leaves-
Hasan: Sell contraband-
Major: Collude with aliens-
Angola: And buy chieftaincy titles as life insurance!
No!
Let our obituaries litter the public places and one day-
Aafa: What illusions! (24)

This re-echoes Major's statement which affirms that even the people are aware of corporate armed robbery as he reiterates that: "...The dog boasts in the town, but everybody knows the Tiger's in the bush". (8) Osofisan is saying that an armed robber is not different from a man or woman that uses his position to commit crimes such as holding back other people's promotion, falsely terminating others' appointment, altering accounts/figures, diverting public funds for personal use, taking brown envelopes to falsely facilitate contracts as well as colluding with foreigners to defraud the nation. He, therefore, calls on all citizens to be accountable to their actions in what-ever position they find themselves. He wonders why evil doers feel they have the right over other people's lives when they themselves know they are guilty of one crime or the other or the same crime they accuse others of. He says this when he condemns the act of killing armed robbers by firing squad. While the armed robbers suffer public execution for their crimes, the real robbers comfortably commit their heinous crimes uncaught.

Angola: No, Aafa, too many objections. First, one sergeant owes us a debt. Then there are many citizens who must be made to account for their wealth, and the poverty of their workers. Such accounts can be settled only one way. (28-29)

Osofisan in the above juxtaposes the lives of an armed robber and that of a pen robber and questions the rationale behind the execution of an armed robber while the pen robber that uses his/her pen to sap the country dry of her wealth is left unpunished. To the playwright, every member of the society is guilty of one crime or the other. He seems to be commenting on the leadership styles of leaders in the nation when he asserts through Angola's statement to Aafa that: "... too many people ride their cars along the sore-ridden backs of the poor. Is there no other way?" (29) This is to say that; it is criminal for leaders to use their positions to exploit the masses instead of providing the basic necessities of life to them. The greedy nature of Nigerian leaders is put to question. It is the sheer greed that

makes people to amass wealth to the neglect of the social-political and economic needs of the people they lead. This cuts across all strata of the society as even the market men and women perpetrate their own dimension of criminality. Going by the market song which goes in part:

The work of profit
brought us to this world,
this life that is the market.
Some sell with ease and flourish
and some are clients
who pay their greed in gold!...
We make inflation
and hoard away
as much as we may relish. (45-46)

The market situation is characterized by the ultimate desire to maximize profit at the expense of the mass poor. This has become an excuse to crime as the market women affirm:

Mama Toun: How can we live, if profit lower or cease?
Mama Alice: How shall we survive, if the Price Control
Officer refuses to be bribed? (92)

From the above extract, it is true that even the market traders have also been robbing their victims in the name of business profit. This justifies the content of the market song, which in its meaning alone attests to a human society that celebrates individual and self-serving materialistic tendency at the expense of others. To this Hassan re-echoes; “The world is a market, we come to slaughter one another and sell the parts” (91).

In Osofisan’s eyes and mind, even the military that execute the armed robbers are themselves worse than the robbers. They also connive and steal public funds. This is revealed in the following lines:

Corporal: They’re gone! They’ve run away!
Sergeant: Too bad. We got only one of them. Recover the
gun.
Soldier: (*doing so, discover money*) Look serg!
Sergeant: what?
Soldier: The money, it’s all here!
Sergeant: (*knocking him down*) shut up, you fool, can’t you
restrain yourself? (*Looks round rapidly*) couple, take care

of the money. And listen, you dogs who may have been cursed to extreme poverty! As far as we know, the robbers ran away with the money! Is that clear? We found nothing. Okay? Let us meet later tonight, at my brother's house. And if I catch anybody with a running mouth...(55)

This justifies why it is rare in the history of the security agents in the nation to successfully overpower and recover stolen properties from armed robbers. Even when they do, they make claims that 'the robbers carted away the money/properties'.

Another angle of Osofisan's change ideology is religion. While there is persisting social decay that results into the hostilities evident in the society, religious leaders in professing their faith have rather remained conniving agents of social malaise. They do this by failing to tell the people especially those in positions of authority the truth as demanded of a true apostle of either Christ or Mohammed. Osofisan, thus uses the character of Aafa to compel religious leaders to live up to their spiritual obligation of moulding characters. This is evident in the conversation from the play:

Aafa: Alihamidu lilai. Your husband, was it?
ALHAJA and MAJOR are started. He chuckles).
Alhaja! Yes, I recognize you. At the war front, when you traded across the lines, selling to both sides, it was convenient then, wasn't it, to call yourself Alhaja? But your longest pilgrimage as we all know was to the officers' beds, not to Mecca!
(19)

Alhaja: And so what, you disgusting old man! I survived didn't I? ...I survived but I don't go raking up much like a municipal waste disposal van. Spill it out then, since you are a refuse depot, let's hear the rest of the rubbish! (19)

These revelations embitter Alhaja as it comes at a time that is most trying and which she cannot take kindly. Obviously, all religions uphold truth which must be told at all costs. This is what Aafa displays even when it is evident that this can cost him his life – in the circumstance, this is done. What Osofisan does is to

indict religious faithful who connive with the rest of the people to cover or even encourage crimes.

There is also the question of insatiability of human wants which Osofisan identifies as the bane of societal unrest. For instance, the four robbers are guaranteed of the power which when judiciously used once is sufficient to make them rich. But would they be satisfied with any amount? This is justified through Aafa's statement that: "Well, it's just that you never can tell about human greed..." (30) Having expressed their desire to get just enough to organize their lives, the whole thing ends in treachery as the power is abused. Major decides to part ways with the other three robbers so that all the gains go to him alone.

Major: Stop! Don't move any of you. (*kicks out a sack*). Alhaja, take this sack and collect all the money. You heard me! (*Reluctantly, she does so*). And I warn you, no one else is to move. I love you all, but I would not hesitate to shoot any of you.

Hassan: The money belongs to all of us.

Major: Bring it to me, Alhaja... The money belongs to me now. (50-51)

While we deduce that the robbers had earlier promised a collective fight against the oppressive powers, this collectivism is thrown to the wind as soon as huge sum of money is involved. The whole money the robbers realize, Major boasts:

Major: This money! Money! A new life. No more scurrying in the smell of back streets. A house the size of a palace! And children! Listen, I am going to be a daddy! I will own the main streets, six, no, ... ten Mercedes, the neon lights, the supermarkets...(52).

The above statement is indirectly condemning the winner takes it all attitude among Nigerians. Rather, the playwright is advocating for a system that pursues the common interest of all. Evidently, even among the robbers, there is no trust and sense of collectivism. What this means is that no positive change can take place in the society when it is not grounded on collective will and action.

From all indications, as Osofisan presents, there is economic, political and religious criminality of varying magnitudes perpetrated by all and at all levels of the society. While those in public offices use the pen to rob the public treasury, the law enforcement agencies compromise and conceal crimes that have economic

benefits from them at the expense of the populace. There is also robbery committed against unsuspecting victims by traders in the name of business profit. These indices present the armed robbers as symbolic scapegoats in the decayed society. The playwright, therefore, calls for a change of attitude for progress and development. In the face of unemployment, hunger and deprivation while the rich openly display their wealth, the temptation of armed robbery and other criminality such as kidnapping as well as ritual killings are, therefore, inevitable.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Change ideology and the extent to which Femi Osofisan adopts them in his dramaturgy, is the focus of this discourse. The clamour for change predates Osofisan but he popularized and ennobled its manifestation in the Nigerian society. Change arose out of the need to wrestle power from the tyrannical and despotic hegemonies that have expropriated and appropriated the commonwealth of the people for their selfish ends.

From his days, Osofisan knew that there is an ongoing dialectical struggle between two classes – the ruling class and the working class. The evils that Osofisan envisions during the period of writing his play, not only still manifest today but have become commonplace. In many parts of the world, especially in the Third World countries, it is the same story of exploitation, corruption, embezzlement of public funds, injustice and oppression, insensitivity, extortions, mismanagement of public tilts, policy somersault, irregular and sometimes outright withholding of promotions and non-payment of salaries of retired, among others.

Osofisan's change ideology is the development of a revolutionary approach to art through a growing radical tendency. The development that manifests itself in the dramatist's commitment to the employment of a revolutionary potential of drama to sharpen social awareness, adopt an alternative approach (socialist) to the obsolescence evident in the socio-political, economic and religious life in present day Nigeria, and presenting recipes for social change. His change ideology as presented in *Once Upon Four Robbers* is a conscious ideological commitment; a conviction that social change could come by the dramatists' ability to raise mass awareness to a positive revolutionary alternative to social decadence.

Osofisan advocates for a change of attitudes from all and sundry as every citizen has a duty and responsibility to the achievement of fundamental change as well as warning the working masses and youth of the dangers of entertaining

illusions in a capitalist government, including one headed by an allegedly righteous and incorruptible leader as in the present (Buhari's) case in Nigeria.

This paper strongly recommends that there is the need for Nigerians to clearly understand what change really is or should entail. Change does not simply imply reforming capitalism (i.e. by making the system less corrupt and efficient) as most Nigerian leaders have allegedly set out to do or through a thorough revolutionary change in the economic and political structure of society as canvassed by many. It entails a change in the way and manner Nigerians have been conducting the affairs of the nation. It is a systematic approach to dealing with change both from the perspective of an organization and the individual. It also means preparedness that begins at the top and this means that leadership – across all levels – must have absolute clarity in purpose and focus; there also must be alignment in strategic philosophy and resolution goals.

The reality is that without strategy, change is merely substitution – not evolution. Simply put, you can have an idea, but without the right strategy and execution of the idea, very little if any progress will be made. This clearly means that there must be a teamwork mentality, and without it nothing else matters. This level of clarity breeds the expectation from every citizen that only those willing to be team players belong in the organization and fit into the culture that is being created. People must be challenged to put their ideals to the test together– but acting in isolation with no respect for the team is not acceptable. It is impossible to create an environment of change and alignment when transparency is missing from the leaders. How can a nation progress politically and economically innovative when leaders harbour hidden agenda as against building momentum for the collective good in support of the change mantra?

While it is true that without a vision the people perish, it is also true that without action the people and their vision perish as well. This calls for positive action by all and sundry to effect the change which Nigerians desire. This view advocates for a change which must be vigorously pursued by both the change leaders and the people's actions.

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THEATRE AND FILM AS CATALYST TO LEADERSHIP CHANGE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Theatre and film are not only similar in their nature as media of “mass” communication; they are also similar in their relationship as both product and process. Again, they are sometimes used interchangeably. However, this paper is designed to explore their close affinity to leadership because as theatre and film are concerned with the collective and general good, even so is leadership. Using the literary research method and anchored on the theatre for development (TFD) theory, this paper x-rays how theatre and film are not only agents of change and leadership, it will also show them as having in them the characteristics and qualities which any good leader anywhere in the world should and ought to emulate. It concludes on the note that leadership would be better if it works closely with the other elements of governance even as the disparate units of theatre and film work together for a holistic and harmonious existence. Recommendations are then made, that those in leadership positions should, if possible, take courses in acting in order to appreciate how the director interacts with the other elements in the theatre and film for the good of the society/audience, among others.

Introduction

Theatre and film are composite arts. They are also communal in nature as well as interactive. By their nature, they serve as pulley, drawing together people from all walks of life at both sides of the camera for film, that is, there are different people behind and in front of the camera. In the same vein, the theatre has people backstage, on stage and in the auditorium. In each case, these people are of different background, culture and experience. They come together for a definite aim, a definite objective; to actualize an experience, project an event and in the end, leave something tangible for the society which is designed to make the people better and leave a pleasant taste in their mouths, a memory which helps them to have a new outlook, a different view and attitude to life and make their relationships better. It must also be emphasized that the people, the artists, who

project this wonderful experience we are trying to describe draw from the same material, the script; are also guided and led by one person, to whom they subjugate their individuality, their expertise, at least, for the duration of this experience. This person is the artistic director, who though, has the power to hire and fire, nevertheless, humbles himself, attends to and accepts suggestions from his cast and crew because he is aware that no man is a repository of knowledge all by himself.

Another thing is worthy of mention. That thing is the fact that the script may change, the entire cast, crew, even the equipment may change, the stage remains, to be adapted to suit the purpose of a new set of artists and script. Also, irrespective of the set of artists on board, their purpose is inevitably the same: to make life better and more pleasurable for the people. This is where leadership, theatre and film merge: in their objective. To serve the people for a better, richer and more beneficial proceeds from the theatre of life, the living stage, which William Shakespeare makes us to understand as the world, when he submits that “all the world is a stage where every man must play a part” (7).

At least, that is the ideal or should be the ideal objective of leadership, theatre and film: to serve the people and leave the society better than they met it. Thus, as regimes end and fresh elections are conducted to usher in new leaders for a stipulated period, even so do productions end and a new set of artists take charge even when the script and stage remain the same.

Definition of Concepts

The main components of this paper are evident in the topic. Inasmuch as they are rather familiar in terms, attempt would be made to put them in the right perspective in which they occur in this paper. Needless to restate that theatre and film, though, slightly different, would be used interchangeably as constituting the “humanistic sciences,” (2), because humanity is their central concern. The human preoccupation with theatre is captured in this way by Wilson:

Theater is an activity that we use to describe how we live. Think of how often we use theater as a metaphor to describe a part of daily life. We say that someone is melodramatic or highly theatrical. When we don't believe children, we say that they are play-acting. We refer to the battleground on which a war is fought as its theater. We describe the role we do in our professional and personal spheres as if we were performers on the stage of life.

Children and adults imitate behaviors that they admire, in the same way as actors and actresses mimic behaviors. (1)

He goes further to say that “theatricality is all around us in many of the popular forms that engage us. The relationship between theater, film, and television, for example, is quite apparent” (1).

As human sciences, theatre and film are preoccupied with how humanity engages itself and makes meaning out of existence. Whether they explore animate or inanimate objects, their concern is with how humanity relates with such engagements in order to make meaning out of them. On its part, leadership is equally preoccupied with people, with humanity. John Wesley is of the opinion that leadership “is doing all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the time you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can” (qtd. in Iwuamadi 2). He then submits that, “without sacrifice, there is no leadership because service is the first chapter in the book of leadership” (22). Again, while being interviewed on corporate responsibility of leaders and business organizations, His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, who is also the President of the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, says, “I have long held the view that industry which has fuelled much environmental deterioration in the world can be harnessed as a creative force to promote sustainable development if its leaders have the vision and commitment to change” (26).

The Prince of Wales, in the above submission has pointed out some key components of leadership which are also those of theatre and film. These are” that responsible leadership is creative, is development oriented, has vision and must bring about positive change. Livio Desimone, the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of 3M as at 1997, in an interview with the magazine also says that, “strong leadership involves listening to all of our constituencies” (qtd. in *Forum* 35).

Listening, then, is one of the qualities expected of a good leader to possess. Indeed, listening is essential to leadership, but it must be distinguished from hearing. Indeed, it is also a quality necessary for a director in the theatre. This is because the director is a leader, a controller of men who has been trained to use people to achieve fixed objectives. The director’s main working instrument is people. This is why Wale Adenuga, the owner of Wale Adenuga Productions (WAP), and producer of the series *Super Story*, uses the catch phrase, “We are pencils in the hands of the creator,” to end his stories. Many of our leaders are hearers and not listeners. A listener digests and reflects because listening is in-

depth and learned while hearing is fleeting but natural. In other words, it is possible for one to hear without understanding whereas someone who listens invariably understands. A good leader must have a listening ear. Speaking on the principles of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), in the first in the series of Pre-NEC lectures, the late former President, Dr. Festus Iyayi, outlined the principles of ASUU leadership, principles which should guide all responsible leaders globally as follows:

- Integrity, transparency and accountability.
- Professionalism, objectivity and hard work.
- Courage, sacrifice and total commitment.
- Internal democracy, team work and group solidarity; and
- Patriotism, anti-imperialism and working class solidarity. (Iyayi 4)

The former president went on to say that the above principles dictate and control all that they do in the union, including their mode of dressing. It is when leaders operate without clear cut principles that they derail and do things like gangsters. In summation, leadership devoid of clearly defined principles, is bound to fail.

Change, by way of a simple definition, is the quality of not being static or constant. The ability to be different, take on a new outlook, shift position, not retaining its original appearance, not being steady but has the tendency to take on a new appearance, shape, position, etc, but always shiftless

Theoretical Clarifications and Methodology

This paper, as mentioned earlier, draws its strength from the theatre for development theory (TFA), a theory designed to guide theatre practitioners to use their profession for the development of man in all ramifications. This theory, according to experts, is traced to Augusto Boal and the experiment of “two Brazilian theatre practitioners who emphasized conscientization of the people, creation of conducive atmosphere for sharing experience, educating the people and inducing a desire for change,” (Ugwu 80-81). As Ugwu puts it, “theatre is to be decentralized and its language understood and spoken by the community members for the purposes of change...To actualize the change, the approach must involve the people and it should start from bottom-up level” (81).

The essence of the theory revolves on how to utilize the theatre for mobilizing the people and making them not only desire change, but they should also engender positive change that would lead to development. The idea behind the theory actually revolves on how to help people, especially the rural people to live a better life, take interest in their own well-being and general affairs, and where necessary, make the government listen and attend to their needs. Thus,

community leaders are expected to be mediators between the theatre for development practitioners and the people, by getting the former involved through the identification of the needs of the latter and then putting the latter in a receptive frame of mind for a joint project geared towards development. The community leaders therefore serve as liaison officers as well as agents of the TFD practitioners. This is because the TFD group can hardly function effectively without the community leaders; they must have people to focus on and through the leaders, the people can now be accessed.

The research method used for this work, as noted earlier, is the literary method which Ukala says is also called the “analytical method” (8). He said that this research method “focuses on written and printed library and archival sources, especially books, journals, theses, reports, literary works, such as plays, novels and poems. Data are collected from these and analysed in relation to the research questions and objectives” (8). This method is quite appropriate to this study as it helps to highlight the objective, which is to show how theatre and film are agents of leadership change, especially if leaders strive to employ the manners and methods of theatre in their leadership roles as it affects the led.

Theatre, Film and Leadership: Points of Convergence and Divergence

The relationship between theatre, film and leadership is quite an interesting and peculiar one. It is interesting because it seems so obvious; and peculiar because it is disturbingly similar in many respects. In the first place, they are all concerned with disparate collection of people. The number of people however, differs based on the type of play or film and on constituency, be it village, Local government, state, a nation or even a corporate outfit, institution or company. Irrespective of the geographical space occupied or the population thereof, the central point is the presence of people of different demographics and psychographics involved with theatrical/film production and with governance. Again, all are or should be concerned with making life better in all its forms. In all three components of this work, entry qualification(s) is/are similar especially with reference to connection or who you know: “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know” (Claire 6). One needs to paraphrase Sir Tyrone Guthrie when he compares acting to prostitution but this time the comparison is with politics. It is safe to say that politics, as a calling somewhere between thuggery and casual work is in demand as never before; politics as a serious profession, especially in Nigeria, is in grave danger of extinction. This immediately calls attention to the fact of the infiltration of mediocrity and sacrifice of merit on the altar of who you know in the industry and in politics. Still on this idea of infiltration and of balkanization of what should be

normal, “what do we have today in the Federal cabinet? Increasingly, men and women of poor breeding, fantasizers of moronic culture, witless assemblage of gossips and administrators of poison to communal trust and peace” (qtd. in Ebika 8).

The above is applicable in all the three components of this work. However, both theatre and film have inherent in them, the means not only for their own redemption, but the power to save leadership and or governance and those involved in it from itself. This is because the leadership problem as experienced in Nigeria is a product of jettisoning responsibility associated with it in preference to the privileges it carries. The responsibility that goes with the privileges of the position are underscored by the fact that, “leadership always carries power with it. The exercise of power always involves ethical considerations” (Amadi 94). All told, leadership and those who are involved in it, at all levels hold it in trust. Whether it was thrust upon one by circumstance, inheritance, appointment or one takes it by force, the underlying outcome is that it is held in trust. The trust endures depending on the leader’s personal traits and attributes. This is because no amount of force can hold a people down for ever. If no other force can counter it, at least, ageing and health, indeed, time wears it down. Having noted the above, which cannot be exhausted in this paper, we can now discuss how theatre and film can engender leadership change for the good and development of humanity.

Theatre and Film as catalyst to Leadership Change

The underlying similarity between theatre, film and leadership is the need for change. It does not matter who the leader is, or his style of governance, the focus of any meaningful leadership is the need for change, actualized through the ability to be a good leader or director in the case of theatre and film, the leader must do what the actor does in the process of studying his role. He has to first “come to terms with himself, come to terms with his physical environment and learn how to manage relationships with other people. In all aspects of his being the actor needs to be sensitively tuned to be able to respond to whoever or whatever he encounters and his responses must be within his control” (11).

This is the crux of what those in leadership positions should learn from theatre and film. That is the ability to “come to terms” with themselves without which they would be unable to relate with others. As noted earlier, all the other units of the theatre (experts in their various fields), subjugate, one would even say, “suspend” their expertise and align their knowledge to that of the director in the overall interest of the production. This is one thing Nigerian leaders should

learn from theatre/film: the ability to listen to the opposition and not be too “sensitive” to criticism. Indeed, sometimes, opposition, which most leaders abhor, is without doubt, necessary to a healthy society and its acceptance is a true mark of leadership. And as the blurb of *Censorship: Opposing Viewpoints* makes us to know, “those who do not know their opponent’s arguments do not completely understand their own.” (Blurb, *Censorship: Opposing Viewpoints*). This observation is a truism and it bears repeating, as this writer has done elsewhere.

No leader knows it all. It is the leader who recognizes the power behind his office, who has the vision to recognize that power is merely a dressing, an icing on the cake of his position who enjoys true support and followership. The power of all leaders is as ephemeral as a theatrical production. The only way to make that power endure is to enshrine it through achievement which is concrete by evidence of its human and structural development in every field, and which in the theatre gains some form of permanence via documentation either in print form through written review or cinema through filming.

A theatre director who wants his production to endure must necessarily get it documented in permanent form. In the same token, any leader who wants to be remembered must leave behind a memory in permanent form through his achievements. Where those before him stopped, he must start from and take a backward step to see why his predecessor stopped there before going beyond it. Every leader in life is a sort of actor as said earlier. Nobody was born to rule, and nobody rules for ever. So, leadership is power given in trust the same way an actor is cast for a role, even so, some leaders get their positions. The definition of acting offered by Hodgson and Richards is quite germane here.

Acting is an interpretation, an impersonation of aspects of the human situation. It may involve playing the role of another person or it may require the imagined response of one’s own person to a mood or set of circumstances. In either case, the qualities needed for the best acting are also those qualities required for the fullest living. (11)

The truism in the above quotation is self-explanatory. If leadership is not role playing (acting), why would the led, the people, prefer one leader to another? Why would governors, senators, local government chairmen, Vice Chancellors, presidents, etc. using similar, if not exact, resources, like actors with the same scripts, perform differently, under similar circumstances? Indeed, leadership, like acting, produces different interpretation of the same role from different actors.

But, tragically, African leaders, one would prefer, rulers, do not behave like actors. For them, when their tenure ends, the curtain does not fall, nor is there ever a blackout. Instead, once their role is played and the play (tenure) ended, it is at that point they begin to improvise a script similar to the one just ended, in the bid to continue with their role(s). In so doing, unlike actors, they refuse to recognize a change of scene or that the curtain has fallen. Even when their ruler ship role was devoid of any significant event, they would rather continue to play to an empty auditorium because they did not pass through any form of audition to get their roles. They refuse to remember that even if an actor cheats at an audition or bypasses the process altogether, like a footballer in the field, such actor would have exposed his limitations on stage even as a footballer does in the field. The tragedy however, is that such actors/leaders, still manage to get some sort of canned applause from sycophants in the auditorium.

A good leader, like an actor who has not mastered his lines, listens keenly to the prompter and if he is good, the audience may not know that he was being prompted. In most cases, even when the audience is aware, if the actor was good, the audience overlooks the lapse. So, a good leader must listen to advice from both detractors via criticism, and to supporters, via encouragement. In either case, he must be sensitive and alert not to take every advice, hook, line and sinker as that would amount to throwing away the bath water with the child or being ignorant of which to take and which to discard. His success lies in his ability to internalize his role, aware that he is the focal point, aware that notwithstanding the individual commendation(s) given to every actor, the overall credit is his own because he was a good coordinator. As the director/leader, he assigns role(s) to his actors and crew members, he has confidence that they would deliver, so he does not interfere with their interpretations but supervises and guides them to work with the central objective of the play/production in mind.

He uses a different approach to relate with his cast and crew, treating each according to his reading of their individual mental and physical attributes, always aware of individual differences. He knows when to call a stubborn cast member to order in public and when a one-on-one chat would achieve a better result. Leadership is about service and he leads well who listens well since listening is learned and hearing is natural. He must be a good listener but must hear all and not listen to all.

The bane of leadership in Nigeria, even Africa, is the preponderance on the self: one's ethnic interest, one's political affiliation, one's religious set, one's family and such selfish syndromes. A true servant does not discriminate against such sentiments, because his leadership is idea and vision driven and not self-

centred. Just as an actor does not choose his audience, even so a leader should not select or discriminate between those who voted him and those who did not. The sentiments which characterize and dominate leadership in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular run somewhat like this, as captured by Okoroegbe in his critical appraisal of Wale Okediran's *Tenants in the House*: "We cannot possibly extend the tenure of the president, when everyone knows it is the turn of the North to produce the next president,.. it is our turn. The North will set the country on fire, if we are cheated. We *must* produce the next president, or else" (emphasis mine, 206).

The above and similar sentiments have been expressed by political aspirants in Nigeria, including, unfortunately, the incumbent president, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (rtd), in one of his previous efforts to be the president of the country. He cannot be a leader who does not know how to manage a defeat or handle success. Much has been written about Achebe's submission on what he considers the "trouble with Nigeria, which he places unequivocally on the feet of bad leadership. "The play," says Williams, "is genuinely considered dead, or at least, unconscious, until the actors take it up again" (39). The play script is like a nation, it is dormant, almost lifeless, until quality leaders, visionary leaders, give it life through their leadership example. The example of Nelson Rohila Mandela, in Southern Africa, remains an everlasting testimony to leadership by example. This is because prior to Mandela's election to South Africa's presidential seat, the country under Pieta Botha and Fredrick de Klerk , was just a nation in pains, where laughter was discriminated and where a part of the people (the Whites) lived, and the Blacks, subsisted. Mandela recreated this situation through his selfless and visionary leadership, so far the only one in the whole of Africa, who had the right to pad the play when the curtain fell, but he took pleasure, like a good actor in responding to the curtain call and took his bow gracefully.

Conclusion

No theatre or film director goes on stage or location without a production plan, which naturally becomes operable right from the preparation/preproduction stage/phase. A good production plan, categorized into short, medium or long terms, is the hallmark of successful leadership. As Ray Ekpu says, "the architecture of success is built long before that future arrives. That is the way to succeed. I wonder whether our leaders agree with that." He then goes on to say at the back page of *The Guardian* of 28th June, 2016, that, "if Buhari wants to stand out from leaders who were largely warming their chairs in Nigeria, he must have

a plan based on agreed national objectives. Without a plan, we will just be wandering in the wilderness as we have been doing these many years.” The necessity for a plan for leaders to pursue their goals and objectives is unquantifiable as without a plan leadership would be like a ship that is rudderless.

This paper has examined the concept of leadership and how theatre and film can be used to arrive at positive change in leadership. It pointed out the close affinity between the concepts and showed that without a plan no leader can succeed even as no director goes on stage or location without a plan. Arising from the submissions, it is recommended that aspirant leaders should borrow a leaf from theatre and film practitioners if they hope to make meaningful impact. They should realize that leadership is as tenured as an actor playing a role; when the curtain falls, another set of actors take over.

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APPROACH TO PLAYWRITING IN A TIME OF CHANGE IN NIGERIA: THE APPLICATION OF POST-INDIGINIST REALISM

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Abstract

In contemporary times, change, which ramifies in multifarious configurations and colourations, has been the lot of Nigerians. Ordinarily, there is nothing strange about this as change is said to be the only constant factor in human existence. But the nature of the 'change' in question calls for more than a cursory attention as it seems to be in dissonant relationship with the people's expectations. Our position is that using their creative inventions, Nigerian playwrights of today owe to themselves and their society a duty to unpack this change. The reality presented by the prevailing change should be of interest to Nigerian creative writers because "when reality is ignored or significant trends of thought are not reflected, art falls into disrepute". This paper therefore espouses the channels by which the creative oeuvre of contemporary playwrights could interrogate the 'new' change. The paper proposes post-indiginist aesthetics, a departure from indiginist essentialism and from indiginist hybridity and which thrives on character realism in a contemporary mode, as the needed tool for playwrights to navigate the new change terrain because, as noted by Brecht, "new problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of representation must change". That is the focal point of this paper.

Introduction

The springboard for our discussion in this paper is the assertion that the present-day Nigerian playwright owes to himself and to the Nigerian peoples the duty of unpacking and managing the 'change' project in the contemporary Nigerian polity. In making the assertion, we would set out by first unpacking the meaning of the word 'change' itself. Though in frequent use, the reality which the word 'change' connotes is often fluid. This fluidity is further captured by the apothegmatic expression that the only constant phenomenon in the existential realities of man is the 'change' dynamics. *Webster's Dictionary* offers, among other contours of meaning, that to change is "to make different; alter; transmute." The fluidity of the change phenomenon is accentuated by the fact that what is current today is often short lived thus becoming history tomorrow because we live

in a world where realities are constantly in a state of flux. Change as a phenomenon involves an unfamiliar newness. This inherent unfamiliar newness of change is essentially what makes change suspect and often unwelcome. In looking at how changes in self-concept affect visual perception of autobiographical memory, Goodman asserts thus:

I am completely different. I've been though (sic) a metamorphosis.... I feel as if I woke up one morning to find myself completely different... I am just not the same person I was three months ago. I look back and I cannot believe that I was her. (qtd. in Libby and Eibach 167)

The citation above validates the circumspection and wariness that change is associated with. Change is said to have occurred when something familiar or old completely gives way to something new and unfamiliar. It is a transmutation which implicates a process and is emplaced when the transition between the old and the new has been successfully navigated. Change connotes "a transition to new situation which individuals are unfamiliar with, giving up old way of doing things and shifting to a new system" (Kebapci & Erkal 2). Whenever and wherever change has successfully been emplaced, it bespeaks a disconnection between an old and a new order.

Change manifests in a motley of ways. Libby and Eibach (167-179) explains the new birth experience in religious circles as one of such ways in which change may occur in an individual. According to the duo, "the rhetoric of new birth in religious conversions suggests such a disconnect between past and present selves, and the practice of adopting a new name on induction into a religion symbolizes the new religious identity" (167). They further cite Tolstoy's religious experience which he (Tolstoy) captures in *My Religion* (1884/1885). With evident reference to his religious conversion, Tolstoy states quite unequivocally,

For thirty-five years of my life I was ... a man who believed in nothing. Five years ago faith came to me ... and my whole life underwent a sudden transformation....What had once appeared to me right now became wrong and the wrong of the past I beheld as right... My life and my desires completely changed; good and evil interchanged meanings. (Libby & Eibach 168)

Tolstoy's submission is a noteworthy testimonial on the transformative potency of change. The transitions or transformations inherent in change are

occasioned by “special circumstances, cultural traditions, cataclysmic events, political ideologies, economic policies and market place conditions” (Boh, Sgritta & Sussman, Prefatory Note). Saif et al., citing the authority of Schein enumerate three basic types of changes that occur among every human group or organisation thus; natural, evolutionary changes, planned and managed changes, and unplanned revolutionary changes. With respect to planned and managed changes, they further observe that the “fundamental theme ... is that individuals can be control (sic) and their behaviour can be foreseen in a scientific or methodological manner” (Saif et al 29).

Also, citing the authority of Rafferty and Griffin, Saif et al delineate three change characteristics that could shape the perception of change by the recipients. These are “the frequency of change, the degree of planning involved in the change and the magnitude of the change” (29). Kebapci and Erkal outline two paths to change as either the adoption of ongoing changes with an introduction of small alterations or an introduction of major and radical changes which often mean complete renewal of existing ways of doing things (12).

Change has some innate features which are survival, behaviour, process, structure and system. Darwin cited in Kebapci and Erkal (8) sees “change” as survival. Kebapci and Erkal record that Darwin associated survival with the ability to respond to changes as they naturally or otherwise would occur in the environment. In effect, every species in nature that truly wants to survive must develop ways of adapting to changes as they occur within the environment of that species. This bespeaks of change management. Metre writes that change management “is the systematic approach and application of knowledge, tools and resources to leverage the benefits of change...towards a better or more efficient process or function in hopes to positively impact performance” (4). Kebapci and Erkal further aver that for change to be properly managed, necessary structures must be put in place. Kebapci and Erkal go further to outline the sources of change as being internal, that is, inside-out and external, that is, outside-in. In terms of scope, change can either be discontinuous (revolutionary) or continuous (evolutionary).

The type of change which foregrounds this writing, as espoused by its proponents who are presently in power in Nigeria, can be described as social revolutionary in nature. Social revolutionary change usually, “has its sole, unambiguous aim the objective to completely transform a decadent socio-political and economic system” into a “progressive socio-economic system; a radical change in the social relations” strongly envisioning to provide solution to “urgent

socio-political and socio-economic contradictions” in a society (qtd. in Rotimi 47-8).

Notable Theories or Concepts of Change and Change Management

The manifest place of change in human existence and its nature have necessitated perhaps an avalanche of studies and postulations. Some of the theorists of change and change management include Frederick Winslow Taylor whose seminal effort in understanding change relates specifically to work situation (Paton and McCalman 177). Taylor’s change management theory otherwise known as Taylorism later received negative criticism. Nevertheless, his pioneering effort in the scientific study of change management among workers has remained impactful. John Kotter (www.rbsgroup.eu) identified eight (8) steps to an effective and meaningful large scale change effort. The eight steps can however be summed up in Kotter’s See-Feel-Change logic. Kotter’s ideological standpoint is that for change to occur, the proponents must not only observe but be emotionally bonded with the situation in order to be ideologically positioned to emplace change.

Another notable theorist of change management, Kurt Lewin (Burnes 977-1004) outlines three stages in the change management spectrum as follows; unfreeze, change and refreeze. According to Lewin at the unfreeze stage the organisation or institution is made to prepare for change by identifying areas of hurt from where change can begin and spread from. At this stage, the desire for change is identified, crystallised and the momentum is established in order to carry through with the next stage. At the change stage, the solution to the problem raised in the first stage is presented and the problem is addressed thus effecting the change. The last stage, that is the refreeze stage, is where the change is made to stick, to abide. The challenge in this stage is to ensure that the problem does not reoccur.

As stated earlier, the concern of this paper is mainly about socio-political change. According to Nwamuo, “Theorizing about any feature of political change almost always connotes an involvement in a web of controversy”. This, Nwamuo further explains, is because “the political position of the ‘actors’ orchestrating change is always a matter of dispute as to whether they are qualified to speak out on the issue of political change” (62). Nwamuo’s postulation above underscores the eminently vital responsibilities of the Nigerian playwright in this time of change as we espouse in this paper.

The Change Movement in Contemporary Nigeria

It is somewhat hackneyed to say that change has always occurred in Nigeria since, as has been noted earlier, change is the only constant phenomenon in human existence. That position notwithstanding one can say, in Otagburuagu's words, that "the first transformation (change) in our socio-political and linguistic history started in Lokoja" (1). Otagburuagu makes this assertion in relation to the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates which was birthed from the colonial administration in Lokoja. Decades later when the Union Jack was lowered and in its place the Nigerian flag was hoisted Nigeria transformed from being a British colony to becoming a politically independent nation. Shortly after the attainment of political independence, Nigeria changed, as it were, into a war-torn nation.

Over the decades, Nigeria has further changed from one military junta to another with short-lived attempts at civil/democratic rule until 1999 when the current civilian era commenced with attendant changes from one administration to another. Perhaps, one of the most momentous changes witnessed in Nigeria in recent history is the change from one civilian administration under the aegis of one political party to another civil administration headed by the opposition. The political struggle of this era birthed the "magic" word *change* in the Nigerian polity. The period leading up to this change shored up remarkable political disputations which saw Nigerians line up behind the two major political gladiators. The call for change came like a very strong wind, blowing across the Nigerian political landscape at the wake of the electioneering campaigns building up to the national elections of 2015. The change mantra soon caught up like the proverbial wild fire and was embraced by not a few Nigerians. In fact, to many Nigerians the thought of change was received as "uhuru" (freedom) at last. The opposition party, the All Progressive's Congress (APC) had a near-hypnotic hold on Nigerians because of their promise to birth a new Nigeria. Having x-rayed, matter-of-factly, the ills bedevilling Nigeria, the APC's flag bearer stated unflinchingly that he, Muhammadu Buhari had "now come to the rescue". An item in his political manifesto reads thus;

As a nation and the Sub Saharan Africa's leading energy producer, we had in the past squandered the opportunity to build functional infrastructure to better the lives of the average Nigerian. We can no longer afford this luxury of inactivity. We must revive our public and private sectors in order to provide functional services and secure the good of the individual Nigerian and his or her family.

We are here committed to Change Nigeria. (Buhari's Manifesto)

The mesmerizing hold of the change mantra notwithstanding, a palpable feeling of political weariness among Nigerians hung unmistakably in the air. In Anigala's words, "The Nigerian populace had developed political apathy" and "the harsh economy has eroded the ideals of integrity and self-respect once cherished by the masses" (Asagba 161). From past experiences, many concluded that politics in Nigeria is "a business enterprise, an investment package, and a means to an end...the criminal's means to an end" (Edeh 29). Edeh makes the point that Nigerians had come to the conclusion that every politician is "a sort of criminal that many mistakenly think isn't intelligent but has proven many times over to be either more intelligent than those who deem him or her a fool, or better still smarter" (Edeh 30). Edeh further stresses that contrary to Myles Munroe's stance that "leadership is the capacity to influence others through inspiration, generated by passion, motivated by a vision, birthed from a conviction, produced by a purpose", the Nigerian politician, by his observed conduct has made himself "unfit to be called a patriot" (Edeh 40). On the contrary, Edeh observes, Nigerians perceive the politician as "a criminal at heart" who "understands politics as the practice of influencing people by manipulation, to do his bidding, not the bidding of the people under the umbrella of a nation" (Edeh 30). On the state of the nation Eniayejuni and Evcan submit that,

Despite Nigeria's uninterrupted democratic governance and transition of political power from one democratic government to another in the last fifteen years, there is a growing crisis of detachment of government and the people, lack of transparency, lack of accountability, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the masses and corruption in the country. (Eniayejuni and Evcan 328)

Inadvertently, Buhari himself tacitly agreed, somewhat, with the above proclamation when, in his Manifesto, he declared, "I, Muhammadu Buhari, believe that our politics is broken. Our nation urgently needs fundamental political reform." According to Buhari, "What is certain in Nigeria today is that the entire country is in need of being fixed." Countenancing further the political lassitude of many Nigerians occasioned by vacuous, sometimes even fatuous, campaign promises of the past, the APC's flag bearer declared;

After years of broken promises, hyper-corruption, the feeling that politicians have become too remote from the people, etc., it is no wonder that Nigerians have completely lost faith in the country's ability to govern itself not just because of the problems facing the country, but the lack of faith in the present set of leaders at the helm of affairs. (Manifesto)

Thus, Buhari rightly observed that Nigerians desired and deserved change and offered himself as the arrowhead of the change, *positive* change, presumably, that Nigerians were yearning for. On Buhari's offer of change, Fongot Kinni quotes an online source thus, "Nigeria's incoming President Buhari said the nation has voted for change in an election that marks the first peaceful shift in power since the end of colonial rule in 1960... 'You voted for change and now change has come.'" (33) Understandably, many Nigerians bought into both his candidacy and the change project. For instance, Olaitan says, "I explained to those who cared to listen at the time that my support for General Buhari was necessitated by the need for the change of direction in Nigeria and more importantly by his anti-corruption credentials" (np) However, while Olaitan and others who share same persuasion apparently saw merit in Buhari's claim to being portent of change, many others had an iffy feeling about his claims. On the failure of leadership in Nigeria and the prospects of change Edeh writes, "To make matters worse, these are the same armed robbers agitating for change - excuse me, what kind of change are we talking about here, or should we expect the final devastation of the Nigerian people, landscape or entity" (42). Edeh also found Buhari's candidacy absolutely unacceptable. Referring to the entire gamut of allegedly corrupt politicians and Nigerians generally Edeh charges, "Sure, if Buhari doesn't send you to jail, the Nigerian people will send you all, and that includes President Buhari for being complicit in the act of corruption by successfully covering up (or letting the sleeping dogs lie) crimes against the people." Edeh wonders if Muhammadu Buhari would "really fight corruption by first giving up himself" for scrutiny thus giving impetus to his stance against corruption. This sceptical viewpoint of some Nigerians could be expressed in the words of Ann Richards thus, "After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels" (Edeh 29). To vary the metaphor, with respect to the political actors wielding power at the time and the opposition party hankering to "defeat the existing instrument of government" the only difference is that between six and half a dozen. This sentiment is anchored

on the stance that every political party is “a dictatorial instrument of government that enables those with common outlooks or interests to rule the people as a whole” (Edeh 32). Edeh, citing the authority of Ghadaffi’s *Green Book*, stresses that “the party is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those people who have common interests, a common perception or a shared culture; or those who belong to the same region or share the same belief” (32) and whose mission is the “domination of the members of the party over the rest of the people” (34).

The positions highlighted above put into proper perspective the ambivalent attitudinal dispositions with which Nigerians welcomed both the change project and the heralds of the wind of change. This ambivalence does not imply that a section of the Nigerian populace did not see the need for change given the palpable decay in the polity. Rather the contention of the cynics was premised on the notion that the change that was being birthed was a specious one spearheaded by persons whose integrity and intentions were doubtful. They seemed to re-echo the aphorism that “he who must come to equity must come with clean hands”.

Explication of Post-indiginist Realism

Post-indiginist realism or aesthetics is a theory in language aesthetics in modern African literature propounded by Isaiah Ilo. The theory represents Ilo’s contribution to “the language question” or “the language debate” or “the language factor” or still “the language problem”, as it has been variously designated, in African drama which Ilo dubbed “linguo aesthetics”. Prior to Ilo’s postulations, there were fundamentally two schools of thought in existence in relation to language use in African literature generally and African drama in particular. The schools of thought are nativist or indiginist essentialist and indiginist hybrid schools of thought. The indiginist essentialist school was sired, as it were, from the loins of Frantz Fanon whose anti-colonial polemics fired the notion that African literature should not, or indeed, cannot be written in the language of the colonisers. A conflation of diverse factors left Fanon with a feeling of psychological disorientation. Born of mixed parentage in the Caribbean Island of Martinique and educated in France, Fanon experienced racism in an “inhospitable white world” (Ilo “Language” 2). This led Fanon to critically examine the psychological costs of colonial subjugation one of which principal consequences manifest in loss of native language proficiency for the colonised. Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks* captures his misgivings on speaking the coloniser’s language this way:

To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but also to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation ... Every colonised people -- in order (sic) words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation: that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonised is elevated above the jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. (Ilo "Language" 2)

Fanon was thus uncompromising in his rejection of the hegemonic hold of the colonisers' language. The indigenist essentialist school is framed by the expressive theory of language which "implies that particular languages embody distinctive ways of experiencing the world" thus making a definitive statement about the owners of the language. Fanon further averred that "...language, above all else, shapes our distinctive ways of being in the world. Language, then, is the carrier of a people's identity, the vehicle of a certain way of seeing things, experiencing and feeling, determinant of particular outlooks on life" (Ilo "Language" 2).

In tandem with Fanon's postulations, Obi Wali's "The Dead End of African Literature?" declares that, "any true African literature must be written in African languages, otherwise the writers and their Western midwives (critics and publishers) would be merely pursuing a dead end which can only lead to sterility, uncreativity (sic) and frustration." (qtd. in Igili 3) Ngugi wa Thiong'o's impact in this regard with his collection of essays, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* cannot be shoved aside.

The hybrid school of thought on the other hand upheld the belief that the colonised should be unperturbed about the hegemonic grip of the coloniser's language but should instead indigenise the African lore within the provisions of the coloniser's language in a manner that still sufficiently bears the badge of the African core. Among the exponents of the latter position are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Kwaku Asante-Darko and a host of other African writers. Achebe, a leading proponent of the hybrid school submits that "the African writer should aim to use English in a way that brings out his message best without altering the language to the extent that its value as a medium of international exchange will be lost. He should aim at fashioning out an English, which is at once universal and

able to carry his peculiar experience”. Obumsele charges the African creative writer to “attempt literal fidelity, to translate wherever possible the actual words which might have been used in his own language and thereby preserve the local flavour of his situations.” (qtd. in Ilo “Language” 5) Soyinka fittingly affirms this line of thought thus;

when we borrow an alien language to sculpt or paint in, we must begin by co-opting the entire properties of that language as correspondences to properties in our matrix of thought and expression. We must stress such a language, stretch it, impact and compact it, fragment and reassemble it with no apology, as required to bear the burden of experiencing and experiences, be they formulated or not in the conceptual idioms of the language. (Ilo “Language” 5)

The underlying dynamic, according to the hybrid school of thought, is that language consists of “neutral properties capable of manipulation” (Ilo Language 5). Both positions are differently nuanced reactions or attitudes to the same overarching reality- the colonial experience- a reality which imprints Africans may never become free from. Before Ilo’s articulation of the language debate, scholars had tended to assume an either/or stance on the matter. Ilo however proclaims it “a continuum in which the major constructs on the issue are acknowledged as different theories that have influenced present practice of playwriting in Africa” and suggests post-indiginist aesthetics “to fill the gap left by the two”.

In proposing the post-indiginist aesthetics in the language of African literature, Ilo countenances the historical fact of colonisation in Africa but argues that, “In view of the decline of Eurocentric colonist ideology, alternative aesthetic criteria for contemporary African literature will not include the colonial experience as a factor in choice of language” because, Ilo avers, “the colonial past is remote from the present that the literature should address” (Ilo Language 8). Given the lasting impact of the colonial experience on the colonised, Ilo’s stance is problematic. A major premise of Ilo’s proposition is that, “reaching for the past is a hard task for a new generation writer who is unable to use the mother tongue or traditional orature” as an effective tool of communication. By this statement, Ilo seems to suggest that the modern African writer is losing or perhaps has lost touch with the mother tongue. Should that be the case, it means that the mother tongue and traditional orature is in danger of extinction. However, the

veracity or otherwise of that assertion is not within the locus of interest of this paper.

“Reaching for the past” for many Nigerian writers has manifested in “the deployment of myths or stories of mythical dimension” thus drawing “heavily from the narratives and folklore of a people’s distant past to project or produce particular dramaturgic critique of not only the past but the present condition, values and ethics of society” (Raji-Oyelade 74). However, Ilo argues further that the purpose of literature in the Post-indiginist aesthetics is to express any subject matter in a contemporary mode, “therefore the criteria of another aesthetic paradigm will not be backward looking and romantic but contemporary and realistic.” In effect, Ilo posits that African literature should divest itself of its nostalgic attachment to the past no matter how glorious - an attachment which is often lachrymal - but should instead brace itself up to and address contemporaneous challenges. Ilo avers that the post-indiginist literary style is one “in which an African dramatist creates out of engagement with the pressing reality of his present environment instead of in response to by-gone colonial experience” (“Post-indiginist” 41) Therefore, a very critical index to be considered in the choice of language for the African creative writer, Ilo submits, is “communicative exigency” and this can only be made meaningful by taking into cognisance the target audience.

Another index is character realism. Ilo sees nothing wrong in the fact that “pre-modern society expressed itself in ritual theatre based on its stage of social evolution” but wonders why theatre should not “wear new look in a modern society that has made much progress” (“Post-indiginist” 46). “New wine” declares Ilo, “must be put into new bottles”. Ilo recalls that the centring of culture in African creative writing “arose from the circumstances of the nationalist struggle” and cites the authority of Frantz Fanon thus; “by a kind of perverted logic, colonialism turned to the past of the oppressed people, and distorted, disfigured, and destroyed it.” This distortion gave impetus to movements such as the Negritude Movement and the Mbari Club which assigned itself the “task of projecting an authentic African culture that contested the Euro-centric hegemony” (“Post-indiginist” 46). Okur notes that African writers “believed that affirming the past, confirming the African identity and validating her institutions over a super-imposed Western ideology would provide epistemic foundation for independence from Western imperialism.” (qtd. in Ilo “Post-indiginist” 46) Ilo’s grouse, however, is that “well after independence, Nigerian playwrights have continued the valorization of myth, ritual and tradition” to the degree that even when handling contemporary issues, African playwrights have tended to favour a

treatment of the present within the context of an allegorical past. Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* an adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* which the author claimed was his commentary on the Nigerian civil war and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun* are cases in point. Ilo's stance is validated by Fanon when the latter says "In no way do I have to dedicate myself to reviving a black civilization unjustly ignored. I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to sing the past to the detriment of my present and my future" (qtd. in Lee 94).

On the strength of this argument Ilo proposes character realism in a contemporary mode. This is considered fundamental especially as Aristotle in his seminal position, had averred that "the hallmark of good dramatic language is the use of suitable present-day words in characters' speeches -- language that enhances the realism of a play and makes its story, characters and logic plausible and hence affective to its audience" (Ilo "Language" 8). Ilo's proposition of character realism in contemporary mode is irrespective of the language chosen by the author, whether local or foreign. In his words, "whether a play is rendered in a foreign or local language, its diction should suit its characterization and target audience; current expressions should be used in place of outmoded ones" (Ilo "Language" 8). The only exception to this is if the dramatic work is conceptually historical in nature.

Ilo's proposition on the post-indiginist literary style as examined above tends to weigh perhaps too heavily on the language demands of the style. This is understandable because communicative exigency will impact significantly on other indexes such as topical contemporaneity and character realism. If undue romanticism must be avoided and character realism achieved, then language use must countenance contemporaneity for communicative exigency.

Responsibilities of Playwrights

In considering the responsibilities of playwrights in the Nigerian society especially as it relates to the change project, the point must be made forthwith that the African writers and scholars have since jettisoned the concept of art for art's sake because of its utilitarian barrenness and therefore non-applicability to the African situation. African writers found no place for the Euro-centric view of *belles lettres* because like Soyinka rightly observed, "the artist (writer) has always functioned in African society as the record of the mores and experience of his society and the voice of vision in his own time. He is the special eye and ear, the special knowledge and response of his society" (21).

Tola Adeniyi, while delivering his Keynote Address during the SONTA Conference of 1992 submits, with reference to the period of military dictatorship in Nigeria, that “the current constellations of forces in Nigeria and the convulsions and contradictions arising from it have brought added salience to the place of theatre and art in our march to civil and modern society” (Malomo and Gbilekaa “Introduction”). If this was true then, it is regrettably even truer in the current dispensation. Adeniyi further avers that “theatre or drama is the most expressive of the context in which the fundamental forces of life are contested, defined, decided and analysed for mankind to see the way through the labyrinth called living”. Adeniyi thus buttresses the point that African literary creativity has always rested on the philosophy that “when reality is ignored or significant trends of thought are not reflected, art falls into disrepute” (Innes 1).

Post-indiginist Realism: Vistas of interface with Contemporary Realities in Nigeria

Having examined Ilo’s Post-indiginist realism in terms of its demand for communicative exigency, topical contemporaneity and character realism in literary works and having also established that every African, nay Nigerian writer is duty-bound to record “the mores and experience of his society” and should be “the voice of vision in his own time”, in this section of the paper, we would like to suggest some of the channels which playwrights could explore in order to represent current realities in the Nigerian polity.

It is expedient for contemporary Nigerian playwrights to investigate how Nigerians are affected by “the shock of the new.” Also, following Kurt Lewin’s change management spectrum, Nigerian playwrights should examine what may have been unfrozen, the change being emplaced and what could be allowed to refreeze within the Nigerian cultural, socio-political and economic realities. The degree to which Nigerians have bought into the change project should also be examined. Metre avers that “change management entails thoughtful planning, sensitive implementation, and consultation with, and involvement of, the people affected by a specific change” (4). It therefore behooves Nigerian playwrights to interrogate the change project of the present administration on the basis of these stated paradigms.

Nigerian playwrights would also need to interrogate how Buhari has kept faith with what perhaps may be considered the most resonating part of his acceptance speech in which he declared profoundly thus, “Having just a few minutes ago sworn on the Holy Book, I intend to keep my oath and serve as President to all Nigerians. I belong to everybody and I belong to nobody”. Buhari

thus indicated his resolve to make fairness and equal treatment the life wire of his administration. This is a hermeneutic channel that could be explored by contemporary Nigerian playwrights.

As against the aesthetic paradigm that is “backward looking and romantic” and which takes up the task of “projecting an authentic African culture” in order to contest the “Euro-centric hegemony” as obtains in the indiginist essentialist and indiginist hybrid schools of thought, the present-day Nigerian writers should interrogate prevailing practices that tend to be crystallising and gaining cultural legitimisation. These include the cultures of financial profligacy, of unbridled maniacal looting of public fund by political and public office holders, and of preponderating cold-blooded violence.

Also, Nigerian playwrights should interrogate the unwieldy powers of political parties, as is presently the case, where party interest is placed above the interest of the citizenry which, perhaps, gives impetus to Edeh’s submission that;

The party is a contemporary dictatorship. It is the modern instrument of dictatorial government. The party is the rule of a part over the whole. As a party is not an individual, it creates a superficial democracy by establishing assemblies, committees, and propaganda through its members. The party is not a democratic instrument because it is composed only of those who have common interests, a common perception or a shared culture (Edeh 32).

Edeh further states that “the purpose of forming a party is to create an instrument to rule the people i.e. to rule over non-members of the party. The party is, fundamentally, based on an arbitrary authoritarian concept – the domination of the members of the party over the rest of the people” (33-4).

In interrogating the present constitutive structure of the political parties in the country, Nigerian playwrights may need to examine the recurring issue of zoning of political offices which has no place in the Nigerian constitution but which has become a card that politicians like to trump up in determining who contests an election. Nigerian playwrights should also be questioning the undemocratic difference between the authority of the people and authorities (houses of parliament at various levels) acting on behalf of the people.

It is critically vital also for contemporary Nigerian playwrights to, in their works, creatively counterbalance the change which Nigerians yearned for, which the Buhari administration promised them during their electioneering campaign with what presently obtains in the Nigerian state. By so doing, they would be

fulfilling their obligations as watchdogs in the society. Nigerians must not only survive this change as Darwin postulates but must enjoy it.

Edeh's submission that the self-proclaimed agents of change are "the same armed robbers agitating for change" calls for interrogation especially as he expressed potent fears that the much touted change may be illusive and may, on the contrary, birth "the final devastation of the Nigerian people, landscape or entity." Having presided over the affairs of the country for about two years now, it is considered apposite for Nigerian playwrights to unpack Buhari's personal offer of change encapsulated in the statement, "You voted for change and now change has come" in the light of his stewardship so far. Buhari's much-talked-about body language needs be interrogated. Such creative venture must of necessity take an all-inclusive look at the prevailing "change" and its drivers in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The 29th day of May, 2015 was memorable in the annals of Nigeria as it marked the commencement of the Buhari's administration and therefore the take-off of the "change" project in the Nigerian polity. As part of his acceptance speech, Buhari (*Punch Newspaper*, 30 May, 2015) declared, "Today marks a triumph for Nigeria and an occasion to celebrate her freedom and cherish her democracy" thus marking the beginning of a new dawn in Nigeria's history. According to the Newspaper publication, Buhari further promised that "Nigerians will not regret that they have entrusted national responsibility to us. We must not succumb to hopelessness and defeatism. We can fix our problems." Further still, Buhari declared, "As far as the constitution allows me I will try to ensure that there is responsible and accountable governance at all levels of government in the country".

However, against the backdrop of these praiseworthy pronouncements comes a dissonant assessment of prevailing realities. Contrariwise, however, it appears the agents of government see things differently. It is in light of the incongruity and dissonance of voices that we believe that contemporary Nigerian playwrights can draw on the benefits of Ilo's Post-indiginist literary aesthetics in order to place the current "change" in proper perspective. Put succinctly, the playwrights need to employ communicative exigency, topical contemporaneity presented in contemporary mode and character realism. Borrowing a leaf from Buhari who declared that he would, "not have kept my own trust with the Nigerian people if I allow others abuse theirs under my watch", Nigerian creative writers would also not have kept their trust with Nigerians if they fail to creatively interrogate the prevailing situation, adequately.

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THE CHANGE MANTRA: REDEFINING COSTUMING IN NOLLYWOOD FILMS

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Abstract

There is no gainsaying the fact that Nollywood (the Nigerian Film Industry) has helped Africans, Nigerians particularly, tell their stories from their own perspective. However, some very important aspects of the filmic genre, like costuming, are given the due attention they deserve. According to Bandura (1977), the social learning theory is based on the idea that learning occurs within a social context either by observation, imitation or modelling, and Nollywood films are instruments through which people are shaped and re-shaped: a site where good and evil are intertwined (Okome, 2003). As a medium of cultural transmission and socialization, Nollywood films intentionally or unintentionally have brought about significant negative changes in the dressing patterns of Nigerian youths through costuming. This paper tends to expose the adverse effect of flaws in costuming in some Nollywood films. It also proposes total over-haul of the Nollywood's objective in order to rebuild and restructure the industry in terms of the moral sensibility of our youths rather than encourage indecency and moral decadence. The paper concludes on the note that the Nigerian Film Industry should re-adjust in terms of censorship by rebranding, re-packaging and re-representing the good, rich cultural values and image of Nigeria and Africa at large, for the transformation of our youths.

Introduction

On a daily basis, the moral and cultural values of the Nigerian society are undergoing transformation from what they used to be in the past. Before technology set in, culture was transmitted from generation to generation by traditional institutions, but today the changes that have enveloped the world are as a result of the effect of globalization caused by industrialization and enculturation through the importation of Western ideologies and culture. These amalgamation of cultures reverberate with the globalization of uncontrolled “economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures” (Kraidy 1), which is what is affecting the Nigerian society. Culture is what defines us,

representing where we come from, our beliefs and values that shape who we are. Culture, according to Taylor, “is the sum total of human action (and its product) which is socially transmitted rather than genetically transmitted... It includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as members of a society” (qtd. in Luzbebaz 134). Culture, therefore, is the totality of a people’s practices in any given entity, a flux that brings about new formation with time. These Western/alien cultures that Africans, Nigerians particularly, have so imbibed were brought during the period of colonialism and more recently socially transmitted by the audio-visual media, which have become the cultural inducer that influences all and circuitously sets the agenda for the society.

It is rare to view an hour of television and not see a suggestively dressed or undressed character/artist concerned with his/her physical attractiveness, either as sex object, alluring objects of sexual gratification or erotic and suggestive stimuli (Lysonski, 1983; Mayne, 2000; Henthorne and La-Tour 1995). Sex is everywhere, on children cartoons, television programs, movies, and music videos. In this case, the sex referred to is in the manner of dressing, which comes under four categories: demure, seductive, partially clad, or nude (Soley and Kurzbard, 1986). Sexual and erotic images are the single most prominent characteristic of the media presently (Courtney & Whipple 1983). It has become more explicit; more models have appeared in the nude and more images of actors, either half-dressed or scantily dressed are all over the media because sex sells products (Muro 1989).

Some of these pollutant alien cultures integrated into the society which were either forcefully, subtly or willingly embraced and accepted by the people have become “a site for convergent interests” (Hall 33), which the Nigerian film industry has comfortably combined to achieve its aim of “essentially making money even when they are systematically being guided by the tenets of African nationalism and cultural identity which help to address local concerns” (Akomfrah 282). The image of the Nigerian society is plainly and symbolically shaped by the films produced by the film industry called Nollywood, which have become universally established within the African continent and beyond. However, this establishment and acceptance have become worrisome because some of the images of these films no longer promote the essence of reflecting African’s cultural self and identity, but rather have created an avenue for socio-cultural and moral collapse of the society. As a medium of cultural transmission and socialization, Nollywood films intentionally or unintentionally have brought about significant negative changes in the dressing patterns of Nigerian youths

through their costuming. The continuous rise in the sexual content and manner of dressing among the actors/actresses in Nollywood films have elicited serious public concern in the society, the impact of role modelling particularly on adolescent, plus the evidence for increased exposure of young people to the media, has led to major inquiries in this paper.

Media has made such a huge impact on the masses as the most pervasive and one of the most powerful instruments of entertainment in the world. It has gone too far in terms of the influences it has on people: tells people how to act, how to date a boy/girl, how to lose weight in a few days, and even how to dress. Woven throughout our daily lives, the media instil their messages into our consciousness at every turn. All forms of media continue to present and communicate images of the sexes in stereotyped ways, many of which are responsible for unrealistic, conventional, and restrictive perceptions of human possibilities. Because media pervade our lives, the ways they misrepresent genders may distort how we see ourselves and what we perceive as normal and desirable for both sexes of which the consequence is that these images encourage us to perceive normal bodies and normal physical functions as challenges which are not good enough. Human behaviour is greatly influenced by the lifestyles of those around us, whether as friends, family, colleagues, or by the lifestyles, both real and fictional, portrayed in the media (Power and Mont 2010).

Media, and especially advertising, are equal opportunistic dehumanizers of both sexes. Not only do media induce us to think we should measure up to artificial standards, but they encourage us to see normal bodies and bodily functions as pathologies. Essentially, society is blatantly objectifying models by displaying their half-dressed or nude bodies on magazine covers, billboards, even television programmes so that the world, youth especially will purchase these nearly pornographic images and think nothing is wrong with looking like these models since society is influenced by what they see. Sexually objectified portrayals of both genders in advertisements can also affect views of sex and sexual behaviour, which brings us to the question: should the media assume some moral responsibility as they create and disseminate images and messages to the consuming public? Sexual objectification becomes culturally acceptable as there are constant portrayals of youths, especially women as sex objects in advertisements.

One form of media that also promotes sexualisation is music videos. Teenagers watch music videos for a period of fifteen to thirty minutes per day on average and this has usually become their primary activity. This means that the viewer dedicates most, if not all, of their attention to the activity of watching these

video (Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers 255-6), with the youths expecting to achieve success using more than just their talent thus negatively impacting the physical and mental wellbeing of youths. It is often argued that men are equally as sexualized in music videos. “Males are more often depicted as adventurous, aggressive, and dominant, shown to have more positive and powerful characteristics, which promote optimistic ideas and expectations of what real men are like; females are more often depicted as affectionate, fearful, and nurturing... [while] for women, a sexy woman is equated with power; for men, a sexy woman is merely a tease” (Zillman and Vorderer 180-181). Though women feel empowered by performances of their sexualized idols, but men are only seeing them as sexual beings, which is why young girls equate sexiness to power. This does not in any way define positive influence on adolescent girls or even their male counterparts.

Youths constitute the largest demographic segment of moviegoers (Strasburger 1995) as well as movie fans, and a good number of movies with sexual themes have plots that appeal primarily to teen and young adult audiences. As youth, you have the right to live a healthy lifestyle that includes exposure to images that are positive and that accurately portray real people. Media such as television commercials/programmes, movies, musical videos, advertisements and even festive costumes and clothing can show us unhealthy and unrealistic stereotypes of both young men and women. Because media is ingrained in our everyday lives, it affects how we view ourselves and others. It is important to be aware of the messages we are seeing in order to understand why they were constructed and what they are trying to tell us.

Entertainment media including movies, TV, magazines, pop music, and music videos which provide a vast array of messages on falling in love, relationships, and sexual desires targeted at a teenage audience may shape their sexual attitudes, values, and practices. Media content is dangerous especially for the youths in society because they will be imbibing this content during important stages in their development, when gender roles, sexual attitudes, and sexual behaviours are being shaped. This group may be particularly at risk because the cognitive skills that allow them to critically analyse messages from the media and to make decisions based on possible future outcomes are not fully developed. Now society is being drawn to this culture and the culture is spreading, making these music videos the norm in society. Another cause for concern is in a media industry that has been in existence for a long period of time - the movie industry. The idea that women are mere objects is an extremely wrong message to deliver to society. But yet, no matter how much one critiques or complains, women are

still objectified in every form of entertainment. Sex sells and will forever be a strong selling point. The trend of objectification of women in media looks to continue because it is profitable and entertaining. However, this media practice is harmful to society for physical and mental reasons. “Sexual objectification occurs when a woman’s body is treated as an object (especially as an object that exists for the pleasure and use of others), and is illustrated interpersonally through gaze or ‘checking out,’ and in the representation of women in the media” (Slater and Tiggemann 2002). Nussbaum (1995) notes that the term “objectification” has become a part of everyday vernacular, commonly used to critique popular culture. The objectification of girls/women is more omnipresent than ever before. The constant barrage of popular culture images that normalizes the objectification of young girls and women has driven many girls to adopt an objectified status prior even to their own sexual maturity. Male objectification is also on the rise in our burgeoning consumer society (Thompson, 2000), but it is still fairly unusual and often shunned by its targets. The fact that some male sex symbols are publicly uncomfortable with their objectified status speaks to a difference in how men and women are positioned vis-à-vis “consensual” objectification. Simply put, the different meanings implied by the labels “actor” and “actress” reflect the fact that women’s primary status in movies is as objects to be acted/ “actored” upon by (male) subjects. Younger generations are more comfortable objectifying and commodifying other human beings because of their new citizen-consumer outlook.

The Role of Film in the Society

The audio-visual media (films, television, movies) have become part of our everyday life because our life style have increasingly been advocated and influenced by these media. The audio-visual media includes the television and film (movies, home video), but the filmic genre is classified into action and adventure films, comedy films, crime and gangster films, drama, epic/historical films, horror films, musical (dance) films, science fiction and war films (Makamani 3-5). These entire film genres have common features, from character, setting, plot, content, form to physical appearance in terms of make-up and costumes, which have direct or indirect impact on the modern world.

Based on cultural infiltration, acculturation and hybridity, the media had instantaneous impact and influence on the culture of any society it comes across with, in terms of language, pattern of eating, and dressing among others. this is because the media have continued to dominate the activities of most households, which aided in the reduction of interpersonal family relationship that hitherto

helped in transmitting the cultural awareness, values and heritage among the people. Presently, the “movies, like books, are culturally special medium...and an important medium of cultural transmission” that has taken control of the inculcation of the culture from the family, hence causing “cultural laggard” (Baran 75).

The filmic media is a powerful instrument of mass communication that has played an important revolutionary function for the transmission of cultural values essential for socialization, according to Johns “without doubts film is the most effective medium for the promotion, propagation and even preservation of culture” (99). Since art without a cultural base is meaningless, the filmic genre represents and projects our cultural elements because it is used in exalting the culture and values of a society, as well as used to reveal and communicate some follies and vices. Films can create interest, stimulate discussion and encourage enquiry when they are used effectively, but its major roles are entertainment and cultural marketing as well as serving as an agent of social control, with its powerful crystallization of common ideas of the masses. Film can create not only temporary phenomenal experiences but also change the cultural climate of a society since it is closely related to different life styles and beliefs that define the human society (Persson 4). Film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle (Mulvey 57). He goes on to say that the cinema both reflects and reveals the psychological obsessions of the society that produces it: "Film is inescapably literal. Images confront the viewer directly, without mediation...We respond viscerally to visual forms, before having the leisure to read or interpret them as symbols" (Shaviro 26). Film is thus seen as a reinforcement of traditional gender representation rather than a corrective measure for the society, which mass-produce daydreams, a form of escapism for most adolescents in their society.

Films became a passion and central to the social life of youths beginning from the late 1950s, bringing in a new youth culture. These films can be informative and reveal essential truths about the human condition. As a tool of falsification, it is referred to as the “opium of the masses”, to manipulate and deter the youth from political activity, by curbing their critical ability, instead of educating them. This misrepresentation of the media, film especially, is presently reflecting and shaping the popular conceptions of youths in terms of their physical attractiveness, a form of deviation from social norms. Though various researches have demonstrated that young people are heavy patrons of sexually-oriented media (Brown et al., 2006) where they copy fashion trends like clothing, haircut,

types of make-up, piercings, colours and so on, in order to express their belonging to a certain group, which means that there is the likelihood of mutual influences. Whereas these adolescents may have little control over how they are represented in the media, they have more control over the identity they create via their clothing choices (Cook & Kaiser, 2004). Presently, youths see an actor, perhaps their idol, and admire his/her voice, but perceives from their performance that having a great voice/talent is not enough; that they may need sex appeal in order to be successful. It is never explained to them that acting in such a manner promotes objectification, and negative gender expectations (APA 2007).

The filmic genre has therefore become a significant cultural context through which there are cross-cultural engagement and means of influencing people's attitudes in the African society presently. However, this genre of the media has transformed culture into a commodity that can be bought and sold, lowering the moral standards of the masses, being intellectually destructive because it has become a tranquilizer for the society, it has questioned and challenged the basic values in the society, it has provided a culture of consumerism rather than being a conduit for conserving cultural objects and values, and finally, it conforms to average tastes without elevating the cultural awareness of the masses.

The Theory of Social Learning.

Most behaviours that people display are learned, at least in rough form either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of others before they are performed. Bandura's social learning theory is based on the idea that we learn from our interactions with others within a social context. People can learn new information and behaviour from others through observation, imitation or/and modelling. Bandura posits that "most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling "from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behavior are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serve as a guide for action" (22). By observing the behaviour of others, people develop similar behaviour, including such concepts as observational learning, imitation and modelling.

The social learning theory by Bandura offers explanations for the learning of culturally appropriate gender roles, ideologies, practices, and behaviours through reinforcement from others and modelling. Bandura remarks that "human behaviour has often been explained in terms of unidirectional causation, in which behaviour is depicted as either being shaped and controlled by environmental influences or driven by internal dispositions" (23). Bandura is referring to the

unique ability that humans have to absorb and mimic their environment, creating a personalized reality that is reflective of what they observe and identify as meaningful and then act based on those observations. Therefore, if youths are observing images thrust at them through mass communication as a guideline of how to act, they will begin to act in that manner because it mirrors their environment.

Bandura refers to this as modelling, a situation by which the observer learns what behaviour is appropriate in what situations and begins to set up structure and rules for their environment based on the knowledge they obtained with their modelling:

As great deal of information about human values, styles of thinking, behaviour patterns and sociostructural opportunities and constraints is gained from modelled styles of behaviour portrayed symbolically through the electronic mass media...The accelerated growth of electronic technologies has vastly expanded the range of models to which members of a society are exposed day in and day out. (25)

Additionally, Bandura does not fail to mention that the electronic mass media is a machine that quickly and efficiently structures new symbolic environments for humans to construct and model. When large portions of the population are modelling behaviour after advertisements, reality television, films and, in some cases, soft-core pornography it becomes a force that changes society as a whole, which, if the change is proven detrimental or damaging, is where a cause for concern grows.

Observational learning is a concept whereby humans learn only by themselves from observing others in order to start the learning process. The learner at this point has the power to influence their own learning in new situations by controlling the environment around them – whether that environment is imposed, selected or constructed (Bandura 158; Hathaway, Muse and Althoff 3). Imitation, on the other hand, involves the actual reproduction of the observed motor activities, in other words, after observation, the learner assimilates and imitates the behaviour of the observed. While in modelling, the learner takes everything, whether positive or otherwise, about the observed and imitated behaviour and begins to act according to the experience gotten. It therefore means an observer's behaviour changes after viewing and paying attention to the behaviour of a model whether through live or symbolic events that

are modelled and in this case the “television ... is a compelling medium for capturing and holding attention” (Grusec 781).

Studies have shown that the audio-visual media have comparatively more impact on its viewers than others. Whether intentionally or not, we are educated and influenced, either positively or otherwise, by the filmic genre. This mindless genre helps to educate the masses as well as promote pro and anti-social behaviours among the people. There is a symbiotic relationship that exists between the media, social ills and other behavioural/attitudinal changes in the society, because it has a very special power to affect and shape the opinion and belief of the masses as well as change of habits and moulding of behaviour, which “are influenced not only by personal and live models, but by those presented in the mass media” (O’Rork 72).

Modelling is an indispensable aspect of learning because it teaches new behaviour, which people adopt, influences frequency of previously learned behaviour and even increases frequency of similar behaviour as people practice these behaviours. Its influences produce learning principally through informative functions and that observers acquire mainly symbolic representations of modelled activities rather than specific stimulus-response associations. The social modelling theory by Bandura (1977) posits that viewers can learn new behaviour by observing role models in the mass media. This modelling effect is enhanced if a high degree of identification occurs between a viewer and the media personality. Humans learn from observation, which occupies and affects them closely after which they copy from their models.

Like any other medium, films have cultural repercussions on its viewers, especially on youths who have become increasingly aware of fashion and its trends. According to McLuhan in his *The Medium is the Message* “The viewer is helpless when he is forced to absorb packaged opinions through the electronic media, especially film. The viewer at the moment of intake becomes the prisoner of his own reactions in that participation, for or against, eludes his involvement at the material time” (7, 21). Dress patterns reflect a people’s manifest culture and the media are the dominant carriers of these manifestations. Most Nigerian youths within the age bracket of 18-25, who constitute the population of most communities, imitate these alien cultures of dressing through these Nollywood films because these actors are role models to them, they quickly adopt the fashion trends they see in these films, using it to boost their egos. We should know that the film is a very powerful means of entertainment and transmission of cultural values, which constitute “mass homogenization of hybrid identities” some of which results in moral decadent behaviour (Grassian 102).

Adverse Effects of Costuming in Nollywood Films

There are universally accepted ways of dressing in every part of the world, and dresses are meant to serve certain definable purposes like: they serve as part of a people's culture, defining their tribal and ethnic identity, they serve ornamental or aesthetic purposes, they serve as protection from harsh climatic conditions as well as for covering the intimate parts of the body. All these purposes are very important because they form an aspect of a person's personality but presently defeated, as the Nigerian youths who emulate alien cultures through the film industry have been greatly influenced by them, hence possessing moral laggard behaviour.

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were naked, but were not ashamed because they didn't know until after they ate the fruit, when "their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked" (Genesis 3: 7). From the immediate realization that they were naked, the female body has become viewed as "the seat of sin, moral corruption and a source of distraction from godly thoughts" (Entwistle 84). Women have been associated with temptations of flesh and decorations, that is why the unclothed body is "inseparable from sex and sexuality, and has become located adjacent to the indecent, obscene and the immoral" (Cover 55). The necessity of dressing was never a cultural invention but a natural fact; hence Adam and Eve had to invent a form of clothing at their time.

Nollywood is indeed a force in the world, such that a mass of films, now available and watched in every corner of the globe, has indeed produced change. It is the nature of that change with respect to adolescent dress sense that is the basis of this discourse. Nigerian films portray messages that have influenced its audience over the years, especially as it tells its stories and are models for moral decency in the country and beyond. However, the film industry has experienced complete derailment and the moral standard has fallen due to the proliferation of grossly indecent movies in several aspects, especially in the costuming patterns of the actors. Ake totally agrees that "it is true we have violence with us and various armed robberies and assassinations. But our goal as the mirror of the society is not to encourage these negative aspects by reflecting them too much on screen without redress" (61). Nollywood films have so influenced our teaming youths that it has become worrisome to so many people, and has eroded Nigerian cultural values as hitherto expressed in the decency and simplicity of the dress patterns of the actors/actresses. According to Udeagha "nudity in Nigerian home video is a shift from the basic and original offerings of the medium" (1). These present nude-crazy actors were never in the picture at the inception of the film industry,

and have obviously lost the vision of the founding fathers in the industry that had a culture of decency in putting across its message to the audience.

Nollywood films have been measured by their content, that is, the relationship of the actors to the story they are portraying, if their appearance are alluring/decorative, and if it has also measured sexism, that is, if the actors are portrayed as a sex object focusing mainly on their body. This study found that Nollywood films in this era have decreased in their moral standards, such as the use of both gender as decorative elements. There is no gainsaying that Nollywood films have increased their content in the use of sexually objectified actors, with alluring images of men and women. Sexually objectified portrayals of both sexes have affected views on sex and sexual behaviour, sex has become commercial, recreational and exploitative (Kuczynski 2002). The term sexualisation is simply attributing sexual characteristics to a person, or when someone personally chooses to look sexy, especially in terms of the appearance. Sexual objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) occurs when greater emphasis is placed on one's appearance attributes and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others. People are sexually objectified as a result of the style of clothing and to an extent of their nudity which are important markers of sexualisation (Johnson 2007; Lambiase and Reichert 2006; Reichert and Carpenter 2004). Sexual objectification focuses on isolated body parts, such as a bare stomach, buttocks, cleavage, or a bare chest, in the absence of a focus on the rest of the person (Kolbe and Albanese, 1996; Rudman and Hagiwara, 1992), reducing the wearer of these clothes to the status of mere instruments (Bartky 1990).

Based on the preponderance of sexual content through the actors' costumes in Nollywood films, its effect on attitudes of young people also begs us to question if these films should assume some moral responsibility as they have become culturally acceptable, creating and disseminating images and messages to the consuming public that are basically influenced by what they see especially as it seems to have subconscious effects on the Nigerian youth populace. "Women and girls are more likely than men and boys to be objectified and sexualized in a variety of media outlets" (APA 15), but this portrayal of women as sex objects trivializes, degrades and dehumanizes the society. Most of these Nollywood films have sexualized the actors, regardless of their gender hence sex has been a constant companion, exposing youths to sexually objectifying films that has placed greater importance on beauty and appearance in defining an individual's own self-worth and the value of role models among youths.

Presently, Nollywood films have taken new directions, especially because it has become an integral aspect of the people's social life by using costumes, sets,

and artistry among others to catch the fancy of its audience, which are mostly youths. These films as we know are instruments through which people are shaped and re-shaped: a site where good and evil are intertwined (Okome 68), hence the reasons why most youths have media-related idols they aspire to be like, modelling their lives after media icons like Tonto Dike, Mercy Johnson, Omotola Ekeinde-Jolade, Genevieve Nnaji, Uche Jombo, Jackie Appiah, John Dumelo, Nadia Buhari, Michel Majid, Uche Elendu, Jim Iyke, Emeke Ike, and Yul Edochie, among others, most of whom freely display their bodies with reckless abandon, and have aided the prevalence of indecent dressing among youths today. As trendsetters, these vulnerable youths trounce as copy-cats, imbibing the lifestyles of these media icons, which are alien to our culture; what Jing Wang warned against “the developed world’s interest in seeking its own mirror image in developing countries” (11). The media icons pose as signifiers of Western modernity and a status symbol for everyone, youths especially who watch, talk and think about the trends they see in the movie, instead of imbibing the positive aspects that will constructively change their social behaviour.

The Nigerian conservative culture have been so bastardised as a result of increased urban migration, education and an influx of global fashion styles and imageries majorly through our film industry, looking at films like *Shakira*, *Secret Lovers*, *A Night with the Governor*, *Men in Love*, *Marriage and Sex*, and a host of others. These films which “invade public and private morality, [and] massacre the innocence of youth” (Black 248) are capable of seductively changing the moral and ethical values of the Nigerian audience. Most of these films are morally offensive not only in the decency of costuming of the actors/actresses, but also depressing to the audience due to the weird desire to appear almost nude in some of these films by these actors, especially the female ones.

The producers of these films and their ilk are not left out because in agreement with them to make more money, they do not bother about the essence of the message of these films but about how much will be raked in. This is as a result of the fact that any sex-related story skyrockets the fame of the film. Unfortunately, the current crop of producers, directors and even actors have lost the vision of the very first set of film personnel who made films in order to make the society better by exposing the ills in the society and teaching the audience moral lessons. Nollywood lives between two cultures but is not truly part of both, living on the “borderlands” (Anzaldúa 9) of the Nigerian and Western cultures. Interestingly, the influence these types of films have on the audience is seen when most people replicate the near-nude dress sense of the actors they see as role models, and turn their backs on our indigenous culture. The findings in this work

does not only document changes in the sexualisation of men and women in popular culture over time, they also point to a narrowing of the culturally acceptable ways for been fashionable and trendy as presented by Nollywood films. This powerful objectification and sexploitation imageries have polluted the cultural environment as well as changed the rules of society and along with it the attitudes of some youths (Kilbourne 72).

The Need to Overhaul Nollywood Films

The Nigerian film industry has an important role to play in reshaping the decadence found in the society because what people hear, see and have interest in has serious impact on them, so every film must affect its audience especially youths, socially, morally and emotionally for it to have the desired effect on them, as an arm of the society and the society at large. In spite of reflecting the effects of globalization, Nollywood films should reflect the Nigerian culture from within not just exhibiting object of desire like impressive cars, lush mansions, and Western near-naked costumes among others that influence its audience.

Even when we agree that Nollywood films are helping Nigerians tell their stories from their perspective, the moral aims should never be downplayed at the expense of Westernization. These films should not in any way become a boost to the decadence in the society, since they are avenues through which youths form and express their identity, construct meaning, adjust to and contend with the social realities in their environment. Their role models becoming the moral compass with which they interpret their social environment.

Nollywood films can be fashioned in such a way that they help combat unrealistic appearance ideals and stereotypes among youths, if the producers do not indulge in the production of films with “negatively based themes” driven more by excessive commercialism or love of profit to the detriment of a sense of social responsibility and relevance (Ademola 1999). The censor board in conjunction with the producers and education board can develop programs that teach students how to analyse films, and decipher the difference between film appearances towards achieving a less sexualized society. The reduction of a human being from subject to object is not all together empowering, so the society must reshape its patriarchal agenda and move towards more equal standards to combat sexism and objectification. This is achievable if the Nollywood industry stops to always erroneously costume their actors, so that youths who are ardent fans should be made to have the likelihood of self-acceptance and self-confidence, however they look. Therefore, working towards a society where youths can walk safely and confidently without feeling inferior, or can look in the mirror without

negative mental and physical consequences, begins internally and hopefully affects the external environment. Some of these films should be a kind of tool for empowerment, sending subtle messages for youths to change themselves and in the same vein also hint that this change and empowerment must not challenge or upset societal norms.

Parental guidance is encouraged so that youths can learn about sexualisation, placing emphasis on the qualities of human characteristics that are needed in the society, instilling confidence in youths based on goals and achievements rather than appearance. In addition, actors must come together and say no to sexualisation, proving to themselves and to youths that success can be achieved through talent and hard work.

Filmmakers must use their films to rescue contemporary Nigerian society from the erosion of its value systems caused by decadence by employing ethnographic and cultural relativism as a framework. Nollywood films should be a veritable tool for mobilization and national orientation for desirable behaviour and attitude: these films must be censored without bias to ensure the preservation of the authentic Nigerian cultural values, especially in terms of its costuming. Indecent, profane and obscene content must be prohibited on broadcast between the hours of 6am to 10pm because there is a reasonable risk that a child might be part of the audience. Cultural imperialism should be critically looked at, so that it can be expunged from films, rebranding and promoting our own cultural values and morals through Nollywood films.

Conclusion

The dramatic increase in the commonplace nudity of Nigerian youths shows a common disregard for the sanctity of privacy, decency and morality as a result of alien cultural domination, so Nigerians and the film industry producers should reinstate our own cultural heritage through reorientation of our own people suffering from colonial mentality. Also the normalized view on nudity, sex and objectification by Nollywood that is clearly affecting the psyche with regard to the treatment of both gender and a degree of sexual expectation placed upon them, makes it mandatory on Nollywood to have a re-evaluation and re-cultivation of the sense of moral decency in the way actors/actresses dress and interpret sex roles.

Objectification Theory posits that human beings, women especially, are seen as mere objects with a total disregard to the personality or dignity they may have. The images of these actors serve to validate the idea that people have been reduced to nothing more than objects of sexual desire, their purpose being one of

sexual gratification. The youths through Nollywood films they watch should be encouraged to imbibe and imitate positive ideologies that can build good moral standards, that is why “there is the need for Nigerian films of Nigerian origin to reflect the aesthetic values of Nigeria and be truly Nigerian, at least, in the bid to depart from foreign models: in dialogue, setting and locale, in the set pieces and costumes (Ogunsuyi 19).

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MUYIWA ADEMOLA'S OWO OKUTA (THE LAW OF KARMA) IN THE CONTEXT OF GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

*Many years after independence, the Nigerian polity is still characterised by political leadership without conscience and gullible electorates. Aspiration for elective offices and appointments are driven by materialistic tendency. This is exemplified in lust for power, obsession for wealth, abuse of human rights and manipulation of electoral process. Textual analysis was adopted as research method and materials as working literacy theory. Marxist theory of materialism contends that reality is material, not spiritual. The material world will show us reality. Instances of class conflict or at the institutions, entertainment, news media and legal, and other systems of society will unfold how the distribution of economic power undergirds the society. Appropriateness of the film, **Owo Okuta** for this analysis lies in its portrayal of selfish interests of a governor at the expense of service to the people. Governor Keshinro (Olu Jacobs) in the film is a personification of selfish leader. The governor who ruled amidst bloodshed planned to enjoy the looted fund with his family after his tenure. But in a twist of fate, that could be described as nemesis, disaster trucks, immediately, he completed his tenure. Major findings include appropriation of commonwealth for self-aggrandisement, kleptomaniac attitude of Keshinro's children, neglect of people oriented projects and perversion of justice.*

Introduction

The United Nations Development Programme defines governance broadly as the exercise of power through a country's economic, social and political institutions in which institutions represent the organisation rules and routines, formal laws, and informal norms that together shape incentives of public service (qtd. in Olu-Adeyemi 167). However, good governance in Nigeria is a much recent and novel idea of democratic governance that found expression in the detailed provisions of the 1979 constitution that contained the fundamental objectives and Directive principles of state. It encompasses among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable, and it promotes the rule of law. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the

voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources (Olu-Adeyemi 167).

Conscience on the other hand is an aptitude, faculty, intuition or judgement that assist in distinguishing right from wrong. Moral judgement may derive from values or norms (principles and rules). In psychological terms conscience is often described as leading to feelings of remorse when a human commits actions that go against his/her moral values and to feeling of uprightness or integrity when action conforms to such norms (May 57-67).

Governance without conscience is therefore the exercise of power through a country's economic, social and political institutions by the political leadership in Nigeria without being sensitive to the plight of the ruled. Political leadership is characterised by the ruling class that bears the responsibility of manage affairs and resources of a political entity by setting and influencing policy priorities affecting territory through different decision making structures and institutions created for the orderly development of the territory. It could also be described as human element that operates the machineries of government on behalf of an organised territory (Ogbeidi 4). It is the abuse of this trust by the political leadership as typified in Governor Keshinro of Gbadura State and the attendant nemesis in the film, *Owo Okuta (Law of Karma)* that this paper explores. The essence is to sensitise ruling elites, upcoming political leaders and the electorate on futility of amassing common wealth for selfish interest.

Materialism

Before applying materialism as a theory to analysis of the film in focus, conceptual clarification is necessary to prevent ambiguity. Karl Marx maintained that it is not our philosophical or religious beliefs that make us who we are, for we are not spiritual beings but socially constructed ones. We are not products of divine design but creations of our own cultural and social circumstances (Dobie 92). To understand ourselves, Marx expatiates, we must look to the concrete, observable world we live in day by day. The material world will show us reality. It will show us, for example that people live in social groups, making all our actions interrelated. By examining the relationship among socioeconomic classes and by analysing the socio-political-environment they generate, will give insight into ourselves and our society. For instance, it is the material world that produced, Governor Keshinro, and it is the material that destroys him. his obsession for accumulation of wealth and flamboyant life style is instigated by the capitalist system he lives, which allows acquisition of assets with common wealth. Ironically, it is the same people that empowered him politically and economically

with their votes that he oppresses with state apparatus of governance as typified in the treasury, judiciary and security.

Governance without Conscience in Nigeria

Decades after independence, governance without conscience in Nigerian polity is enacted in absence of people oriented leadership, corruption, abuse of human rights, civil strife and manipulation of electoral process. The perception of political leadership by the politicians and electorates still leaves much to be desired. There is still the mind-set that political offices are the short-cut to riches. The aspiration for elective offices and political appointments are thus driven by the desire for self-enrichment at the expense of services to the people. The narrow minded ones among the electorate aid this attitude with frivolous demand for money to solve immediate personal and family problems instead of communal services and projects. With this greed of the few for crumbs from the table, majority of the populace are deprived of the ideal dividends of democratic governance as typified in health, portable water, roads, education, empowerment schemes and housing.

Closely aligned to this self-centred leadership is problem of corruption that is endemic in Nigerian polity. Corruption has among others been defined as an act of requesting, offering, giving or accepting directly or indirectly a bribe or any other undue advantage or the prospect thereof, which distorts proper performance of any duty or behaviour required of the recipient of the bribe, the undue advantage of the prospect thereof (qtd. in Olu-Adeyemi 169). Electoral corruption is discernible in sell of voting right by the electorate, promises of office, special favour, intimidation and interference in the electoral process, killing and maiming people in the name of election. In the same vein post-election corruption include diversion of fund that is now prevalent. This often results in diversion of public investment on large scale projects, typically military or infrastructural projects, rather than on the provision of necessary public services such as health, roads, housing and education. Dike holds that mostly, the Nigerian government at all levels spends relatively more on large and hard to manage projects, such as airports, or national stadia, to make room for fraud because execution of such projects makes self-enrichment easy (qtd. in Ogbeidi 19)

Human rights situation in Nigeria was nothing to write home about before the restoration of civilian rule in May, 1999. Reflecting on the excruciating human rights situation in Nigeria during the dark days of military rule, Nobel laureate, Professor Wole once remarked that “I smell the sperm of tyranny before the rape of the nation” (qtd. in Olu-Adeyemi 169). While the situation has

improved now, democratic governance has only succeeded in revealing the symptoms and not the cure. The traditional means by which the rights to life and human dignity were abused are manipulation of electoral process, extra judicial killings, political assassinations, arbitrary arrests and detention; kidnapping for ransom.

Reports from Nigerian courts revealed that when these cases are prosecuted, Litigants hardly get redress because of endless trial occasioned by frivolous adjournments and injunctions. This is because judiciary which should be the custodian of human rights has also been influenced with cancer of financial inducement. Cases that exemplified this mortgage of conscience by some judges for money are mostly political cases. Cases involving politically exposed persons, PEPs have become the Achilles of the Nigerian judiciary as judgements are allegedly swayed by the weight of cash or political considerations. This has been the situation since the return of the country to democratic rule in 1999:

The judiciary is thus facing a huge integrity problem with controversial rulings by election petition tribunals. Subsequently lawyers lament that judges have joined the club of billionaires through election tribunals, which they lobby for heavily. In the same vain, cases of embezzlement and misappropriation of fund against some former governors which commenced in 2007 are still in court because of frivolous adjournments and incessant black market injunctions granted by judges. Judgement debts against the federal government have piled up as it is alleged that lawyers negotiate higher amounts with judge at a fee to win cases. (*Tell 19*)

Another major obstacle to governance with conscience is civil strife. Since the re-emergence of democratic rule in May, 1999, many politically ethnically and religiously motivated conflicts have occurred in Nigeria. Prominent ones include Boko-Haram terrorism in North Eastern zone of Nigeria, clashes of Fulani herdsmen and farmers over grazing land and the vandalism oil installations in South-South zone of the country. While it is difficult to differentiate between genuine demands and outright criminality and mayhem, the loss of lives and properties is a distraction to good governance. The implication is that, money that should have been expended on development of human resources and infrastructural facilities is being channelled to internal security.

Empirical Studies of Nigerian Films with the motif of Governance without Conscience.

Like the stage drama, the Nigerian Video films have been apt vehicle for reflecting and documenting impunity in governance to prick the conscience of the political leaders and the electorates. This conscientisation drive on the screen dates back to the days of celluloid film, when unfolding events in the Nigerian polity inspired thought provoking themes. The leading cineaste in this crusade is Eddie Ugboma with these titles; *The Mask* (1979), *Oil Boom* (1981) and *Death of Black President* (1983)

The Mask explores political brigandism in Nigeria that followed the transition from military to civilian hegemony. *Oil Boom* which was a follow-up criticises the mismanagement of oil excess arising from oil boom and subsequent corruption, avarice, abandoned projects and direct focus on oil alone at the expense of cocoa, cotton and groundnut which were formerly the main export commodities in Nigeria. Animasaun (25). *Death of a Black President* on the other hand is the filmic enactment of the brutal murder of General Murtala Mohammed who initiated the move towards attitudinal change with his zero tolerance for corruptive tendencies in February 1976. Another film that depicts the mortgage of conscience in governance is Soyinka's *Blues for the Prodigal* (1984). Okome says this film is "a deliberate and contemptuous parody of Nigerian's second republic" (231). To Okome, *Blues for the Prodigal* can be dubbed the first of the underground/radical films that are likely to flourish in the face of political misdemeanour which is fast becoming the hallmark of the times.

After the transition from celluloid format of producing films to home video format in 1990s because of high cost of production, political themes were not immediately embraced by the Nigerian film makers. Among the reasons adduced for this, are fear of censorship and taste of targeted audience for quick returns on investment. However, with the democratisation of the Nigerian film industry like the larger polity, political themes are now satirically and metaphorically dramatized in Nigerian Video films. Video films that exemplified this trend include; Tunde Kelani's *Saworoide* (1999) and *Agogo Eewo* (2002), Fred Amata's *The King Maker* (2002) and Isola Durojaiye's *Asiri Gomina Wa* (2007) (The secret of our Governor).

A critical reading of *Saworoide* (Brass bells) and *Agogo Eewo* (Gong of taboo) reveals a metaphorical enactment of the Nigerian polity. In *Saworoide*, the king perverted the traditional rights to establish the pact with the people. This was to disentangle himself from the responsibilities associated with the pact. He never

intended to serve the people, he only wanted to use the throne to enrich himself and to guarantee the future of his children (Adeyanju 305).

In *Agogo Eewo*, the story continued. After nemesis caught up with the former king because of his obsession for wealth at the expense of services to his people, his successor refused to toe the line of conniving with foreigners to exploit natural resources of Jogbo town. Baffled kingmakers who were instrumental to his installation planned to sabotage his efforts aimed at making services to the people his priority.

The *Kingmaker* is a dramatisation of the antics of the Godfathers in Nigerian polity who always want to be reciprocated with contracts and political appointments by the Godsons (the governor). In the same vein, *Asiri Gomina Wa* (Our Governor's Secret) explored the extent to which politician can go in behind the scenes rituals and sacrifices with human blood to triumph in elections and fortification from opponents.

Synopsis of the Fil, Owo Okuta (The Law of Karma)

Produced and Directed by Muyiwa Ademola in 2008, the story line of *Owo Okuta* revolves around Governor Keshinro Adesuwu of Gbadura state who sees the mandate given to him by the electorate as an opportunity for self-aggrandisement. When his attention is drawn to vital sectors like education for rehabilitation and improved services, he refuses to listen to voice of reason. Governor Adesuwu relishes awarding contracts that will enrich him.

The children on the other hand, particularly first daughter and the second son flaunt the wealth acquired from common wealth with reckless abandon parties are organized at regular intervals to lavish money on musicians and women. Not even the protest from students on the deteriorating state of education in the state can make Governor Adesuwu to search his conscience.

Insensitivity of Governor Keshinro to the plight of the down trodden in the state is typified in his attempt to compensate the parents who lost their wards in the student protest with money. To sweep the criminal case of the son's friend who kills a lady in his desperate bid to force her to bed after a dance contest under the carpet, the judge is intimidated to leave the city for his country home. The diabolical plan of Governor Adesuwu to enjoy his loot after his tenure come to nothing. The Law of Karma avenge the atrocities against his people with calamity of strange ailments and death of members of his family one after the other.

Governance without Conscience in Owo Okuta

Scenes of governance without conscience are enacted in Governor Adesuwa's preference for contracts that will enrich his pocket than people oriented projects, his refusal to listen to voice of reason, Kleptomaniac attitude of the children, intervention in judicial matters and belief in spiritual fortification.

In the early phase of his regime in the film, the advice of one of his commissioners on the need to increase sectoral allocation to education fell on deaf ears. He defended his stance by insisting, that, there are many sectors competing for his attention. Later student's protest on the inadequacies in the educational sector is resisted with an order to the security guards to dispatch the protesters to save the life of his daughter, Pero (Mosun Filani) who ran into them in her jeep. Shots fired by the security guards to ensure the safety of Pero snuffed life out of five of the protesters. This neglect of education sector for elephant projects that enrich the governor at the expense of the masses affirms his obsession for wealth. In the same vein intimidation of the vocal youths with the state security apparatus captures insensitivity of the political leadership to the plight of the electorates.

On his second visit to the governor, the commissioner (Yinka Quadri) drew the attention of the governor to the fact that, the collapsed building that killed a student was one of the ones slated for rehabilitation. The governor, who did not see reason with him shouted him down. He thereafter tendered his resignation letter in protest. At home in a private discussion, Lanke (Muyiwa Ademola) first son, and his father ruminated over the plight of the masses but he insisted the, 'I am doing my best'. The advice that, he should quit if his best was that not enough infuriated him. In the same vein when Lanke again advised the father to make up for the inadequacies of three years in the remaining one year, the governor, who was of the conviction that no amount sacrifice can please the people planned to make more money for a secured future through frivolous contracts.

Flaunting of ill-gotten wealth in the midst of millions wallowing in poverty were dramatized at the birthday party of the first lady (Rachel Oniga) birthday of Pero and dance contest organised by Eyitayo (Femi Adebayo, second son). At the birthday party of the first lady, there were lots to eat and drink. In the dancing session the musician was lavishly sprayed. This same scene was replicated at Pero's birthday party. The popular musician that performed at the party realised the sum of Five Million Naira (₦5,000,000.00). The frivolity of spraying money appropriated from commonwealth amount to oppressing them with funds that should be channelled to development projects pervasion of justice that followed in a case involving the governor's son dashed the hope of commoners from getting justice, when cheated or deprived.

In furtherance of the frivolity of displaying ill-gotten wealth, the governor's second son, Eyitayo and his friends organised a dance contest with a car to be won by any lady who can dance in nudity. A lady, Fakekemi who was enticed by the bait of the car won the contest. In a desperate attempt to have sex with her after the contest by one of the organisers (Afeez Eniola) she died. To cover up the criminal act, the culprit is to jet out to America, while a proxy is to serve the prison term with a monthly compensation of One Hundred Thousand (₦100,000). In his own attempt to influence the judge (Tabosun Odunsi) handling the case, the life was threatened by unknown gun men suspected to have been sent by the governor for his refusal to compromise. In frustration and fear, the judge retired to his country home.

For his security and that of his immediate family against the wrath of the oppressed and exploited people, the governor combines physical security with the spiritual. In one of his security meetings with spiritualists, they were served with sumptuous meal and assorted drinks backed up with lump sum packaged in brown envelopes. Aably represented in the team were the Muslims, Christians and the traditionalists as personified in an Alfa (Deji Aderemi), Pastor (Adebayo Faleti) and Ifa priest (Peter Fatomilola). Later at the meeting of the Ifa priests, with delivery of money from the governor, they resolved to make all necessary rituals and sacrifices to overcome oppositions and tribulations. Physical and spiritual fortification of the governor with tax payer's money distanced the governor from the electorates that gave the political and economic power.

Findings

In this study, the characteristic traits of lack of conscience in governance had been identified using the film, *Owo Okuta* to illustrate. These are exemplified in wrong perception of governance by the politicians and the ruled, arrogance and greed, obsession for wealth, corruption and abuse of human rights. Critical reading of the film in focus revealed the following:

- (i) Negative perception political power and office as short cut to amassing wealth closely related to this, is the gullible attitude of the electorate who look forward to distribution of wealth instead of services.
- (ii) Arrogance and greed blindfolds sense of reasoning. Constructive criticism is misconstrued for subversion.
- (iii) Corruptive tendencies of diverting money meant for people oriented projects to white elephant projects for purposes of siphoning money into private pockets is pervasive in Nigerian polity.

- (iv) After pleading for mandate from the electorates before the election, communication gap widens after the election with physical and spiritual fortification acquired with tax payer's money.

Conclusion

In conclusion, edification in *Owo Okuta* on futility of seeking political leadership for self-aggrandisement affirm the potency of the screen in sensitising on attitudinal change by politicians and the electorates. The edification here lies in nemesis that will catch up with those who govern without conscience as characterised in reversal of fortune and calamities that befell governor Keshinro of Gbadura state in the film. On the other hand, for the electorates who aid and abet looting of public treasury for momentary dividends, the opportunity cost is the neglect of roads, health, education, water and infrastructural facilities that can transform communities.

Owo Okuta is therefore a moral lesson for the faithful politicians and the electorates to be guided by their conscience in governance. In taking decisions and embarking on projects, the soul searching questions will then crop up: is it morally right or wrong? Is it in the public interest? And who are the beneficiaries? For the unfaithful ones, the film sermonises on essence of being faithful to God and humanity.

Governance with conscience can therefore inculcate moral uprightness and honesty in Nigerian polity; A political leadership willing to serve the electorates. A polity devoid of electorates aiding and abetting corruptive tendencies as typified in manipulation electoral process, political assassinations, nepotism and diversion funds meant for public services to infrastructural projects and abuse of human rights.

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FILM IN SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Film is a portentous means of communication. It is a veritable tool for social mobilization, information and entertainment as well as a purveyor of culture. Several nations use film to promote their culture, social values and norms, government policies and national ideologies for social transformation to attain national cohesion and development. The film medium is a platform to persuasively engage the people to accept a new idea for change, to develop a new opinion, attitude or to take a specific course of action on issues. The paper examines the impact and effect of films from other lands, their influence in galvanizing support from the citizenry to take remedial action to attain positive change in the society. It does so by investigating the general influence of film and the documentary and other public enlightenment short film clips as effective means to promote social values and public interest, thus create awareness and a new consciousness for positive change. The paper notes that Nigeria's value system has been badly eroded over the years hence the need to take an innovative media approach to stimulate the conscience of the citizenry towards a change that would ensure progress, stability and growth. In lieu of its findings, the paper recommends that as part of the artist's social responsibility, all hands must be on deck to encourage Nollywood and other film makers to breath a new life in their productions by exploring themes that impact positively on the audience to promote government policies and ideologies as well as address socio-economic and political issues nationwide. Since film is a vital agent in shaping people's mentality and as a consequence, the paper recommends the production of films that emphasize deliberate drive for positive change in society, setting up of cottage cinema viewing centres in all local government headquarters and the provision of mobile cinema vans to exhibit films of social relevance that would engender change.

Introduction

Film generally is regarded as a medium of entertainment. The cinema theatre provides a unique opportunity where people meet, exchange pleasantries, interact with each other as they settle down before the commencement of the film which

engages their intimacy with the screen. The exhilarating experience one gets watching life size images on the big screen, the crowd and the cinema ambience are the contributory factors that affect one's social experience and participation. Besides entertainment, the impact of film on the society makes it a great tool when used properly and for the right reasons to influence society both locally and globally. Film has the capability to greatly change the viewers' opinions or make them shift from one position to the other by way of communication; how the information is conveyed. Many countries like Britain, United States, India, Germany and Russia have been influenced and shaped by their national cinema. Regional cinemas of countries have also influenced cohesion and the spirit of nationalism. The unique properties of film as a representation of action in time and space, the combination of visual and aural forms of communication make it one of the most potent medium of communication. It exercises a strong moral influence on its audience. Towards analysing the power of images on the screen, Ivan Sergevich Turgenev compares the popular axiom which states that a picture is worth a thousand words. He is a Russian painter and sculptor who remarks that, "a picture shows me at a glance what it takes a dozen pages of a book to expound" (qtd. in Hanmakyugh 6). Such is the enigmatic power of film images that leave indelible impressions on our minds. It also has the capacity to influence people in such ways as fashion, mores and behavioural patterns which Jarvie describes as "a total environment medium, and the wider the screen and louder the sound, the more the sense one has of being swallowed up in it. It is a medium in which we talk of identifying with those who appear and what happens to them on the screen" (220).

Films from Other Lands: From Past to Present

Bollywood is the name given to the Hindi film industry in India. It produces more films than Nollywood and Hollywood. Indian feature films are characterized with spectacular song and dance, magic, love themes (romance melodrama) depicting breath-taking landscapes and culture. Indian cinema has impacted culturally, socially and politically with charm and glamour across the globe. Writing under the caption "The Role of Movies on the Indian Society", Kunal Chopra notes that one of the significant aspects of Indian cinema is art, culture and inspiration. He states further that:

Movies inspire us more than we think it can. Inspirational movies help us to become brave, clever, loyal, determined etc. which helps us to become positive – minded people. Movies like BhaagMilkha Bhaag, Mary

Kom etc. are true examples of arousing a feeling for good among the audience. (par.11)

In the same vein, a Pakistani journalist Mushifq Ahmad comments on film for change thus:

Cinema is an extraordinary powerful medium, much more powerful than the television and newspaper. Cinema has been used all over the world to engender positive social change. In our neighbouring India, the film industry has done an admirable job by promoting communal and ethnic harmony, highlighting the ways of corrupt politicians and pointing out other social issues --- we have to give our people thought stimulating movies. Through movies we can make the people fight against the rotten system of government and reform the social environment. If we manage to stir the thoughts of the common man through cinema, we can hope to achieve some harmony in this country of several ethnicities and creeds, a goal that our educational institutions have failed to achieve. (par. 3)

Ahmad's views above reflect the thoughts of this paper which sees the multiplicity of cultures of the multitude of ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria where issues of ethnicity and religion are promoted on primordial sentiments which threaten to destabilize the status quo. This is what Nigeria needs, film, to not only educate inform and entertain but go a step further to influence change in the society by highlighting certain ills of injustice in the society in order to galvanize the masses to demand change. The 2012 Academic Award Winner for documentary film from Pakistan *Saving Face* (2012) directed by Sahrmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Daniel Junge tells a story of two women attacked with acid and their struggle for justice and healing. The psychological and emotional drive through the graphic depiction of visuals is so horrifying and effectual that it moved the Pakistan parliament to quickly pass a bill on acid violence as well as commence immediate trial and conviction of perpetrators.

American film makers present the mystic America through the camera lens with a show of power, might with an aura of glamour, technology, sufficiency and pride for being Americans. It is however noticed that stereotypes and racist iconography in American films denigrate the blacks. According to Pramaggiore and Wallis, "ideological critics assume that films influence what

film goes think and how they act when they aren't watching movies" (317). Using the ideological approach, Jonathan Rosenbaum opines that "what is designed to make people feel good at the movies has a profound relation to how and what they think and feel about the world around them" (3) such feelings and reactions are succinctly captured from the *Birth of A Nation* (1915) a film by David W. Griffith, a radicalized stereotyping of African Americans as foolish, servile or menacing while the white characters are portrayed as noble and courageous. The effect of this film on the viewers was negatively overwhelming. It was a rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan (K.K.K) with attendant lynching, riots and other terrorists' acts against African Americans. As a result, the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) protested premieres of the film in numerous cities across the United States of America and organized national movements of resistance against stereotyping of African Americans in films. The ultimate outcome was that thousands of African American marched to the State House demanding that the film be banned from screening in cinema theatres. (www.massmoments.org>moment par. 11).

Similarly, the film *Blood Diamond* (2006) depicts the appalling catastrophe of war in Sierra Leone, a country torn apart by the struggle between government loyalists and insurgents while trading diamonds for weapons. Some of the atrocities of the war include; rebels' amputation of people's hands, & feet, burn down villages, rape, child soldiers serving as active combatants. The film drew the attention of international organizations such as Human Rights, the United Nations agencies and affiliated non-governmental organization to take a positive action and restore normalcy in Sierra Leone and enforce dignity of human life especially the promotion and rehabilitation of child soldiers and their reintegration into society.

Ousmane Sembene's films are narratives that address societal issues bothering on communal daily experiences of people in urban and rural areas. In his film *Mandabi* (The Money Order). Sembene interrogates societal mores and tribulations as the film criticizes the petit bourgeoisie and neocolonial bureaucracy which to a large extent have altered the traditional lives of the people. One significant message from the film besides the encouragement it gives to the viewer is as analysed by Ukadike (24) "confront the contradictions of neocolonial bureaucracy and the ironies of Africans appropriating and entrenching an alien culture" (24). The film intends to arouse the consciousness of the citizenry to actively participate in the revolutionary process in order to induce change in the society. This is the much paradigm shift expected of the contemporary Nollywood narratives to embrace cinematic expressions of socio-

economic, cultural and political problems in order to create awareness, a new consciousness that would awaken collective desire to promote national ideologies, cohesion, unity, selfless service and national development which Sotubo and Chidozie collaborate as being “critical and essential to the sustenance and growth of the nation. Development is usually associated with positive changes of growth; it involves changes in social, political, economic and physical structures of man which give rise to both qualitative and quantitative changes” (69-70). The motivational force to achieve the above objective is to create awareness, inform and educate the people properly through the film medium so as to influence their choices for positive action.

The German film *Triumph of the Will* (1935) is a narrative propaganda documentary of the Nazi party congress in Nuremberg depicting the heroic grandeur of Adolf Hitler, party unity and a display of civilian and army strength as it presents real people, factual information and events in real places to give it power and relevance. In his analysis of the film, Richard Meran Barsam opines that “*Triumph of the Will* was an artistic propaganda master piece. Leni Riefenstahl edited the film footage to achieve two basic goals; the glorification of the Nazi party and the deification of Adolf Hitler... the modern audience is stunned both by the films artistic power and by its content” (27).

Triumph of the Will engages its audience with cinematographic techniques of aerial photography, use of lenses distortion perspective and music. As a result of the film’s enormous impact on its viewership and the reactions from various authorities and organizations, the film was later banned from screenings in Germany because it supported Nazism and Swastika. Commenting on the film’s artistry, depth and import, Shiela Curran Bernard says that;

Documentaries should do more than help the viewer pass the time; they should demand their active engagement, challenging them to think about what they know, how they know it and what more they might want to learn. A good documentary confounds our expectations, passes boundaries, and taken us into worlds- both literal worlds and words of ideas that we did not anticipate entering. (3)

The power of the documentary film as seen in *Triumph of the Will* is the kind of experience we share in the South African narrative feature *Cry Freedom* which affects the audience on an emotional and intellectual level, engaging them to participate rather than being passive observers. The film *Cry Freedom* is about the fight against apartheid in South Africa. It is a narrative film that delves into

repercussions of violence as a result of discrimination, political corruption, segregation and maltreatment of black people by the white minority in apartheid racist South Africa. The political instability in South Africa arising from the white supremacy rule subjected the black people to live in isolated segregated areas. The film is structured in form of an advocacy against the government by Richard Attenborough as written by a white journalist Donald Woods who in the course of duty becomes a close associate of Steve Biko. There are so many cases of police arrests, detention and death in police custody while the Apartheid Government gave false official explanations for such deaths. Biko's subsequent arrest, torture and death in prison custody in the hands of the police becomes the thrust of Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* to create awareness of the socio-political negative effects of apartheid on the black population as inhuman and totally a violation of human rights. Biko's philosophy that blacks have the same opportunities and freedoms as the white people in *Cry freedom* has exposed the ills of apartheid to the whole world. The film's impact and effects generated anger, challenging humanity to take affirmative action against the ills of apartheid. Christine Findlay of Media Matters notes that:

Attenborough has maximized on the film's dramatic impact by structuring the narrative in this way so that the audience is assaulted with the conflicting imagery at the beginning and returns to full circle at the end to the nightmarish images of Soweto. ...The fact that the political situation has now changed with Nelson Mandela's release from prison and the subsequent dismantling of the frame work of apartheid provide more positive postscript in changing entrenched attitudes despite its being banned from South African Screens. (par. 2 & 4)

Creating awareness about a situation like apartheid to engender change using the film medium is not by coercion rather, the film maker came out with a clear vision to persuade, motivate and empower others to take action on his vision as they watch the facts from the film, which is the ultimate way for mass education for change.

Nigeria in Perspective

Colonial Britain introduced films in their occupied territories as a vehicle for information, education, instruction, mobilization and community development. The documentary films were full of propaganda education to show their might

and stimulate interest in the British Empire to promote agriculture - the production of food and cash crops, to show government's efforts or health care delivery as well as social activism by impacting foreign cultural ideology. Being aware of such tremendous impact documentary films have on the people, Nigerian film makers have also taken advantage of the documentary film genre for instructional, informative and publicity purposes of national programs and events. The documentary *Nigeria: Good people, Great Nation* is a potent visual narrative with great promise for Nigeria. Producer/Director Femi Odugbemi depicts in this film the positive aspects of Nigeria as a nation full of potentials, great opportunities, a tourist destination with hospitable people and a destination for business and investment. This documentary shown anywhere in the world would attract and woo investors to take advantage of the opportunities and the good economic climate with open doors for exploration. The birth of Nollywood despite its short comings has done much to put Nigeria on the world map of culture and entertainment.

It is a truism that the cinema exercises a great value of influence on the minds of its viewers with great entertainment and educative values. The several films mentioned in this paper have demonstrated their power in shaping the thinking of people who watch them. Film, structured along the lines of patriotism engage the viewers with love for their country just as comic films are therapeutic in the treatment of patients. While films from other nations of the world engage in adventurism, technology, science and space exploration, man against nature and several other inspiring and motivational themes, the Nigerian cinema is famous for its expository themes of prostitution, cultism, magic deception and betrayal, witchcraft, urban violence and corruption. As unpalatable as these negative narratives are, we agree that film is a reflection of the society. The Nigerian cinema can do more to extirpate such negatives and profitably focus on themes of national integration, honesty, eradication of poverty, man's conquest of the environment; ensuring that negative themes attract punitive measures as didactic means to serve as a deterrent. The Nigerian cinema could be harnessed to showcase our common heritage, patriotism, unity of purpose for peaceful co-existence and national development. As a contributory factor to national development, the Nigerian cinema can interrogate creatively structured narratives, on tax matters, road safety, hygiene, agriculture, science of technology as well as socio-ethnic relationships.

The youths in any society are always looked upon and groomed ethically, educationally and culturally as 'leaders of tomorrow'. It is imperative that filmmakers produce films that arouse national consciousness, engage the citizenry

in social reconstruction and national building through skilful adaptation of moral, social and educative themes that would stir up dialogue, generate intellectual discourse to formulate and guide public opinion. Several campaigns are ongoing by the Federal Ministry of Information, Culture and National Orientation to raise the standard of ethics among Nigerians. President Muhammadu Buhari himself is taken aback on the nation's value system which he describes as "been badly eroded over the years, emphasizing that virtues like "honesty, integrity, hard-work punctuality, good neighbourliness, abhorrence of corruption and patriotism, have given way to dishonesty, indolence, unbridled corruption and widespread impunity". At another instance President Buhari declares that "if you have not seen the change in you, you cannot see it in others or even the larger society". He goes further to say that "Before you ask, where is the change they promised us you must first ask "what have I done to be part of the change for the greater good of the society" (www.premiumtimes.com/auth). Hence, change begins with me! It would be recalled that thirty years ago, President Buhari then the military Head of State launched 'The War Against' Indiscipline (WAI) as an ideology of moral rectitude. Major General Domkat Bali, who was the then Minister of Defence wrote this as part of the foreword: "Recent probes into Federal and State contractual agreements have shown how some contractors were paid large sum of money for jobs not done, or the sum paid was far in excess of the actual cost of jobs done. The list of the evils is endless. These ills permeate every fabric of our national life" (3).

The various societal ills of the nation are as a result of indiscipline both at the top echelon of the society to the lowest common man and the situation of the latter has not changed since then. In all these, one observes lack of patriotism and ideological commitment as demonstrated by greed, ethnicity religious and political bigotry hence the need to wedge a media war of campaign to positively transform the nation into a haven for all citizens. The way out of this quagmire was for General Buhari to make WAI an ideology for national development and moral rectitude. According to Buhari, "a committee should be set up with clear guidelines for its propagation. It will be the duty of the committee to examine why many countries have succeeded so that we too can follow suit" (73). The fiat of the Buhari administration then compelled Nigerians to shun corruption and imbibe new social ethos. Massive media campaigns were carried out on radio and television stations. A lot of television jungles were produced as well as tailor made drama and documentaries in line with the WAI crusade theme. The effective use of these campaign messages became household products just as children could also sing WAI slogans. The messages permeated to the grassroots

and engaged public dialogue both in market places, office, places of worship and at home.

In 1984, Oyeka Onwenu produced a documentary film titled *Nigeria a Squandering of Riches* which focused on corruption in Nigeria and the Niger Delta question. The documentary is about the corrosive effects of the uneven windfall of sudden oil wealth, Nigeria's pervasive mismanagement with its attendant effects of corruption. The film shares the opinions of bankers, industrialists, street traders and farmers to capture the moods of rising dissatisfaction with the economy: as it is now and with governmental corruption. This documentary is a factual account of the Nigerian situation of which nothing has changed since then. The support, impact and acceptance of this film gave credence and justification for the military intervention of Buhari and Idiagbon coup. Such has been the power of the documentary film ever since; to believe in a cause and rally people around to support it by presenting captivating images that raise the consciousness of people to take up public discourse and action.

The 2014 kidnapping of 276 female students from Government Secondary School Chibok in Borno state by an extremist terrorist Islamic group known as Boko Haram has attracted media attention throughout Nigeria. The Nigerian media has relentlessly carried out reports and features about the kidnap which has received global condemnation. The electronic and print media are credited for beaming a searchlight on the kidnap of the Chibok girls especially the promotion of #BringBackOurGirls campaign deliberately designed with the intention to publicize the kidnapping of the girls. From far away United States of America, Michelle Obama is seen displaying the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag posted to her official twitter account, which is another effort to create awareness about the kidnapping (par. 16). Similarly, Fox News Entertainment reports that at the 2014 Cannes film festival actress Salma Hayek rendered her voice got a bit political at the festival displaying a BringBackOurGirls hashtag in support of the Nigerian Chibok school girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2014 (par. 2). Michelle Obama and Salma Hayek including several individuals and interest groups have not stopped in adding their voices to Oby Ezekwesili's outcry to the world in the campaign for the release of the abducted schoolgirls from Chibok by Boko Haram. As a result of the awareness created by television news reports with film clips, the print and social media, there is overwhelming condemnation of the kidnapping of the Chibok schoolgirls worldwide. Several countries and organizations including United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Security Council, United Nations Secretary General, European Parliament, United States of America, France, Israel, China and a host of other

countries have condemned the act and offered their support to Nigeria towards the fight against terrorism and release of the girls from their captors.

Conclusion

The film medium if properly harnessed can effectively affect not just the emotions and entertainment values of the society but serve as a conduit that would percussively engage viewers, appeal to their consciences, arouse interest and generate a new consciousness that could create change within society. The positive results nations all over the world have achieved as a result of film whether for propaganda, cultural, technological or economic purposes portends that, Nigeria's cinema can excel in the use of film to attain whatever positive change it needs towards a new orientation that would usher in peace, patriotism, honesty and selfless service to the nation. It is against the backdrop of the communicative impact of film in all its ramifications including television news coverage, features that titillate the consciousness of a civilized world that this study interrogates the effect of film in social mobilization and human development as a change agent in Nigeria. The paper finally recommends that government should encourage film practitioners to embrace the ethical framework of social responsibility to generate and contribute content that will positively engage the citizenry for a social change. The use of cinema vans which will carry the message to remote villages and settlements and the establishment of cottage cinema viewing houses will serve as a window for mass mobilization and apprehension to enable Nigeria attain the much desired change in the society.

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PROFESSIONALISM AND QUACKERY IN COSTUMING AND MAKE-UP FOR NOLLYWOOD FILMS: A STUDY OF *ROYAL INSULT* AND *MY LOVING HEART*

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Abstract

*Costume and makeup designers in the Nigerian film industry have called for a change in the manner with which their department is being treated by other film-workers. They argue that the neglect of their department by production crew goes to hinder the creation of costume and makeup appropriate to characters, time, places and situations being portrayed. This article investigates the challenges faced by the costume and makeup designers in the industry. The research is based on critical viewing and analyses of two Nollywood films: *Royal Insult* and *My Loving Heart*. It appears that costume and makeup designers in the industry have not really been successful in executing their arts, especially as regards achieving appropriateness of design in relation to characters and situations being portrayed. Factors such as budget; indiscipline on the part of actors and actresses; lack of cooperation from production crew and inadequate research time constantly militate against the appropriateness of costume and makeup. Inappropriate use of colour in costuming, non-coordination of costume colours with the scenic background and inappropriate application of makeup effects characterise the costume and makeup in these films. While illuminating the causes of ineffective costume and make in Nollywood films, the study sheds light on factors that have prompted the designers' call for change.*

Introduction

Attention has been drawn to Nollywood costume and makeup designers' crave for positive changes in the position practically designated to them as crew members. They have blamed the inappropriateness of some of their costume and makeup on insufficient budget, poor remuneration, inefficient teamwork among the crew members, inadequate time for research and nonchalant attitude towards the research processes. In addition to these militating factors, they also alleged that they are usually regarded as dispensable by directors, actors and actresses.

These issues bothering the costume and makeup designers evoke exciting discussion which calls to mind Nigerian socio-political situation of the recent times. An exciting analogy can thus be drawn between Nollywood industry and Nigerian political setting. The drawn inference could become a way forward to the designing of near-perfect film costume and makeup. Since the inception of Nollywood, the industry has uninterruptedly been exploding with great popularity within and outside Nigeria. The films depict the realities, wisdom and culture of the Nigerian people. So, they appeal to a mass of Nigerian people as they relate to what they believe in or practice. In the same way, President Muhammed Buhari, the flag bearer of the all Progressive Congress (APC) was elected on the basis of his personal virtues of transparent accountable leadership and his promises to fight corruption and insecurity and to bring about positive changes in the economy. President Buhari rose to power on the crest waves of “change” which depicts the populace’s expectations. Nigerian populace craved for a change from the corrupt government of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan to a new government that will effectively bring a positive change to the country’s political setting.

It appears that not much priority has been apportioned to effective team work by the Nollywood production crew. This seems to have thus been resulting in inappropriate portrayal of characters, time and situations that are being depicted by the films. It seems a common practice to see an actress dressed for bedtime, still wearing facial beauty makeup and jewellery. In order to curb such laxities, Nollywood costume and makeup designers call for change in the place practically accorded to them by other film-workers. They seek effective and efficient collaboration from the production crew at every point in time.

Film Costume and Makeup

As a valid reflection of a people’s culture, film uses costume and makeup designs in showing how the people dress. This in turn buttresses the essences of costume and makeup as essential and indispensable elements of communication in film production. Costume and makeup as observed by Oklobia and Bakare, “are often used to suggest the locality and period that a dramatic action is set” (101). Designing costume and makeup for film, requires just about as much creative and imaginative abilities as designing for the stage. If costume and makeup are not adequately designed, light can mar the filmic picture; thereby, giving the film a meaning entirely different from the one intended by the film director. Besides, unlike the stage performance, which is ephemeral, film production lives on and can be viewed over and over again. Ayakoroma maintains “that the stage production is one full uninterrupted run, a tele-drama or home video is a product

of “bits and pieces” ... The shooting is broken till the next day, the continuity man or lady is there to ensure that you are taking off from where you stopped” (52).

This will enhance believability. For the costume and makeup designers to be imaginative, creative, competent and knowledgeable in the film medium, he or she must be an observer of real life, and must be able to design costume and makeup to depict reality. So designing costume and makeup for film depends to a great extent on creative aptitude. Thus exposed to the techniques of designing, the designer with skill and technical know-how will always excel in his work. Bakare and Oklobia suggest that “as costume and makeup are integral parts of production design, the designer must pay careful attention to them for costume and makeup are the exterior reflection of the actor’s impersonation, which assumes, that the person portrayed is someone other than the actor himself” (106). Therefore, one has to be sensitive in the use of costume and makeup in film production. Although the costume and makeup designers that have no creative ability can create designs, but they may not be appropriate to the storyline of the films without that creative or imaginative touch required.

Film is a Medium that utilizes lighting. Consequently, one of the artists with whom the costume and makeup designers are supposed to work with is the lighting designer. This is because; film cannot be produced without lighting. According to Smith *et al*, “... lighting is regarded as an integral element of scenery because it illuminates, accentuates, textures the set as well as all the visual aspects of production into organic dramatic picture” (383). However, one of the challenges face by costume designers in the Nigerian film industry is that of not having a foreknowledge of what the location looks like, or the opportunity of investigating the location for a particular scene before the actual shooting. Amaka Akaigwe, a costume designer in an interview lamented: “We are not allowed to see locations where the film would be shot. This affects our designs negatively.” According to her, the result of this is what usually seems like a careless use and combination of colours. This is why sometimes in Nollywood films are found with flaws of the scenic background having the same colour with a character’s costume. This results in character’s disappearance into the background. For instance, a character seen in cloth with the same colour as the chair he sits on, will have an effect of non-distinction between the character and the scenery. In view of this, Gillette posits that “the analysis of the script expands beyond the page to include the views and interpretations of ...the other designers...Any or all these other members of the production design team may see relationship between the

characters differently than you do. Their opinions must be acknowledged and evaluated” (393).

A film costume designer should therefore endeavour to work in harmony with the makeup, lighting and location man. At least, he or she should ask questions about the colours they intend to use. The information gathered, provides the essential background materials that he or she will use to create effective and appropriate costume designs. To this effect, Gillette postulates, “Costume design is also influenced by the production venue” (395). He outlines some typical and important questions that relate to costume design as: what the costume budget is, the production concept, the period of the play, first dress rehearsal, what the set design looks like, its colour palette, and the lighting designer’s colour palette. He notes that some of these questions would be answered when the costume designers begin to study the script. While others will be discussed and answered during production meetings in which designers and the director freely exchange ideas. Consequently, the costume and makeup designer takes an objective look at the communication process that has taken place between them and the other members of the production crew and their own use of costume and makeup process. According to Gillette, “The purpose of this evaluation is to discern ways in which you could improve your communication with other members of the production design team as well as your use of the design process” (386).

Contrarily, what is obtained between Nollywood costume and makeup designers appears to be a negation of the stipulated rule of effective teamwork. It was gathered that because most of the costume and makeup designers in the industry are unskilled practitioners, they are poorly paid. So they can hardly measure up to the standard of the actors and actresses who are well paid. Besides, most of the actors and actresses are class-conscious people who treat the designers with disdain. Thus, an actress would vehemently refuse to heed to the instruction given by a costume or makeup designer. Most times these so-called star actresses do not agree to clean up their beauty makeup when asked by the makeup designer to do so. Hence, they appear with their normal everyday makeup. That is why in almost all contemporary video films produced in the industry; actresses seem to still wear their beauty facial makeup while depicting night scenes or bedtime scenes. They are also cases where a designer would give mourning clothes to a widow who just lost her husband, but rather than cooperating with the designer, she would dictate to her what she wants as her costume. Generally, however, an actor or actress can suggest costumes, but this must be in accordance with the general costume concept and the character being played.

Although, there is some degree of believability in the use of costume and makeup in traditionally set films even though there is not much distinction between costumes used in one film from those used in another. In most of these epic films characters are costume in sack cloths. Ayakoroma observes that, “If it is an epic or historical genre...what we see are sack cloths as costumes” (13). As Abone states, “films can propagate and even influence national image ... Already the vital role of film in promoting national image has been aptly expressed in the National film policy (section 4.1.4 (g)) where it is stipulated that film potentials should be used to counter prejudices and misconceptions of the international community about the black race” (27). Umukoro supports the assertion that cloth to a large extent defines a society. Quoting Frantz Fanon, she says that “dress constitutes the most distinctive form of a society’s uniqueness...the most immediately perceptible...It is by their apparel that types of society first became known” (47). The question now is does a film set in Nigeria, in which characters are adorned with only sack depict a true image of ancient Nigerians? To this, Nwafor observes that “the video film industry is faced with challenges which if surmounted will contribute to her development and growth. These problems include lack of adequate sponsorship, participation of non-professionals ... lack of legislation, lack of innovation” (119). Therefore, for a good design to be achieved in the practice of costume and makeup in film productions, a designer is required take certain steps. Nwadiwe reiterates that “designing requires analysing, planning, fore-seeing, compromising and adapting means to end so as to meet other people’s expectations” (34).

It seems however that Nigerian filmmakers concentrate more on the story and income accruing to them from the films’ sales. Little attention is therefore often paid to visual design of most Nigerian films. Daniel-Inim observes concerning Tchidi Chikere’s *The Sleek Ladies*: “From the beginning of the film, Cindy is costumed and made up...with highly provocative wears. One often wonders whether Cindy is really a banker” (202). Costume and makeup carelessly designed could give the film a meaning totally different from the one originally intended by the filmmakers. Nwadiwe and Embu suggest that, “performance design is a problem-solving exercise. The designer is continually confronted with the artistic and technical problems which must be solved before the design idea is successfully concretized” (33). Designing costume and makeup for film therefore require sensitivity and caution in other not to mar film production. Nwadiwe reiterates that, “If designers do not confront technical problems and experiment with new dimensions, their potentials may not be optimized” (43). Daniel-Inim stressing the inappropriate use of costume and makeup in *The Sleek Ladies*

reiterates, “we see Jennifer (Daniel Okeke) costumed in a party wear just to visit the supermarket” (202).

Synopsis of *Royal Insult*

Royal Insult is a Nollywood film directed by Iyke Odife, with the costume designed by Amaka Akigwe and makeup artist as Big Brother Concept. The film set in the contemporary world of Asaba, Delta State was produced in 2007. The film revolves around Princess Margaret whose mother; Queen Lilian wants her to marry Prince Philip, who is also a royalty. Prince Philip and Princess Margaret are courting, until the fateful day; when she meets and falls in love with Timothy, a wretched thief. She starts dating him immediately as they become best of friends. Timothy the “common criminal” eventually turns a new leaf. But, when Prince Philip discovers that the princess is no longer interested in him, he determines to kill Timothy who has become his rival. So he hired an assassin to help him eliminate Timothy. The assassin in turn sends one of his “Boys” with an instruction to shoot any young man he sees entering the palace. Unfortunately, it is Prince who comes to see the Princess when the proxy assassin is at the palace gate to carry out his assignment. Therefore, Prince Philip is shot instead and he dies instantly. The king, Princess Margaret’s father who is a king in Asaba, comes back from his trip to Rome to visit the Pope. After much enquiry, he discovers that his daughter is truly in love with the commoner, Timothy. The king thus gives his consent for their marriage to proceed. Timothy is eventually brought into the royal household as the film ends.

Costume and Makeup Analyses of Characters in *Royal Insult*

Princess Margaret: She is a young lady of about twenty-five years, and the daughter of a wealthy king in Asaba, Delta State of Nigeria. Princess Margaret is the only child of her parents; hence she is loved and pampered immensely. However, her humble personality trait makes her a friendly and lovable person. She likes to explore the real world by attempting to do things like domestic work herself. However, her mother, the Queen abhors this attribute of hers. Her mother insists that she must never be found befriending the palace maids. But Princess Margaret thinks class is not important and should not be a barrier to friendship.

She first appears in bed wearing a knitted-sleeping cap (hair-net) on her head, a red sleeping gown and a house coat with blue and red flowers. Her costume here is inappropriate, because a house coat is meant to cover the night gown when one is outside the bed so that she can operate within bounds of decency. Princess Margaret is repeatedly seen in costumes and makeup which

contradict the situation being portrayed. In her final appearance, she is shown in bed at night wearing a black hairnet, eyeliner on the upper and lower eyelids, brown pencil on her eyebrow, lip-gloss and red lip-liner, white eye-shadow lightly applied and a red night gown. Her makeup in this scene is very inappropriate to the time of the day and the situation depicted. Being a night scene, costume and makeup is supposed to depict the time and occasion which is night and bed time. So the Princess should have sported a plain face.

Queen Lillian: Queen Lillian is a beautiful woman of about forty-five years, and the wife of a rich king in Asaba, Delta State. She is a fashionable woman who believes that folks should only associate with people of their own class. Hence, she adjures her daughter, Princess Margaret to treat the royal maids with authority rather than being friendly with them since they are beneath her social and economic status. Although the queen cannot be said to have sported inappropriate costumes, the reiteration of her royal accessories have amounted to a boring and almost unaesthetic costumes. In almost all her appearances, she sports the same hairdo, earrings and wrist-beads and neck-beads.

The King: He is between the ages of sixty and sixty-five years; and a wealthy king in Asaba, Delta State. Like his daughter, Princess Margaret, he is down-to-earth and believes that neither economic strength nor social status should serve as instruments for selecting one's friend.

The king just arrives at his palace from a trip to Rome to see the Pope. He is wearing cream coloured lace caftan with army-green designs, a full gathered long skirt, crown (like that of kings in Benin kingdom), neck band, wrist band (all made with red beads) and big white and red beads on the neck and wrist. He is shown again sitting in his throne in his chamber with his visitor, Prince Philip. He is wearing a crown with strings of beads dangling from the hem of the crown down to his chest, giving a minimal view of his face. He is wearing neck beads as describe previously, wrist bands and wrist beads. And for his cloth, he wears a full gathered black velvet skirt with golden coloured patterns.

Costume and Makeup Assessment of *Royal Insult*

Royal Insult, exhibits the rich array of indigenous African clothing and the ingenuity of the costume designer. Nevertheless, makeup in the film seems not to have been given adequate attention and consideration. In many ways however, the costumes do not just suit the actors, they help to define the characters and trace their development through the film's course. The costume designer was able to

stick to realistic scales of contemporary fashion in her choice of colour and fabrics. For instance, in one of the scenes, the Queen dresses in expensive-looking purple velvet, with hair adorned with beads. This costume adequately depicts royalty. The Princess at all times in the film, dresses in matching clothes and shoes. In one of the scenes, she wears a pink and blue satin skirt and blouse with a pink matching turban. One therefore observes that the costumes through colours express gender differentiations. Females are depicted with soft colours such as pink. As Brockett posits “hues that are grayed in saturation and dark in value are used in establishing a sober mood, while those light in value suggest a mood of gaiety, delicacy or frivolity. The colours of each costume should be expressive of the traits of its wearer” (559). Hence, the Queen most often wears clothes that are dark in colour like purple to show royalty and at other times, she wears costumes of dark hue like green or dark red. However, colours of the costumes worn by the Prince do not really express his gender or mood, since the film portrays him as an arrogant follow. Contrary to his character traits, he wears clothes with light colours in almost all his appearances.

In most cases however, the costume designer adhered to the right use of fabrics to express character status. Brockett suggests: “... smooth texture of silk suggests the upper class. Each material has its own texture that the designer can use to capture desired effects” (556). Accordingly, the Princess is adorned in pink satin cloth and a pair of pink shoes to match. The glossy surface of satin connotes brittleness and femininity. While her drapery made with feathers indicates her economic and social status (upper class). The Queen wears crown made with beads to indicate locale (Delta State). She wears beads around her neck also. Most times, she wears expensive-looking laces and in one of the scenes, she is wearing a richly adorned purple velvet material. There are places where the Princess is costumed in *Ankara*. It can be deduced that the costume designer through the use of textile, tries to show the humble personality of the Princess. (*Ankara* is considerably cheap). The film portrays her as one who is not enticed by the peculiarities of royalty. As the Princess says in one of her lines “... I am not a class conscious person.”

It is important to note however, that this film in its costume design does not really reflect any particular tribe or culture in Nigeria, but is rather a combination of cultures. It has a touch of South African costuming as in the scene where the Princess wears a South African head gear. Again, the Princess and the Prince are most time dressed in flamboyant rich cloths which cannot be ascribed to a particular culture. There is a scene where the Prince dresses like a titled Urhobo man (Niger Delta). The king in all his appearances is adorned like a

Benin Oba. Although one can argue that there are similarities between the costumes of a Benin Oba and those of an Asaba Obi, there are also obvious dissimilarities but these are not expressed. The Asaba people are identified with *agbo* material also known as *akwa ocha*. Therefore, the costume design of this film seems to reflect the contemporary Nigerian people's dress sense. Nigerians are fashion-conscious people and so, tend to experiment with clothes from different cultures.

Synopsis of *My Loving Heart*

My Loving Heart is a Nollywood film directed by Tchidi Chikere and produced by Chinweuba Nneji in 2009. The costume was designed by Chiemela Nwagboso and Makeup artist is Kingsley Godwin. The film revolves around Bob, a young millionaire with terminal heart disease. His path crosses with that of two women – Breana, who saves him from an untimely death, and Angela, his girl-friend who brings him pain and sorrow. Bob has been sick for a long with heart disease, and the doctor has predicted his death unless there is a successful heart transplant. The problem now remains that of getting a donor who will donate a heart to him. So, when it dawns on Bob that he is going to die, he proposes marriage to Angela who has just found out about state of his health. Angela agrees to accept his proposal, if he is ready to will his possessions and wealth to her. But luck runs against her as Breana comes to know about Bob's predicament through a television advert. Breana's late husband requested that she donates his heart to anyone who needs it to survive. So she donates it to Bob. Bob, who is now living a healthy life, eventually falls in love with the woman who saves him. Breana equally loves this man who bears the heart of her husband. The film ends as Angela; the gold digger is jilted by Bob, while he plans to marry Breana.

Costume and Makeup Analysis of *My Loving Heart*

Bob: He is a wealthy young man in his mid-thirties who suffers from a terminal heart disease. So he needs an urgent heart transplant to survive. He sports clean shaved hair. No makeup whatsoever is used to depict the health condition of Bob. His costume may be said to be appropriate for someone of his economic status. But, his makeup seems not to be appropriate for someone of his health status. No attempt was made to simulate the symptoms or suggest his health condition. Some makeup effects that would have shown the symptoms of a worsening heart disease would have been used on Bob. Since, his condition is getting worse with each passing day as their dialogue suggests.

Bob is also shown in his office wearing a pair of black trousers, a white shirt and a black jacket over the shirt. The buttons of his jackets are all undone, and his white shirt is not tucked in. Hence the shirt is slightly longer than the jacket in length. Bob's mode of dressing in this scene is informal, thus contradicting the environment which is a corporate office. To actually depict a corporate personality, Bob's inner shirt should have been properly tucked in and his jacket buttoned up. His style of dressing here is not appropriate to the locale depicted which is a corporate office neither does his makeup effectively portray his condition. At his survival party, he is shown wearing the same radiant face as he wears when he is sick. Nothing in terms of makeup is used to differentiate between the sick Bob and the now healthy Bob. The makeup design of this film is inappropriately done, especially as it seems as if there is no makeup designer among the film production crew.

Breana: She is a young woman in her late thirties. She is the widow who donates her late husband's heart to Bob. She is shown at home watching television. She wears black scarf on her head and coffee coloured blouse and trousers. She is also wearing low heeled slippers, gold necklace and pendant and a pair of gold earrings. Although her makeup is shallow beauty makeup: powder, eyeliner, lip-gloss and brows painted with brown eye pencil, Breana's costume does not really match her condition and mood. Since the film suggests that she lost her husband barely one month ago. Since her actions here show that she is still mourning her husband, it is expected that she wears a black costume and a makeup-free-face. Her carefully designed hair style and accessories also contradict her mood.

Bob's Elder Sister: She is a middle-aged woman of about fifty years. In her first appearance, she is sitting in a white sofa, and wears a white fitted, long-sleeved shirt. Her costumes in these appearances, seem not to have been given due consideration, as they get absorbed into the scenic background. Thus, making her to disappear into the set and become almost invisible. She sports a bright face through the use of very light makeup.

Costume and Makeup Assessment of *My Loving Heart*

Costume and makeup design of *My Loving Heart* appear not to be effective. From the selection of costume colours to the styles of the costume, a lot of inadequacies are apparent. There is an instance in the film, where Bob wears a cream coloured shirt and a pair of cream colour trousers against a cream coloured wall and sofa. In another scene, he wears a pair of white trousers and a white striped shirt against

a white wall. This lack of tact on the part of the costume designer tends to make the costumes of the film dissolve into other production elements, especially the set and lighting. This is contrary to the view of Gillette as he talks about the relationship among all the production elements and costume. He postulates that, “Costume design is also influenced by the production venue” (395). The costume designer of *My Loving Heart* seems not to have collaborated with the location and lighting men. At least, it seems he did not ask questions about the colours of the set, hence, effective costume design is not achieved.

It appears as if no effort was made in the area of makeup design to illuminate the characters and to define their social relations. Importantly, Bob whom the film portrays as having been terribly sick with a terminal heart disease, from the beginning of the film to the point when he gets cured, maintains a radiant face and a healthy body. No makeup was used to indicate his health status. In summation, the film has not used makeup or employed any makeup design in communicating to the audience the physical characteristics of the characters. Characters are not illuminated through the employment of effective makeup design.

Findings

The research discovered that Nollywood costume and makeup designers usually aim to achieve appropriateness of the design to the roles played and locales depicted. However, the costume and makeup designers in the industry are guided by certain factors which include: budget, the designers’ training and time available for the shooting of the film.

The financial control of the industry is mostly handled by businessmen who are theatrically unlettered, and those who do not know the intricacies of an effective filmic production. Hence, the industry tends to relegate elements of design such as costume and makeup to the background. Consequently, costume and makeup designers are poorly paid. It is not surprising then that a costume designer would be paid a hundred and fifty thousand naira (N150, 000) to design an epic film for instance, where just one actor will take more than twice of that amount home. The designer, instead of losing the job to others who are even willing to do it for an amount lower than what was offered, would accept it, but would naturally not embark on designs which will exceed the financial limit of her department.

When a film is epic or historic, it becomes compelling that thorough research is embarked on. This may entail traveling to far places to gather materials and information. This is because to produce designs that are appropriate

to the time and locales, one needs to research into the period and place (setting) of the film. This may mean traveling to villages to carry out researches. But the limited budget and speed, with which Nigerian films are planned and produced, are not adequate to carry out such researches.

Conclusion

Although it has been said that the Nigerian film industry, presently generates a lot of income for the nation; it is however besieged by many problems such as inappropriate or recycled costumes, unrealistic settings and inappropriate make-up design among others. In most cases, films in the Nigerian film industry are planned and are shot within the interval of one to two weeks. Hence, the costume and makeup designers have barely two weeks to read, analyse and execute their designs. In a case, where the film is a contemporary one for instance, the task becomes easier since part of the research for contemporary film is constant observation of people in real life. Therefore, the costume designer through ingenuity and creative abilities can produce designs appropriate to the contemporary film, and its characters. Nevertheless, the makeup designers of the contemporary genre seem not to care much about depiction of real life. Hence, most often we see characters wearing inappropriate costumes and make-up. It can, therefore, be assumed that the interest of the Nigerian filmmakers lay more on aesthetics (beauty) than on accuracy on depiction of reality. Consequently, it appears that no Nigerian film has been totally free from the flaws of inappropriateness.

Recommendations

Film producers in the Nigerian film industry should take consider of their budget before selecting a script to for production. If the budget is lean, the producer should avoid choosing an epic film since the production of epic films tend to require heavier budgets. Again, costume and makeup designers in the industry should endeavour to give the actual depiction of locale, history and characters in any given film. For instance, the practice of depicting traditional African characters uniformly with sack is wrong. They should take time to research into history and places before executing their designs. If the film is set in Igbo-land, the costume designer should find out what Igbo people of that period wore. While the makeup artist, on her part; should try to find out the kind of makeup with which that period was identified. For instance, simulations of *Ichi*, which the traditional Igbo society used in depicting strength and valour could be used in epic films to depict warriors and courageous men. If the film is set in the Northern

part of Nigeria, the designers should research into the particular area which the film is set and apply their particular body designs or tribal marks, as well as dress code appropriately. Every area or state in the northern part of Nigeria has peculiar body adornment practice as well as particular modes of dressing. For instance, the Borno area has its own tribal mark different from that of the Zazzau people of Kaduna state. Makeup artists should therefore show the different cultures of the Nigerian people.

Film directors should also take longer periods to plan and shoot films. If the productions of films are given more time, better results will be achieved. Equally, production crew should cooperate in filmmaking. Costume designers should be allowed to see film locations before the actual shooting of the film. This will enable them implement a colour scheme suitable to the location of the film. There should be cooperation among all the film cast and crew, including the actors and actresses. There is also need for practicing costume and makeup designers in the industry to go back to school for professional training. More professionally trained designers should also be absorbed into the industry and be given the opportunity to practice their art.

Lastly, although the industry has a union which holds the designers in the industry together, the union is not effective. The Creative Designers Association of Nigeria (CDAN) has not been functional in protecting the interest of the designers. The union should therefore desist from being mere figure-head. Their leaders should make concerted efforts to execute the mandates of their office, and imbue the Union with credibility.

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‘GLOCALIZATION’ AND MARKETING STRATEGIES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NOLLYWOOD INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The concept of glocalization posits that for globalization to be effective, the people should, as a matter of necessity, think globally but act locally. This has become effective in developing countries of the world where globalization has been seen as having some negative influences. In glocalization, the global is domesticated (suffused with much local contents) to be sustainably functional to particular societies. This paper sets out to x-ray the adoption of local materials in film scholarship in Nigeria. The paper is follow-on of a doctoral research project that adopted triangulation (involving documentary research, in-depth interview and observation) as research method. It is discovered that the commercial framework (marketing aspect) of Nollywood controls other aspects of the industry. Yet, this all important aspect of the industry is at present entirely manned by non-professionals and the least emphasized in film training curriculum in the country. A review of film curriculum in Nigeria to include, as a matter of utmost importance, glocalized cross disciplinary film marketing training with an eye on the commercial needs of the industry is advocated. This will aid trained film entrepreneurs aspiring to break even into the industry. In the long run, the injection of such academically trained film marketers into the industry will engender the revolution of Nollywood for better sociological functions to the nation as well as ensure that the industry competes favourably in the global film market.

Introduction

Industry performance entails understanding the financial and nonfinancial returns of marketing activities of a firm to the firm’s business and to society at large. Industry performance can be said to fall under performance marketing. Industry performance is used to capture the range of possible outcome measures that have financial and nonfinancial implications and implications beyond the company itself to the larger society. For the company, such issues as profitability, brand and customer equity are considered in industry performance, while social responsibility, legal, ethical, and community related issues are considered under

industry performance beyond the company. Customer satisfaction, sales volume, market share, and profitability are indices of industry performance. Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller enumerate the dimensions of industry performance:

Top marketers are increasingly going beyond sales revenue to examine the marketing scorecard and interpret what is happening to market share, customer loss rate, customer satisfaction, product quality, and other measures. They are also considering the legal, ethical, social and environmental effects of marketing activities and programs. (44)

The performance of Nollywood, the video film industry in Nigeria, is best measured through its commercial framework and the over bearing effects of same on all other aspects of the industry.

Conceptual Clarification

This work is anchored on the concept of glocalization. It has become extremely difficult to pin-point who first used the term ‘glocalization.’ However, E. J. C. Duru states that the term ‘glocalization’ originated from within Japanese business and commercial practices with its etymology from the Japanese word *dochakuka*, which simply means global localization. Continuing, Duru states: “originally referring to a way of adopting farming techniques to local conditions, *dochakuka* evolved into a marketing strategy when Japanese businessmen adopted it in the 1980s to mean “the creation of products or services intended for the global market, but customized to suit the local cultures” (4). The term is said to have been popularized in the English-speaking world by the British sociologist, Roland Robertson in the 1990s and further popularized by the Canadian sociologists, Keith Hampton and Barry Wellman in the late 1990s.

Applying the concept of glocalization in their discussion of football, Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson state that “The term ‘glocalization’ helps to explain how the symbiosis of the local and the global differs according to particular cultural circumstances. Glocalization (the word) seemingly originated in Japanese business practices” (549). In the exact words of Duru:

Like globalization, the conceptual utility of glocalisation is in contest. But in general terms it is a "portmanteau word of globalization and localization". Specifically, glocalization refers to any individual, group, division, unit, organization and community which is able to think globally while acting locally. It is an historical (sic) process whereby localities

develop direct, economic and cultural relationships to the global system through information technologies, bypassing and subverting traditional power hierarchies like national governments." Through the process of globalization, Africa has encountered non-indigenous processes and practices that have had certain influences on African peoples, economy and culture. Basically, globalization ... has imposed on Africa alien processes and practices that have either enriched or corrupted its socio-cultural, political and economic system. But glocalization affords Africa an alternative to the negative influences of globalization. The process of glocalization can create new opportunities for Africa to assert local autonomy and control its own socio-political and economic destiny. (1)

Glocalization has been hailed as a more sustainable alternative to globalization. The infusion of the global and the local to form the term "glocal" is indicative of the place glocalization can be put to in the bid to find optimum solutions that can be sustained in solving local and/or international problems of the contemporary society. This paper advocates the adoption of the glocal to film training in Nigeria most especially on the aspect of film marketing training in Nollywood.

Film Scholarship in Nigeria

The historical development of film scholarship in Nigeria is an aspect of Nigerian film history that has not been exhaustively and chronologically discussed. Hence, there is paucity of materials on this. It is on record that the first ever academically trained filmmakers in Nigeria were trained at the Film Training School in Accra, Ghana. Shaka gives an exposé into this in the following words:

To train indigenous manpower for this sector of the economy, the colonial government in Nigeria sent Adamu Halilu, A. A. Fajemisin, J. A. Otigba and Mallam Yakubu Aina for training at the Film Training School in Accra, Ghana...The first generation filmmakers who were students of the Accra Film Training School were trained essentially as documentarists by the protégés of the John Grierson School of Documentary of the Old Empire Marketing Board's Film Unit which subsequently metamorphosed at

the outset of the Second World War to the Colonial Film
Unit. (12)

Post-colonial feature filmmaking is said to have begun with filmmakers such as Ola Balogun, Eddy Ugbomah, Francis Oladele, Sanya Dosumu, Jab Adu and others who studied film production in Europe and North America (Shaka 12). Other earlier trained filmmakers studied in the USA and the UK. Since the film makers trained at Accra Film Training School were trained in documentary production, they concentrated on documentary production on their return to Nigeria. Shaka (12) posits that “Adamu Halilu, the only (feature) filmmaker of note to emerge from the Accra Film School, started making feature films only as from the mid-1970s.” In his work *Trends in Nollywood: A Study of Selected Genres*, Ayakoroma attempted a categorization of film practitioners in Nigeria between 1970 and 1985. He mentioned two categories of academically trained film practitioners thus:

- (i) those who had their training from the Accra Film School (Halilu, Fajemisin, Otigba, and Aina, among others);
- (ii) those who had professional Western (American and European) training in film production (Balogun, Ugbomah, Oladele, Dosunmu, Galadinma, Adu, Ladebo, and Adesanya, among others). (32-33)

In tracing the historical development in film scholarship in Nigeria, the town of Jos in Plateau State is very significant as it houses two prominent film training institutions- the National Film Institute and the NTA Television College Jos. National Film Institute was established under the Nigerian Film Corporation. In his *Film in Nigeria*, Hyginus Ekwuazi gives a background information into the establishment of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) stating that in a “Seminar on the Film Industry and Cultural Identity in Nigeria organized jointly by the National Council for Arts and Culture and the University of Lagos’ Department of Mass Communications, in 1979... virtually every participant at the seminar called for the establishment of a body like the NFC” (34).

In 1979, the military government of General Olusegun Obasanjo promulgated the decree setting up the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC). Yet, the corporation only took off in 1982 through an enabling Act by the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari. The act establishing the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) empowers it to lay a solid foundation for the development of a virile and sustainable film industry and cinema culture in Nigeria. Hence the

management of Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC) saw film training as sine qua non in the realisation of the mission of the corporation and as such worked towards the establishment of The National Film Institute (NFI). The National Film Institute, Jos was established in 1996 with Prof Hyginus Ekwuazi as the pioneer (Consulting) Director (Ekwuazi 36). Presently, the National Film Institute runs diploma programmes, and in affiliation with the University of Jos also runs a degree programme. The NTA Television Collage Jos is also a reference point in discussing film scholarship in Nigeria. Though not a film training school, the TV College has courses that relate to film. Regional media stations in Nigeria were merged in 1977 to form the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). This gave rise to the need to streamline training to cater for the needs of national organization. NTA Television College Jos was established in September 1980. In 1985, a two-year professional diploma programme was introduced in the college. In 2003, a committee was set up to transform the college into a degree awarding institution. The college presently awards a Bachelor's Degree in Mass Communication in affiliation with the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria.

There is a generation of trained film practitioners and scholars in Nigeria who had their training in Theatre/Dramatic/Creative Arts and Mass Communication Departments in Nigeria before proceeding abroad for further studies in specialist film schools. They include Hyginus Ekwuazi, Femi Shaka, Onookome Okome, Sam Akudinobi, Austin Efua-Enahoro, and Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike among others. Presently, departments of Theatre/Dramatic/Creative Arts and Mass Communication in many Nigerian universities append Film Studies in their nomenclature. No full fledged department of Film Studies has been established in Nigeria. Ekwuazi buttresses this point when he says that "the point is that in Departments of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication across the country, more and more students are being drawn to the film programme and more and more graduates are being turned out for gainful employment on both sides of the camera- and as critics" (36).

Owing to the present state of film scholarship in Nigeria, not all aspects of film are taught the students from the undergraduate days both in practical and theoretical terms. According to Ododo and Fasodu (vii), "It has been observed, for instance, that in an average theatrical and cultural entertainment project, especially in Nigeria and indeed many parts of Africa, more attention is usually directed towards the artistic and technical components, leaving the managerial and business aspects to suffer." Continuing, the writers posit thus:

It is also true that in many Theatre Arts departments in Nigeria, "more students seem to subscribe for

specialisations in acting, directing, design, dance and choreography, etc., with only a negligible few opting for management, marketing and arts administration. In other words, considerable attention has always been accorded to the “show”, while compromising the commercial essence of entertainment as “show business...This is why professionally trained theatre and entertainment marketers are rare to come by in Nigeria. (vii)

The position above applies with double emphasis to film scholarship in Nigeria. Little wonder the film curriculum for the Film Studies programmes in Nigeria (an offshoot of the Theatre Arts Departments) does not reflect any attention on film marketing. Yet the area of film marketing controls every other aspect of the industry as well as detects the pace of activities in those aspects. It must be stated here also that there are in existence in Nigeria, privately owned film training institutions that offer various degrees of short term courses to their students. These are scattered across the country.

Marketing in Film Industries

Defining marketing has been a major conceptual problem of marketing. This problem has persisted partly as a result of misconceptions about marketing primary among which is the fact that “many people think of marketing only as selling and advertising” (Kotler & Armstrong 1). To the American Marketing Association, marketing is defined as “the process of planning and executing conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals” (qtd. in Peter and Donnelly 7). This definition recognizes all parties usually involved in marketing and goes a step further to include non-business exchange processes. To Kotler and Armstrong, “marketing is the delivery of customer satisfaction at a profit” (3). The authors go further to state thus: “We define marketing as a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and value with others.”

It is a statement of fact that the soul of every modern business is marketing which aims at attracting new customers and keeping current ones. In the exact words of Hye-Kyung Lee, “marketing is a management function that is common to both commercial and non-commercial organization” (13). Put in other words, “marketing is the provider of all the income for any business, whether it be from sales, grants-in-aid, sponsorship or donations. All sources of income in one way

or another, are generated through marketing and the more effective that marketing is, the more income it accrues” (Nwamuo 44).

For the film industry to survive and continue to be in business, marketing concerns should be given emphatic re-assessments. This situation applies to Nollywood in strict business sense because this “expanding video industry deserves a mass market” (Chami 260). It is the view of Blackstone and Bowman (2002) that “the production of films is competitive and yields low profit on average; yet each film is unique” (qtd. in Kerrigan & Ozbilgin 231). Hence, film marketing is a very essential aspect of the film business to increase the profit margins of films produced. “The marketing segment of the industry is the engine house of all film sectors. It is the honey pot that brings money to all players in the industry” (Omawale 320). Film marketing is a field of specialization within the marketing profession but depends largely on complex knowledge of film operations as business venture, medium of social entertainment to the public, and as potent tool for mass communication and social mobilization to thrive effectively. Hence, in the film industry marketing is used to “refer to the entire process of marketing, starting from the emergence of a film idea (new product development), through the production phase, the distribution of the film and finally to the exhibition phase” (Kerrigan & Ozbilgin 229) as against the idea of ‘telling and selling’ the film (Kotler & Armstrong 3). The essence is to marginally increase the potential audience and, by extension, the revenue earning potentials of the film. It is not enough to just “have a good product (film), at a good price and at the right market” (Omowale 311). Owing to the pride of place marketing occupies in the film industry, it becomes most important for film industries, particularly Nollywood, to re-assess marketing concerns as this “determines the pace and scope of its growth and development. Any attempt to underplay or underdevelop (sic) the marketing segment... will spell doom for the industry” (Omawale 320).

Marketing is shrouded in the controversy of definition and by extension its applicability to business ventures. Aro re-echoes this view thus: “Many organizations in times past frowned on the idea of applying marketing to their business. The hesitance continued until recently” (77). Film is one of such industries where marketing as a term has not always been applied for business and commercial relations. The commercial life span of a film normally starts with a cinema release before it is released on video; then broadcast on pay-television, before it is broadcast on public television. Finally, the film is released on other ancillary media (i.e. video games, cartoons etc.) and merchandising. This is the typical marketing chain of the major film industries of the world. In the above

arrangement, the term marketing is not usually used. Rather, the terms distribution and exhibition are used. But in Nollywood and some other third world film industries, the release pattern of films favours straight-to-DVD that are immediately pushed into the markets. Here, the terms distribution and exhibition are not strictly used. Instead, marketing is adopted. Chami believes that:

The concept and practice of the marketing, distribution and exhibition of... film can be viewed as one side of the same coin. These activities are inter-twined given that it is almost impossible to speak of one in isolation of the others in our industry, which...is a complex, expensive and rigorous process. This is more so from the point of view of prevailing business and economic condition in the country. (257)

An examination of the place of the marketer in Nollywood, the video film industry in Nigeria, is apt here.

The Place of Marketers in Nollywood

What the home video producer lacked in a distributor – cum – exhibitor, he found in the marketer. The home video marketer not only bank rolled the production, he took effective control thereby guaranteeing return on his investment. (Adesanya 106)

The statement above best describes the marketer in Nollywood. It is an undisputed fact that Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* was a commercial success at the time of its release into the Nigerian film market. This commercial success story sent a signal to some business men, mostly of Igbo extraction, that a lucrative but long-neglected market has been struck in the video film. Many of them read the hand writing on the wall even before others could see the wall. This occasioned the re-channelling of their resources into the video film market. They were quick to realize, according to M'Bayo & Onabajo, that "Nigerian home videos move very fast and return very high yields. They embraced the sector whole-heartedly, deploying their instincts as businessmen: pumped money into the sector and in the process unleashed a kind of production frenzy never before witnessed in any part of the continent" (75). These businessmen adopted the Nigerian business mentality of jumping into any business that is lucrative at any

material point in time. The implication of such undertaking is that quality will certainly drop significantly. The postulation of Onabajo and Odoe that “many who get into the industry do so not for the passion that they have about it but for financial gains which are actually the wrong motive for going into such a venture” (91), merely stresses this obvious fact which virtually every film historian and scholar in Nigeria agrees with. This is further accentuated thus: “For them, film is perceived only as money-spinner. And so, driven by the impetus of what quick profits can be made from film, they engage in producing as many films as possible within the shortest time frame, with the barest artistic and technical considerations” (Ekpenyong 75).

At the moment, the marketers are the policymakers in the industry. According to Sandra Obioha, a Nollywood actress, “The marketers are the kingpins. They are the king makers. They have the knife and they have the yam, and you will only get roles if they wish, or if they like you, or if they like your face” (qtd. in M’ Bayo and Onabajo 75). Gukas affirms this view. According to him:

... the marketers either fund projects generated by producers or buy off the final products from the producer. In some instances, the marketers on their own come up with their own project and commission producers to produce it or even seek to produce it themselves. This clearly underscores the indispensability of the marketers in the industry. In other words, both the final product and its marketing rest with the marketer. Projects that have sought to forge ahead within (sic) their input have met with very little success because the marketers who control the industry would not distribute the finished products. (qtd. in Agber 76)

From this position, one can have a feel of the weight and strength of the marketer in Nollywood. The marketers have metamorphosed into a cabal that seems difficult to break or circumvent in the industry. With their full heavy weight, they strictly check the rising profile of the cast and crew members in a manner that prompts Ogunsuyi (124) to tag them “the czar of the industry.” The place of the marketer in Nollywood is estimated by Ogunleye in these words: “The Nollywood distribution system in 2006 is dominated by a large population of small-scale distributors, known as ‘marketers’, and it is estimated that in about

80% of cases the marketer controls each part of the value chain, including financing, production and distribution” (qtd. in Bud 92).

Alexander Bud, in affirmation of Ogunleye’s view above, gives further exposition on the place of the Nollywood marketer. In his words, in most cases:

... the marketer pays the director an upfront fee and coordinates the production of the film. When the film is completed, he then duplicates several thousand copies on VCD or DVD and brings them to one of the four markets that act as national hubs: Idumota and Alaba Markets in Lagos, Aba Market and Iwaka Road Market in Onitsha. Here they are bought by individuals or smaller-scale marketers, who then take the discs to smaller regional markets for downstream trading. The discs purchased at these markets are often duplicated without authorization, and it is variously estimated that as a result, between 58% and 80% of revenues are earned through unauthorized distribution. (Bud 92)

For the 20% where the marketer is not in control of the marketing/distribution value chain, Ogunleye (quoted in Bud 92) posits that such a marketer may be involved only with finance or distribution or both. Whichever way, the pride of place occupied by the marketer in Nollywood cannot be overemphasised.

The strength of the marketers in Nollywood and their activities could be likened to that of the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC) of the early days Hollywood. The MPPC, which later became known simply as the “Trust” was formed when, on December 18th, 1908, Edison and Biograph led the most powerful American production companies into establishing the consortium of producers (Cook, 1996; Maltby, 2003; Thompson & Bordwell, 2003). The common goals of the producers who formed consortium include:

- (a.) controlling production and distribution of films
- (b.) to eliminate cheap theatres
- (c.) raise admission prices
- (d.) cooperate with censorship bodies
- (e.) prevent film stocks from getting into the hands of producers who were not members of the MPPC

The MPPC tried to control all spheres of the industry. They issued licenses and assessed the accruing royalties. They entered into a sole contract with Eastman-Kodak on issues relating to the trade on raw film stock. Only licensed

manufactures of film equipment were granted patents; film stocks were sold only to licensed producers who in turn adhered to the condition to fix minimum rental prices to minimize competition (Cook 35). Only licensed distributors were sold the films, and with a mandate to lease such films only to licensed exhibitors who also enjoyed the exclusive right to use MPPC projectors. This set up that ensured monopoly on equipment gave MPPC films high technical quality. Though they were accused of being static and unimaginative in their narratives, MPPC's strict monopoly instigated strong competitions which climaxed into the formation of the Independent Film Protective Association in January, 1909. This body was to change its name to National Independent Moving Picture Alliance (NIMPA) later the same year (36). The competition between the MPPC and the NIMPA brought innovation that moved the American film industry, Hollywood, immensely forward.

The Trust – the name given to the Motion Picture Patents Company which began to operate in 1909 and consisted of film industry personnel determined to gain exclusive control over production and distribution channels in the industry can be identified as the first monopoly to exist in the film industry. In opposition to the Trust, the then independent companies formed a cohesive opposition. It is from this opposition that today's majors emerged. And they have remained in control of the global film market even since. (Kerrigan & Ozbilgin 232)

In Nollywood, it is alleged that the marketers seized the industry and have held it so firmly since then. Some stakeholders and keen observers in the industry point accusing fingers at Kenneth Nnebue himself as starting the trend. *Nairaland Forum* puts it this way:

It all started with Kenneth Nnebue, the pioneer producer to venture into the market at Idumota with his dual role as producer and marketer. The marketers at Idumota also believed that they could handle the roles and now took up the title of executive producer, which gave them the opportunity to dictate to the movie makers. Initially, they started by choosing the kind of stories they wanted and cajoling the producers to use certain location. In no space of time, they started dictating the actors and actresses they wanted on films. Before anybody could guess their next

move, some of them even became directors and established their offices among the filmmakers themselves. (par. 9)

In the recent past, there have been efforts by independent producers/directors to break the overbearing influences of the marketers. These independent producers/directors have made efforts to distribute their films through other experimental and avant-garde outlets including exhibitions in cinema halls, and distributing through producer-owned markets. The setting up of an alternative film market at the Censors Market located opposite the National Population Commission along Babs Animasaun Street Surulere, Lagos is an instance of such efforts. According to Ayakoroma, the realization of the proponents of this market:

was that the Idumota marketers had a stranglehold on film production and distribution, which was not healthy for the growth of the industry. It was such that once a film did not feature artists of their choice, the EPs would not market such films. Where they even agree to market such films, they offer pittance that may not even cover the production cost. The proponents of the market thus saw the need to find alternative avenues for prospective producers to distribute their productions. (105)

The Film Cooperative of Nigeria (FCON), under Don Pedro Obaseki as the pioneer head, sought to float this alternative film market where producers can distribute their films without much of the harsh conditions the major marketers imposed. Even at that, this alternative film market never really prospered like the film markets at Idumota and Alaba in Lagos, Iweka Road in Onitsha and Pound Road in Aba- still a sign of the overriding monopoly of the marketers because the alternative market at Surulere “is like a ghost town presently, as opposed to the beehive of activities at Idumota (Lagos), Upper Iweka (Onitsha), and Pound Road (Aba)” where the major marketers are in total control (Ayakoroma 105).

To penetrate the markets and be permitted to join the marketers’ guild, the Nollywood convention is that one does some apprenticeship under a registered marketer for an agreed term and duration (Haynes 12; Bud 95). As successive generations of apprentices become free of their masters, they set themselves up in the business. It is from this pool that new group of marketers are periodically admitted into the marketers’ association.

Advocating a *Glocalized* Career Training in Nollywood Marketing

So far, the need for paradigm shift to career training in film marketing in Nigeria has been brought to the fore in this paper. Yet, it must be added that a glocalized type of film marketing training to serve the needs of Nollywood is being advocated. The wholesome adoption of film marketing training as they relate to other ‘developed’ film cultures for Nollywood will amount to the age long witty analogy of “having run well but outside the track.” This is best understood from the point of view of the fact that film marketing in most of such developed film cultures is purely service marketing. This is cannot adequately apply to Nollywood.

Certain characteristics have been attributed to services. Scholars, though, are not unanimous on this. Yet, intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity, variability, inconsistency, and perishability/inventory are the special characteristics attributed to services. Film in developing film cultures like ours could be said to be a social service product and as such falls under the social needs. Those who see goods as only physical objects will attest to the fact that a film recorded on tape or disc, and sold for home consumption becomes a tangible/physical product. Those who go to cinema halls/movie theatres to watch films, buy such films as services. Yet many previous scholars categorize film as service, its marketing as service marketing, and the industry as a service industry. This paper is of the view that such categorization is faulty as it suites only the major film industries where the commercial life span of a film normally starts with a cinema release before it is released on video; then broadcast on pay-television, before it is broadcast on public television. Finally, the film is released on other ancillary media (i.e. video games, cartoons, etc.) and merchandising. This is the typical marketing chain of the major film industries of the world - the first and second world film industries. This categorization never anticipated the emergence of experimental and avant-garde film industries that rely majorly on the video technology and whose release pattern of films favours straight-to-Tape/CD/DVD that are immediately pushed into the markets. Such film industries cannot be adequately categorized as service industries or their marketing tagged service marketing.

Applying the characteristics of service marketing as enumerated above on Nollywood and other experimental film cultures that majorly favour the straight-to-Tape/CD/DVD experience reveals that marketing in such film cultures cannot quite fit into services marketing. Peter and Donnelly (220) had foreseen this, almost two decades ago, and stated thus: “however, most products are partly tangible and partly intangible... These common, hybrid forms, whatever they are

called... may not have the attributes just given for totally intangible services.” The products of Nollywood (the video films) are marketed as tangibles through the physical film markets or as intangibles through the online/internet markets and other content delivery platforms. Scholars have mostly adopted the name service products for such hybrids of tangible and intangible business ventures. The emphasis of this study is on the consumption of film as tangibles. This is so adopted because of the conviction that the content delivery platforms and online marketing will not take over the traditional mode of film marketing/distribution in Nigeria in the nearest future. State of technological development in the country, literacy level, technological know-how, power outage issues, and poverty are such issues that has continued to bar a larger part of Nollywood audience from patronizing the content delivery and online film marketing/distribution platforms. Again, it should be borne in mind that the Nigerian (and indeed African audience) prefers to consume popular arts as a public which displays the sense of coming together (Okome 2007). The per viewer type of screening, which some of the content delivery and online distribution platforms favour, is a disruption of the group viewing experience and the communicative interaction film consumption induces among viewers Nigerian and African audience members. This favours the preference of the more orthodox spaces of consumption. This is the same reason why people who have access to sports channels still patronize the sports viewing centre. Hence, the emphasis here on the orthodox marketing patterns which favour the marketing of Nollywood films as tangible hybrid products. Hence, the need to train film marketers in Nigeria with an eye on the marketing needs of Nollywood through the introduction of courses on Nollywood marketing.

Conclusion

The glocalized film marketing training as is being advocated for Theatre Arts and Film Studies Departments in Nigeria will in the long run engender a revolution of as it will produce special breed of film marketers who will bridge the entrepreneurial gap in Nigerian film practice. The designers of this curriculum should understand the nature of Nollywood as an experimentally rudderless industry. They should fully understand the indispensable place of the marketers in the industry. Cognisance must be taken of the competitive strategies in the industry to prepare the aspiring trained marketers. A survey of the salient commercial areas and release points of Nollywood reveals that there are in existence the market leader, the market follower, the market challenger and the market-niche strategies in the industry. The strength of each of these groups and

how to deal with or relate to them must be factored into the training of the globalized Nollywood marketer. Finally, it must be stated that such a training has to be a cross disciplinary one involving experts from Marketing and Economics Departments for a start because even though film marketing depends more on intricate knowledge of film practices to thrive, it is still a field relaying the marketing profession for its specialization.

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**FEMINISM AND THE CHANGE MANTRA IN AKINWUNMI ISOLA'S
DRAMATIC TEXT OF MADAM EFUNROYE TINUBU:
THE IYALODE EGBA**

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Abstract

*People from all human endeavours are pessimistic about change and this includes women. Feminism is the scientific study of female gender and their concerns. Men and women alike have become advocates of feminism. It has been observed since creation that some women rose to prominence as a result of their resolution to liberate themselves and their fellow women from male's dominance, which have subjected them to much hardship and injustice in their immediate societies. The worse vilification of women persists more in Africa where women are considered as chattels as well as objects to be seen and not to be heard. This tendency has been challenged by women in their attempts to break the barrier and demonstrate the relevance of women in their communities. One notable woman among them was Madam Efunroye Tinubu, the Iyalode of Egba. She was a merchant who supplied different farm produce to European merchants who used Lagos as exit point for exportation. With their interaction with the indigenous people of Lagos, the British merchants extended their concerns beyond merchandise and began to poke their nose into governance. This was met with stiff opposition from Madam Efunroye Tinubu who boldly attempted restricting them to partnership in trade than intruding into governance of which they were novice. King Dosunmu did not see anything good in what Tinubu was championing. This uncompromising move consequently led to her banishment as they saw her enormous power culminating into a hard nut for them to crack. The leadership role she played though not appreciated, resulted in a leadership institution that served as road map for other women to follow. For this reason, this paper examines the text: **Madam Tinubu: The Iyalode Egba** written by Akinwunmi Isola as historical performance narration that epitomizes the role of women in governance and activism. The text exemplifies the presence of women fold in societal building.*

Introduction

What is constant in human lives is change. Change began when a child is born because change becomes noticeable few minutes after the birth of a child. Despite the predominant changes life cycle goes through, human still exercise fear to abide with change. When a situation remains without witnessing development human tagged such situation as moribund. Looking at this situation confuses a right thinking person why human is afraid of change then. A man born will one day marry and have a change of status from bachelor to married man and vice versa of a woman too. From the fore going change is an evidence of development. Change could be positive and negative, depending on process and reason that warrant such change at the time occurs. System, government, human and some unforeseen forces can mastermind change. The process for change is dependent on the situations that warrant it. Haralambos, Holborn and Heald posit their opinion about development and changes distinguish between the pre-modern and modern societies. The distinction is a very general one and can neglect differences between the societies of each type (5). People have identified some key changes that have taken place in human history. They have been able to discuss the significance of these changes. Some by no means, argue that a new type of society, the postmodern society has recently developed or is developing. Change goes along with event of time and the demand of people. No matter the people's reaction, change is inevitable in human societies that is why elements of the society react positively or negatively to process of change.

Feminism, according to Hornby, is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men (395). The feminists have put up struggle to achieve this aim overtime when discriminations against women seem to become a transitory culture of Africans. Feminist is a person who supports the belief that women should have equal rights and opportunities as enjoyed by men counterpart. Feminism blurred the boarder of either gender in achieving the struggle for equal treatment. From all indications, the struggle to put away bond of stigma on women has been the fight of minority among both men and women. Women themselves have resorted to fate in the struggle to emancipate their gender in the process of change. Many of them have demonstrated self-defeat of the highest order by allowing man fold to continually dominate them in all areas of life, especially when the process of change is not very distinct to them. Culture, religion and society have enough folktales and baseless theories that circulate overtime to allow for man's dominance with impunity.

Cultural beliefs have made equality between men and women impossible as women at certain stage of cultural deeps; women are barred from crossing the

bounds deliberately created so as to uphold the level of men's superiority over women. Religion has its own restriction for women and any attempt to cross the perceived restriction is considered as contempt or religious sacrilege. Culture and religion are the bi-product of the society; they therefore took their cues from what is operative under the cultural and religious barricades. In his capacity as a feminist, Idowu made reference to Charvet when he observes that:

Radical feminism alone attaches no value what-so-ever to the differentiation between the sexes, which apart from its physical form in the sexual organs and other possible physical characteristics; it seems as something not determined biologically, but by and in the interest of men. Furthermore, it alone sees all traditional social orders as founded on the domination of women by men. (129)

In one African parlance that is common among Yoruba tribe, it is believed that women are structurally weak with seven bones that make the skeleton while that of man has been nine in skeletal structure. This notion on many occasions form the basis for what a woman is allowed to engage in, in the society. Radical feminists do not believe in the demarcation created through culture between men and women but consider sex organ as the only existing difference but not a determinant factor for decision making on matters concerning gender. Because of cultural demand, women are barred from taking part in decision making in an African family. It has been found out that many women have good intellectual ability to proffer solution to lingering societal problem, which remain unsolved by men. Because of this, change has allowed women to find their way into governance. Despite this feat, it is surprising that men have not allowed women to exercise their potentiality in many spheres of human lives. Women have been facing this problem from time immemorial and for this reason; this paper looks at the historical account of Madam Tinubu, the Iyalode Egba as she broke even with mantra of change without considering such usual demarcation artificially created by men.

Briefs on the Life of Madam Tinubu

Madam Efunroye Tinubu remained the wealthiest woman in Yorubaland in the 19th century. She had over 360 slaves and trade alignment with people from home and abroad. She was a Queen who helped to install kings. She was not comfortable with European dominance over the people of Madam Efunroye Tinubu. In retrospect, Tinubu was born in Abeokuta sometimes around 1805. Her

mother was Nijede and the father was Olumosa. He first married Degolu who did not live long before she died and thereafter married Tinubu's mother. They lived around the bank of Ogun river, then known as Odo-Ose where their daughter Tinubu was born. They gave her these names in full Yoruba pronunciation as Efunporoye Osuntinubu Lumosa. The parents were Osun worshippers and the name Osuntinubu was coined after the Osun goddess that is *Osun-ti-inu-ibu-wa* (*Osun goddess came out of river deep*) (www.amazon.com).

Osuntinubu's grandmother was an Owu trade mogul in herbs, roots and animal skins. She transferred the art of trading to her granddaughter who later became notable and affluent trade mogul among the natives of her time. She became so influential through her versatility in buying and selling farm produce for end users. She grew up around Ijokodo area of Gbagura and was popularly called Tinubu as a short form of her full name from birth. At the age of about 20, she married an Owu man and gave birth to two children for him. Tinubu was a radiant beautiful Yoruba woman all the men were hunting for where she lived then. The charming existence of Tinubu came crashing during the war of dispersals in Yorubaland. Around 1930, when Sodeke was the crowned king of Egbaland, the environment in existence then made her to mingle with her age contemporaries when thousands of Egba people found refuge under the Olumo rock. She eventually lost her husband in death and because of this for her to be consoled, her wealthy father assisted her with fund to cushion the effect of her husband demise on her trade.

As time went on to be precise in 1833, Adele, a member of royal family from Lagos fought for the Obaship in Lagos and lost. He came to Abeokuta on a goodwill visit in other to thank the Egba people for their goodwill and support during the time he fought for the throne in Lagos. He saw Tinubu during his visit and was attracted to her beauty. He asked for her hand in marriage which she accepted and later brought her to live in Badagry, a suburb of Lagos. Tinubu found Badagry to be good for her trading business; she therefore expanded her trade tentacles with trades in arms and ammunition. Tinubu also engaged in slave trade. In her stay in Badagry, she experienced a tragedy when malaria affected her two children and killed them. Since then, she never bore any child for the king. Akioye said that Prince Adele won the right to the throne and returned to Lagos with his new queen, Efunroye Tinubu. Her marriage to the Prince did not bear any children however; the stage was set for one of the greatest amazons to grace Western Nigeria to flourish. Tinubu extra-ordinary life had begun (1). This submission indicates that Tinubu was not bogged with the death of her children to engage in activism.

Adele died in 1837 and Tinubu married a war veteran named Yesufu Bada. After her marriage to this war veteran, her business began to boom and she started to expand the business. As fortune began to smile on her and the husband, she paid undivided attention to the expansion of her trade involvement while she combined politics along with it. She became noticeable and vocal among the traditional chiefs in political matters as the successor of her husband Oluwole continued to reign. Not very long war broke out between Oba Oluwole and his nephew, Kosoko. This necessitated the enthronement of Akintoye and because Tinubu was known for her political interference, she has to proceed on exile to Badagry with her husband in 1845.

Her business exploits of all rural Yorubalands continue to soar and no merchant from home or expatriates could rob shoulder with her merchandise. She became prominent slave trader when she realised that the Europeans were coming because of slaves to Badagry. She used her fame in business to comb the hinterland for slaves she later sold to European slave traders. This added more to her wealth because she employed shrewdness into the business relationship that existed between her and the White slave traders. She therefore monopolised the trade and prevented the Europeans from having direct contact with hinterland to buy slaves except with her liaison. Tinubu therefore had many slaves; they numbered over 360, who ran her trade for her. The merchandise widened and she added the trade of palm oil, cotton, elephant tusk, alcohol and drinks among many other things she traded. The colonialists saw the economic potential of Lagos and felt that it should not be monopolised by an illiterate woman called Tinubu. That made them to dabble into political affairs of the Oba of Lagos. They plotted problems among the natives dethrone any monarch in Lagos who felt too powerful and arrogant to heed their biddings. The wrangling and political interference of the white colonialists affected the reign of Akintoye and he went on forced self-exile to Badagry. His arrival in Badagry became noticeable to both Tinubu and her husband who showered a first class hospitality on the exiled monarch. The stay of Akintoye became the sole responsibility of Tinubu and her husband.

In 1852, their hospitality towards Akintoye yielded fruit. When Akintoye was restored back to his throne on December 1, 1852, he went back with Madam Tinubu and her husband to Lagos. On her arrival in Lagos, her influence took different dimension when she noticed that the governance and various local activities were in the hands of the Europeans. She acquired so many landed properties with her wealth. *The African Times* of 23rd April 1862 posits that her (Tinubu) empire had become so successful that by 1855 she has few rivals among

traders in Lagos. Many Oba ceded properties to Tinubu for helping them to achieve outspokenness with their subjects against human right syndrome of the colonialists. She began to notice the shenanigan and hypocrisy of the British colonialists, for this, she developed abhorrence for the way the Europeans were treating the natives. She rekindled her involvement in the governance of Lagos. Akinoye buttresses this when he says that she (Tinubu) began to dabble into politics exerting tremendous influence over the affairs of Lagos, especially concerning trade with the British and the West Indians (3). This is also corroborated in *Asiri Magazine* that Tinubu came into political limelight when Akintoye and Kosoko (nephew and uncle) engaged in a battle struggling for the throne of Lagos where Madam Tinubu supplied Akintoye's forces with arms and ammunition and later regain his throne on Thursday, 1 January, 1852 (2).

During the reign of Dosunmu, Kosoko was banished to Epe, a suburb of Lagos after the demise of Akintoye. Tinubu assisted Dosunmu as he did to Akintoye. The reign of Dosunmu was too inclusive that Tinubu found it so difficult to bear-up with the way he was attending to vital Lagos issue. There were many lingering problems during Dosunmu's time to the extent that the then Lagos people knew the differences that existed. The colonialists concocted an intrigue that influenced the Oba to banish Madam Tinubu to Badagry. While he was expelling Tinubu, he (Dosunmu) said, 'I found Lagos to be too small for you, so you are hereby banished to Badagry' (Akinwunmi 23).

Akinwunmi Isola's Presentation of Tinubu

In the text of *Madam Efunroye Tinubu, the Iyalode of Egba*, Akinwunmi Isola traced the life of Tinubu dramatically with her prowess, wealth, and the way she exemplified rulership of the natives by the natives. The text aims at bringing out the womanhood in Tinubu, and to exhibit a woman to champion what men at times are afraid of executing. The British colonialists purposely came to ravage Lagos and cart away her economic proceeds to Britain. Tinubu, a woman among other white cap chiefs was bold enough to challenge the British consul with his mistreatment of indigenes of Lagos. According to Akinwunmi, she said the consul does not have right to poke his long nose into the affairs of Lagos (23). The British consul did an overview of Tinubu's activities and tagged them as excesses that must not be left without account. She was often referred to as 'terror in Lagos'. He (the consul) began to intimidate Tinubu even through indigenes of Lagos that have received western education, just to ignite a fight that will indict her. One notable among such educated Lagos indigenes was Adejumo who

bragged by making several attempts to confront Madam Tinubu. One of such was a time when the white traders arranged a riot in the market place in which the market women were beaten and dispersed from their goods. Attempt was made to get rid of Madam Tinubu after this incident when the consul insinuated that Bada, Tinubu's husband, caused the riot. On hearing this, he (Dosunmu the king) asked him to be locked-up in the prison until the case was heard. Tinubu heard about the Oba's decision lock-up her husband and she violently confronted the king in his palace where she demanded with unspeakable sentences for unconditional release of her husband. The king acceded to her demand and released Bada, her husband unconditionally. Oba Dosunmu now felt that what Tinubu did was insulting to his throne therefore took counsel from consul and few chiefs in solidarity on what to do on the matter at hand. The consul was quick to recommend total banishment to Madam Tinubu and promised a military support from his home country to give Dosunmu a security in cases of reprisal from Tinubu or her allies.

The announcement to banish Madam Tinubu rented the air and it came as a surprise to many members of Dosunmu's cabinet. Everybody became so jittery about the consequence of that action because the woman in question was not a small fry among the people living in Lagos. Dosunmu in his action to pre-empting the after effect of this decision put his loyal chief and consul on red alert for in cases of Madam Tinubu's bid to fight back. The whole city was in turmoil and it looked as if they were all sitting on a keg of gunpowder ready to explode any moment. Dosunmu himself panicked as his body shakes to its marrow in confused state of not knowing the strategy of the culprit. As if the trouble was not enough for him, the market women who were liberated by Madam Tinubu protested their shock on the decision to expel her from Lagos. The aged women cultists were not left out in the action and they also exhibited their grievances in full glare of the people as their solidarity for Tinubu. The silence of Tinubu did not also help matters as everyone was eagerly awaiting her reaction to the king's decision. She finally decided to sheath her sword after consultation by the eldest woman among the cultists who encourage her not to fight in retaliation and she agreed. She therefore conveyed her decision to leave Lagos to the King and that came as a surprise to even the king who was baffled for not able to preempt what her final decision would be. Though at the stage in which Tinubu decided to leave Lagos Dosunmu was planning to reverse the banishment order on her but she has decided and all effort to persuade her not to leave fell on her deaf ear. Finally, Tinubu left for Abeokuta her birthplace and not Badagry as directed by Dosunmu the king. She bade all Lagos people farewells as she was seen off by large chunk

of Lagos people who were persistence in telling her to change her decision to leave Lagos.

The fear of Tinubu's exit from Lagos continued to hunt the then Lagos people because of:

- Fear of unknown
- Fear of perceived exploitation from the colonialists

The two situations mentioned made people to be restless because the entire peasant populace felt that absence of Tinubu would spell doom for them in the hands of the foreigner who were too powerful for the king to curtail their excesses. They also have the premonition that the attempt by British allies to control Lagos economy will be realised and before they know it foreigner who knows nothing about their cultural welfare will take over the governance. This perceived change continues to be the concern every tom, dick and harry in Lagos. The only person who they relied on and was bold enough to checkmate the excesses of the foreigners had left Lagos for Abeokuta. After Tinubu exited Lagos, things began to take a different direction as the British consul clandestinely removes the authority of Lagos from the King. He put up many intrigues to lure the king into believing that without the help of Britain, Lagos commerce will not flourish. In styles, Lagos was under the control of the Britain and the natives were not able to make decision on their own without recourse to Britain. Madam Tinubu would have averted this latter trend had it been the king and few Lagos people were not stampeded into believing that she was their enemy who did not want good things for them.

Inference Lesson

The ancient axiom that women should be seen and not to be heard necessitated the move for affluent Lagos people not believe in Madam Tinubu as a leader that will rescue them form the hands of tyrants. Being a woman also put her at the other side of the people's divide when the man who should have acted were fearful of the foreigners and a bid to challenge them became difficult despite their suffering in silence. It has been forgotten that achievement is not successful as a result of gender. Okoh in her submission argues that creator endowed both sexes with equal potentials and capacities, but these are taken away from women through the process of socialisation (124). Women need power of self-definition instead of retiring the bid to challenge to unnecessary dominance the culture has inflicted on their existence. Many women have fought for the emancipation of women fold in the past and they have left their footprint on the soil of civilisation process. For example, Mrs. Fumilayo Kuti of Abeokuta, Queen Aminat of Zaria,

Queen Kambasa of Bonny, Queen Idia and Emotan of Benin, Omu Okwei of Osomari, Efunsetan Aniwura, the *Iyalode of Ibadan*, Moremi of Ile Ife, Inkpi of Idah, Queen Daura of Daura, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Professor Dora Akunyili, Jessica Matthew, Folorunso Alakija to mention but few among many women of repute. Such women have risked their lives to fight one injustice at a time, to break the fried nut of fathomed inequality men have persistently exhibited for their selfish existence in corridor of power. Akinwunmi placed emphasis on the potential of women in this play to show that when a woman decides to achieve she does not look back; she pursue the change intended to a logical conclusion. The text is exemplifying the potential inherent in women and this should not be underrated like decorative articles in homes instead of allowing them to put to use their endowed ingenuity.

Okoh therefore opines that every mother should create in the mind of every daughter the desire for knowledge, the love for autonomy, the spirit for competition, fearlessness, dauntlessness, and an enterprising spirit (124). Men should not just make women sex machines or children production factory confined to the bedroom and kitchen but make effort to institutionalise them to draw out their potentials. History has shown that when a woman leads an organisation, failure becomes minimal. Sometimes, a woman does what a man is afraid of doing with great results. Mrs Fumilayo Kuti and Aba women played vital roles in stopping the exploitation of women through taxes then. Another good example is the story of war in Ile Ife, when marauders were killing and carting away their livelihood even their beautiful married and unmarried women. Moremi sacrificed herself to avert the marauding trend that men were unable to curtail. Oral tradition and surviving traditional religions support the participation of women in the ancient politics just Madam Tinubu was made the *Iyalode* among other chiefs. Public domain should not be considered as the preserve of men, instead both sexes should be allowed to operate according to potential endowed by creator.

Conclusion

Men have records of domination from the creation onward. The emergence of scientific process of fighting for women equality called feminism has put to check some of these excesses. The issue of civilisation was used at the beginning to camouflage the move to take away the right of women. The involvement of women in the community politicking yielded good fruit. Women were known for their patience and ability to pursue a course to a logical conclusion. However, many of them were frighten by men imposition to cave into cowardice to

demonstrate their potentials. But among them we have those who are ready to fight their course to finish no matter the roughness of the process. Because of this doggedness, some women rose to prominence because of their resolution to liberate themselves and their fellow women from male's dominance in human societies. The worse vilification of women persists more in Africa where women are considered as chattels as well as objects to be seen and not to be heard. We have example of such women who defy men barrier to go for the course they believed in. Madam Tinubu has laid a good foundation for other women to build on. Had it been she was allowed to go ahead with the fight to exemplify the indigenes, Africa may be would have developed beyond this stage. She combined industry with governance and she excelled in all of her effort. Though she was not appreciated but she was dogged and the history of her exploits remain an extant lesson. This text *Madam Efunroye Tinubu: The Iyalode Egba* encourages women to forward match in whatever they believe and pursue it to fruition. Men in position of authority should assist women to attain their potentials. Husbands should treat their wives as compliment and treat female children with equality with mind-set that they will achieve their potentials if given opportunity like male children. Women are not to be confined to living room, bedroom and domestic kitchen.

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PROVIDING DIRECTION FOR THE NIGERIAN CULTURAL RE-ORIENTATION IN IYORWUESE HAGHER'S *LIFETIMES*

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Abstract

*The murky cloud that enveloped the Nigerian nation in the recent times has been laid in the doorstep of various degrees of social vices that manifest in corruption, child labour, illiteracy, early teenage pregnancy, sexploitation, kidnapping and other high level criminalities. These vices undoubtedly are as a result of flagrant disregard for cultural norms and ethos by the Nigerian. Consequent upon this, cultural re-orientation becomes apt in Nigeria. It is in that direction that this paper explores the role of drama as a medium capable of exciting the sought for a change in our cultural orientation using Iyorwuese Hagher's *Lifetimes*. Thus, we employ analytical method as a tool to identifying and excite attitudinal change that the literary piece under examination underscores in the dramaturgy of Hagher's *Lifetimes*. Having perused the work, our findings reveal that drama ranks amongst the veritable instruments that succinctly appeal to minds of people as well as a medium that soothingly elicit beneficial change in the people of any giving society. It has been variously established that drama is a luxuriating balm that engender the soothing magic of believability. The paper concludes that uneconomical exploration of the medium of drama is a leeway to cultural re-orientation. The paper therefore appeals to playwrights to rummage into more of the misdemeanours plaguing our society, document them for enlightenment, education, sustenance and cultural re-orientation of our society.*

Introduction

Culture is the shelter under which man dwells for the purpose of carving an existence that makes any society attain egalitarianism. Unfortunately, many factors have eroded the expectation that will make the society reach the pinnacle of social equality. Conscious efforts at understanding why, points in the direction of advancement in technology, which made experts in the information platform,

describe the world as ‘global village’ and a period of ‘Jet Age’. These phenomena are the reasons for the changes that the Nigerian society has been witnessing in this twenty-first century. Thus, the revolution of sophisticated technological advancement soars as one of the reasons for the changes witnessed in our society. It also became clear that these changes are the reason behind the orchestrated man’s ubiquitous and dynamic reactions to variations around him as well as the adoption of various societal terminologies in the garb of modernisation, globalization, etcetera. In reaction to these, the slogan need for change become so loud and sought for by all and sundry. In our reaction to the momentary slogan; ‘change’, this paper attempt to excite a direction for a cultural change in this work that we titled: Providing direction for Nigerian cultural re-orientation. The essence of this work is predicated on the fact that the numerous social switches that pervade our entity appears to be the reason for the relegation of the concept of ethicist to the background and while modernity is orchestrated as opposed to orthodoxy.

Just as technology is pined as the catalyst of the transformational phenomena enumerated above, drama also actively reacted to the flurry of changes in the theatre dramaturgy that manifests in form, content, structure and genre, orchestrated in the nomenclature of; Theatre for Development (TFD), Community Theatre (CT), Community Theatre for Development (CTFD), Theatre for Integrated Development (TFID), Theatre of the Oppressed, Total Theatre and many other theatre productions that use various isms. All these phenomena changes point to the change mantras that are witnessed in the artistic parlance in the Nigerian theatre. No doubt, all of the theatrical dramaturgies that have been employed were for the purpose of exciting positive direction in the various areas where they were used. However, we note that the various changes, either at the point of execution or implementation have caused dislocation to Nigerian cultural norms, which in some areas are positive and in some areas negative. The negative effects of the cultural changes spur us into embarking on this research, having noted that the need for drastic cultural re-evaluation, re-orientation and re-appraisal, especially at the dawn of the quest for change in Nigeria is of essence. It is our hope that the submissions in this paper will be beneficiary as well as an approach that will rescue us from the socio-cultural doldrums that our society is plunged into.

Nigeria at 57, no doubt, has gone through series of ups and downs, particularly as a result of various democratic changes it has witnessed in the last few decades. As these changes manifest, Nigeria continues to pay host series of political and policy summersaults. This was what stirs scholars like (Osofisan 41)

who states that: “We prove at once that the problem of development and culture not only exists but has even grown into a crisis”. This confirms our position that in so many ways, our culture has been compromised. There is no doubting the fact that the Government that everyone looks up to seems to have lost its focus hence, most government policies that the citizen hoped on are cosmetics and mere lip service and empty boast.

This is why the theatre practitioners and scholars, being fully aware of these lacuna decide to explore the method of taken the campaign for cultural revival to the grass-root, through theatrical enactments as Iyorwuese Hagher has done in the play under examination. This singular effort has warmed drama into the heart of the people at the grass-root haven distinguished itself as a genre of literature that employed non-riotous but wailing medium, which has excited critical, objective, and result oriented approach, using the performative idiom of a re-birth of our culture from its state of comatose. Aristotle confirms this feat when he alludes to drama thus: “drama as an imitative and or performative art is superior to all other arts forms. Besides, it is the most effective and most sociological of all literary arts” (qtd. in Dasyuva 32). It is in the light of this that we, in this paper, underscore the potency of drama as a medium that has provided direction in the Nigerian cultural re-orientation as exemplified in the dramaturgy of Iyorwuese Hagher’s *Lifetimes*.

Conceptual Clarification of Terms and Concepts

In this paper, some terms and concepts featured, which we felt should be explained as they are used in the context of this work to put paid to any seeming ambiguity. They include: culture, drama and re-orientation.

Culture as a term has been variously defined. Needless go into all those definitions but for our use in this work, we find Edo’s definition of culture as apt. He describes it as:

The total way of life of a people...pattern of learned behaviour whose component elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society from one generation to the other. It is made up of the customs, tradition and beliefs, behaviour, dress language, works of art and craft, way of living, net-work of relationship, attitude to life, as well as the technology and institution of the people in the society. (1)

This definition is all encompassing and detailed in describing what culture stands for. Drama on the other hand as described by Brockett, is;

a play (drama) is a representation of man in action. But “action” does not mean mere physical movement; it involves as well the motivations (both mental and psychological) that lie behind visible behaviour. “Man in action” therefore includes the whole range of feelings, thoughts, and deeds that define what sort of creature man is – what he does and why he does it. (qtd. in Johnson 48)

We adopt the above definition for this paper because it appropriately describes Drama in its performative (action) characterised as that medium that has the power of mirroring the society, which is the reason why it is referred to as slice of life of man’s follies and foibles and evocation of emotion that affects the sensibilities of the audiences. On the other hand, Aristotle describes it as: “purgation of emotion” through fear and pity.

Dramaturgy as defined in the online *Britannica.com* is: “the art technique of composition or theatrical representation.” We adopt this definition because it manifests in Hagher’s dramatic piece under examination.

Re-orientation is a rebirth, a process of overhaul, a direction in which something is re-directed or re-focused for a better result. We also adopt it as another approach to change. Since the thrushes of this paper explore the mantra, change, which has been adopted as the slogan for an improved Nigerian society.

Literature Review

Theatre, Culture and the Artists in the Society

Society as described in *Merriam-Webster on line Dictionary* is: “a part of a community that is a unit distinguishable by particular aims or standards of living or conduct: a social circle or a group of social circles having a clearly marked identity.”

On the other hand, culture, which is dynamic, has been defined multifariously by scholars. For instance, Oyewo describes culture as:

Ubiquitous, multidimensional, complex and all pervasive. Culture is the deposit of knowledge, experience, belief, value, attitudes, meanings hierarchies, religious, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (qtd. in Oshuntokun and Olukoju 8-69)

If culture is complex as Oshuntokun and Olakoju posit, then it is bound to be explored from multifarious dimensions and that is why Osofisan's position is apt that:

In fact, it is perhaps more apt to talk of the cultures of a society, rather than of one culture. Every class in society defines itself by its culture, and therefore to talk of 'cultural development' is simply to say that some of the existing cultures in it should die, while others are promoted and revitalized. (qtd. in Unoh 43)

Therefore, if the society according to *Merriam-Webster* is a group of social circles having a clearly marked identity then, the society is the landlord of culture. The entwined nature of the two concepts makes Osofisan to say that society defines itself by its culture. Although Chatman describes Hagher as one who believes that "the traditional way must change" rebuking that opposition to maintaining status quo and insisting that "some traditional way must change at times with new ways", he however highlights the traditional ethos which indicates "that is how history is created" (251).

However, we seem not to totally agree with the position that when cultural development manifests the existing ones should die. Much as change is an evidence of development, we think it should not be digging a new hole to fill an old one; rather, there should be complimentary efforts in development, in that when a new culture evolved, the existing ones should be kept for posterity and robust development. Obafemi underscores this when he succinctly states that "Culture offers meaning, purpose and value to the socio-economic, political and aesthetic ethos of society" (64). This shows that irrespective of change that one may want to infuse into culture, the existing one must not be eroded. In the same vein, Obafemi draws from the position of one Professor Obichere who affirms the "inseparability of culture and civilization" confirms our position that in pursuing meaningful change, our cultural re-orientation should be an effort gear towards exciting meaningful cultural improvements and not erosion of an existing culture (64).

We should not lose sight of the fact that in a development prone society, chaos is imminent. Where such a situation occurs, there should be a mediator, which we found in Drama. Drama, according to Bullon, is "an exciting event or sets of events" (473). Sets of events here are series of socio-cultural and political events, some positive and some negative. When it is negative and it has snowballed into chaos, then there is the need for a direction to be provided to re-

orientate a disoriented society. This drama unequivocally provides. As Chatman submits, a leaderless society suffers “lack of leadership in some areas” (25). The potency of drama as a tool for direction is what is chronicled in Hagher’s *Lifetimes*. The play enumerates some of the misdemeanours that the society has been contending with as he underscores drama as the tool that can ameliorating the situation and provides direction.

It is in that premise that this paper, in keeping track with the reality of life considers the play; *Lifetimes* as a medium that fits as a model of re-orientating the disorientated Nigerian culture for a better society. He underpinned this by enumerating the barrage of cultural derailments that have bedevilled our society while he presents the play as the dramatic piece that is fit to provide the much awaited direction.

Expounding on the Symbiotic Relationship between Drama and Culture

The society is, and has remained the umbrella that houses all paraphernalia of the institution amongst which is; culture, ethics and ethos. Overtly, one can say that the society is the parent that sublets those elements to other agents with a view to currying symbiotic rapport for the benefit of the society. Drama on the other hand, because it mirrors the society, it ranks as one those agencies that have drawn from the society by providing nourishment for a healthy society. In underscoring the symbiotic relationship, Bamidele connects drama, society and culture and submits that: “Play (drama) attempt to re-create the social world of man’s relation with his family, with politics, with the state in its economic or religious constructs” (4).

Given the above, one would agree that drama can, and has functioned as a tool for re-orientating the cultural ethos of the society. Aside from the fact that drama entertains, it has proved to be a tool that has stir up attitudinal changes in many societies. The credence to this assertion is given by Mao who describes drama as: “a reflection of that society which includes that society’s economic structure, its class formation, its conflicts, and contradictions, its class power political and cultural struggles, its struggles, its structures of values” (25). Wickham also underscores the potency of drama thus:

Drama, I submit, far from being ‘no subject’ is in fact a subject with remarkable integrating power which can relate the ancient world to the present day, which can bring critical appraisal into direct contact with creative experiment, which can provide the arts man with a lively introduction to scientific thinking and the scientist with as

lively a reflection of his own human condition. (qtd. in Umukoro 6)

It is in further affirming this that we explore Hagher's *Lifetimes* as a literary work that exposes the vices, foibles and follies of the society and recommends a change for a better society. We also relish on Illah's illumination on the ideological effrontery that run through Hagher's literary works. He made a particular reference to his play, *Lifetimes*, on which he pungently submits that it is one literary work which provides "the parameter of the drama in the next millennium since it advocates democratic pluralism...development entertainment...social vision, located in actual cultural process with an alternative potential to counter bourgeois globalism" (Illah 11). It is still this entwined relationship between drama and the society that Idegu accentuates in his submission on the relevance of the theatre, theatre artistes and the society. More emphatically, he states that:

The theatre artist does not operate in isolation. He is a member of the society and his relationship with the society via-a-vis (sic) his work, is of significance. The creative process in theatre includes several links, one of which is reality or the presentation of real life experience to the reader, spectator or listener. (17)

We further underpin the symbiotic relationship between drama and society, following Akinwale's assertion that: "so long as there are human societies with their attendant human problems, drama will always reflect them in its effort to guide human thought, mould human life and expose social ills" (3). Let us see how *Lifetimes* reflects these.

Synopsis of *Lifetimes*

The play revolves around Pa Jimoh, a traditional healer and his two sons; Mufu and Jimoh. Jimoh is based abroad, while Mufu is a school drop-out turned tanker driver with twenty-one children from nineteen different women. Mufu is in the habit of having a woman friend at every of his tanker bus-stop, which was the reason for the harem of women and the number of children in his kitty. Consequently, Mama Quadri and Hafusatu are saddled with the responsibility of taking care of Mufu's battalion. They also keep Pa Jimoh's company. Pa Jimoh, a traditional healer fell in love with one of his patient, Laide who is HIV/AIDS positive as a result of genital mutilation. Atanda, Mufu's friend in a circle of

immorality got Mama Quadri and her thirteen-year-old daughter Hafusatu pregnant. However, the play illuminates on the failure of leaders as the cause of the high level of corruption, religious intolerance and other social vices that our society has to contend with. These are epitomised in Mufu's attitude, the Alabe error, religious bigotry and the civilian Governors maladministration, craftily weaved in the play-within-a-play *LifeTimes* all to emphasise the need for change that our society needs.

Lifetimes: A reflection of multifarious moral ills in our society

The choice of *Lifetimes* to interrogate this work in spite of the age of the work is borne out of the fact that it presents issues that bothers on the ills plaguing the Nigerian society. Again, the content of the play is based on incidences drawn from a community theatre research experience, which is relevant to the present day happenings. Hagher underscores this in his submission below:

This play is derived from the Theatre for Development (TFD) Workshop held at Iseyin, Oyo State, Nigeria, during the period 29th November to 4th December 1988...We sought to establish dialogue with people of Iseyin on some harmful traditional practices. These were: female genital mutilation, scarification, child labour, and teenage sexuality. (1)

He further explains this reality that “We became drawn unto the vortex of the crisis of family and leadership values, pitted against the needs of urbanization, change and challenges posed by the intrusion in the rural community of a deadly, unfathomable and incurable disease – HIV/AIDS. The resultant crisis is the premise of this play” (*LT* 1).

We shall not discuss all the societal ills that Hagher enumerated in this piece for the fact that some of them have been discussed at many fora, but we shall identify just a few ones that truly emphasise how we can excite true change in our society. They are enumerated and discussed below.

Leadership laxity as the bane of moral uprightness

In Hagher's dramaturgy in the play under examination, Mufu is presented as a perfect example of the carefree leaders that sit on the affairs of our nation and messed it up as a result of their selfish tendencies and self-centeredness. The metaphor of Mufu, a tanker driver, presents the prototype of the type of the leaders in Nigeria who are bestowed with responsibilities of distributing equitably

the state wealth and resources of the nation to those that they govern but like Mufu, they take advantage of the resources and use it to better their lots. This act of self-centeredness eighty years old Pa Jimoh, his father attests to in the dialogue below:

Pa Jimoh- ...He is now a tanker driver. Instead of sending money to maintain me at home, he sends his illegitimate children every season. (*LT 4*)

The culture of a child ploughing back to his parents who nurtured him is eroded here. In the submission of old Pa Jimoh, it is obvious that Mufu has neglected his parents that trained him, which is the reason behind the cry. When a cultural norm is broken, the resultant effect is the affective cry that we see here. Ostensibly, the Old Pa Jimoh in this play represents the Nigerian masses that are constantly denied their share of the state wealth as epitomised in Mufu's attitude here. Instead of showing remorse, they silence the governed with draconian policies that further impoverishes them. Failure of our political leaders to discharge effectively their responsibilities is nothing but a cultural dislocation, which is a sharp contrast to how Oyewo describes one who is culturally responsible as: "deposit of knowledge, experience, belief, value, attitudes, meanings... and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving" (qtd. in (Oshuntokun and Olukoju 8-69). When a leader fails to discharge the responsibility to those that looks up to him, then cultural disorientation is imminent.

Lack of Education as the bane of cultural re-orientation

One major problem that has made our society to wallop in the pool of ignorance and grope in the forest obviously is half or lack of education. This Hagher unveiled in the characters of Jimoh and Mufu, using education to as a scale in measuring the output of his two male Children. Jimoh, the educated one; who trained as a doctor and the one that drops out of school; Mufu, a tanker driver indicates that the lack of proper education of the latter is the bane of his untoward attitude. Consequently, the challenge to educate our children so that they can be a better person tomorrow is the admonition that Pa Jimoh directs at the wife of his son; Mufu, who rather than send their six years old son to school decides to send her on apprentice work. Pa Jimoh underscores the importance of education as a weapon for exciting good direction in the dialogue that ensures between Pa Jimoh and Mama Quadri below:

Pa Jimoh- Which work?

Mama Quadri- Apprentice work
Pa Jimoh- Why? He is too young –only six years –send the boy to school.

Sending the children to school will indeed curb the menace of child labour and teenage sexuality as these kids will be engaged in educational activities rather than being turned toddler apprentices and exposed to all forms of vices. The attention that we pay to our children education is a pointer to the type of leadership quality that we want to implant in them. Just like a say in the Bible in Proverbs 22:6 that: “Train a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it.” More often than not, we as leaders don’t show the way to our children. When we fail, what happens to Pa Jimoh, which we recap below, is usually the result:

Pa Jimoh- These children are terrible; there is rubbish everywhere. My sons have no pity on me... I sent Mufu and Jimoh to school, Mufu dropped out. He is now a tanker driver. Instead of sending money to maintain me at home, he sends his illegitimate children every season...Quadri, like his father, has dropped out, he smokes Marijuana like chimney, Azeez is training as a garage tout – and Kunle too is apprentice thief. (*LT 3-4*)

A society that is striving for development, must be up and doing on the issue of their child’s education.

Corruption: the social diseases, and the bane for meaningful development

The metaphor of AIDS and its devastating effects on human health in the play under analysis reminds us of the long eroded cultural ethos, which made the most revered African culture to be relegated to the rear. There is no doubting the fact that just as deceases are inimical to the wellbeing of every human so also is the fact that misdemeanours like corruption is a bane for meaningful development. In this direction, allusions to ‘incurable diseases’ epitomised in ‘teenage sexuality’, ‘scarification’, ‘genital mutilation’, ‘corruption’, ‘religious intolerance’ and the likes in the play illustrate are what we refer to as sacrificing culture on the altar of carelessness.

No doubt, corruption and religious intolerance have been the banes of the backwardness that Nigeria nation has had to contend with over the years. This we witnessed in the recycling of Nigerian political leaders who are out to amass

wealth at the expense of the electorate. Their corruptible tendencies are the viruses that have driven Nigeria into the state of economic comatose that is currently witnessing. In underscoring the benefits in the dramaturgical approach that Hagher employed in the literary work under examination has been described as “using the arts to re-interpret a people’s mode of existence and experience” (Mude 228). One can only conclude that there is nothing as good as being morally upright. This, Hagher, artistically weaved in the play text under examination and which Mude attests to.

Cultural re-orientation as Panacea for Social Change and Development

The comradeship that makes African culture unique from time immemorial is its practice of communalism. Africans irrespective of where they come from and the nature of the person within their community, see themselves as culturally responsible to the wellbeing of one another. However, as modernity finds its way into the cultural system of the African’s way of life, civilization, which is the immediate product of modernity, erodes the conception of oneness. Pa Jimoh, the metaphor of cultural re-orientation in the play under examination calls our attention to the importance of returning back to the era of being our brother’s keeper. This he succinctly underscores in a position he advanced that it is not all challenges that we have that are caused by the carrier but some are as a result of the cruelty of the society. He explores the plight of Laide who contracted AIDS through genital mutilation and circumcision and sees her plight as a victim of cultural stagnation. After Laide contracted AIDS, her parents and the society that made her to go through the ordeal turned their backs against her as she laments here:

Laide- I got AIDS from circumcision...Imagine me, the daughter of the Local Government Chairman, a final year sociology student at the University...my mates mock at me and speak about me in whispers, my mother says I am a bad example. All hate me... (LT 13-14)

It was in this situation that Pa Jimoh demonstrates his brother’s keeper’s ingenuity by agreeing to take responsibility for the health care of Laide and also takes her as a wife. In his fondness of her he calls her:

Pa Jimoh- My beautiful wife...this is your home. Remember your parents brought you back from the University dying from this disease called

AIDS... AIDS has no cure so they brought you to me and left you to die here with me.

Assuring her that she will not die and even turns his ears to all kinds of name calling by demonstrating his genuine love as he made this categorically in his dialogue below:

Pa Jimoh- Don't let that worry you Ashawo or no Ashawo, I love you. If nobody loves you, I love you my pretty wife. How else should a person demonstrate being his brother's keeper, if not the way Pa Jimoh has done? His disposition is what we describe as a positive direction in the re-orientation of Nigeria for a better society (Mude 228).

Conclusion

So far in this paper, we have seen how drama, in the play of Iyorwuese Hagher's *Lifetimes* has been used as a weapon for providing cultural direction, having pointed to the various areas of decadences that have debased our society. When critically appraised, the subtle dramaturgical approach of Hagher in using drama as a tool for preaching change, gives hope. If government's efforts will encourage this area of scholarship, by promoting drama education or drama in education as well as promote stage and television drama, then Nigeria is back on the track of exploring the right medium for providing direction towards a better society.

No doubt, drama has been notably a medium of entertainment. Its other garbs as an enlightenment and edutainment tool will compliment various legislative efforts of the government. One recalls the Nigerian Convention on the right of the child (2001) and the Child Right Law (2003) as well as various anti-graft and anti-corruption efforts, which were geared toward curbing various infringements of child and citizens' right and see them as a welcome development in attainment of a better society.

Giving the fact that government and individuals have benefited from the direction that drama has provided in e-orientating our society, Government should in all strata of our education, introduce drama curriculum and encourage formation of drama clubs. This will help educate and create awareness at an early stage of man and cause attitudinal change that has affected our cultural practices. After all, what is seen with the eyes sinks deeper into the mind and last longer than what is merely heard with the ears.

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**NIGERIAN PLAYWRIGHTS IN SEARCH OF CHANGE: JULIE OKOH,
ALEX ASIGBO, TRACIE UTOH-EZEAJUGH AND EMMANUEL
EMASEALU EXAMINED**

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Abstract

The concept of change has been described as a constant phenomenon that is inevitable in any given society. Although change can be from negative to positive dimension or positive to negative dimension depending on the management approach and the intension of the change agent(s). The clamour for change from atavistic cultural practices to a friendlier and development driven culture; dictatorial leadership to a democratic/ people oriented leadership; corrupt and tribal/ethnic attitude of citizens to accountability and transparent citizens' orientation; marginalization to collective bargaining and resource control amongst others have preoccupied the pages of different plays of Nigerian playwrights. From the plays of established playwrights such as Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima to even the plays of amateur voices yet to be exposed by critics, a lot on positive change for a well-developed and better Nigerian appears not to have yielded the desired target due to several factors. Some of these factors include; poor reading attitude of Nigerian citizens and leaders who are expected to implement the concepts in these plays, poor perception of the citizens on the potentials of theatre and drama and inability of some of these plays to meet the audience through performance. This study applies the content analysis method to examine the change mantra in selected plays of Julie Okoh, Alex Asigbo, Tracie Utoh-Ezeajugh and Emmanuel Emasealu.

Introduction

The philosophical statement(s) embellished in the creative work of an artiste cannot be too far from the realities of his immediate environment. This informs why playwrights in Africa have continued to commit their ink to restructuring their society with the aim of achieving the desired positive change. Nnolim describes the creative writer as one “who wears more than one garb; he undertakes to be of definite use to his society and humanity” (1). Describing the source of ideas of the artist in general and the playwright in particular, Effiong Johnson writes “A playwright does not write in isolation. He writes to express the

pricking of the buffeting circumstances in which he has found himself cobwebbed and trapped” (27).

Change which deals with transition from one level to another is described as a constant phenomenon that is inevitable. Change occurs in all strata of human endeavour be it biological, economic, social, political or religious. However, change does not have a permanent direction as its direction most times is usually conditioned by the management principles and the administrative prowess of the management agent. According to Tim Creasey:

Change management is the process, tools and techniques to manage the people-side of change to achieve the required business outcome. Change management incorporates the organizational tools that can be utilized to help individuals make successful personal transitions resulting in the adoption and realization of change. (2)

He further comments that, Change Management (CM) refers to any approach to transitioning individuals, teams and organisations using methods intended to re-direct the use of resources, business processes, budget allocations, or other modes of operation that significantly reshape a company or organization. The motivational force for Nigerian playwrights from James Ene Henshaw, Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Wale Ogunyemi, Femi Osofisan, Bode Showande, Sony Oti to the more recent Henry Bell-Gam, Barclays Ayakoroma, Irene Salami, Ben Binebai and Edward Imo has been to attain the needed change that will bring about development in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The efforts of these creative artistes are a concerted search for change in the right direction. This work is aimed at analyzing the change advocacy in selected plays of Julie Okoh, Alex Asigbo, Tracie Utoh-Ejeazugh and Emmanuel Emasealu. These playwrights are carefully selected for this study due to their thematic preoccupations that fit into the thrust of the study. Apart from the thematic contents of their plays, their gender disparity and generational similarities in the playwriting scene make them relevant for the study. For example, Alex Asigbo and Emmanuel Emasealu are male playwrights whose creative works reechoes the change mantra whereas Julie Okoh and Tracie Utoh-Ezeazugh are female established playwrights whose works have not stopped calling for the needed change on the fate of women.

Change Advocacy in Selected Plays of Okoh, Asigbo, Utoh- Ezeazugh and Emasealu

The change phenomenon of the aforementioned playwrights is succinct and of direct bearing to the realities of the Nigerian state. It is important to state that Julie, Okoh, Alex Asigbo, Tracie Ezeajugh and Emmanuel Emasealu are products of the third generation of Nigerian dramatists, which Adeoye is of the view that Ahmed Yerima is the leading figure. For the avoidance of doubt, the third generation of Nigerian dramatists according to Julius-Adeoye:

Is defined not by nationalism or mythopoeic ethos. They are not particularly interested in revolutionary aesthetic or Marxist cantos but in individual survival strategies. However, hardly any of the plays by the third generation's playwrights deviate from what Ameh D. Akoh refers to as "the burning issues confronting postcolonial transitory state of Africa or Nigeria. (254)

Among the female playwrights of the third generation, Julie Okoh stands tall in her search for a redefinition of the woman in the society. The change advocacy in her plays is the amelioration of women from the shackles of cultural and chauvinist extremities. She has consistently and repeatedly questioned the position of women, which for her is defined by men. From *Mask*, the issue of infidelity is portrayed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Okosun. Okoh in this play calls for a change in the attitude of husbands against their wives. She appeals for a replacement of infidelity with faithfulness, love, care and total commitment to the marital union. In her opinion, when a man is unfaithful to the wife with a flirtatious lifestyle, the end product may be a total collapse of the family which is very important to the development of every nation. In an attempt to secure her home, Mrs. Okosun went diabolic by acquiring a charm, which leads to the collapse of her husband. This act can be avoided if men learn to be faithful to their women and endeavour to play their parts as loving and caring husbands.

Another play that readily comes to mind is *Closed Doors* where Okoh calls for a change of perception to the concept of rape, early pregnancy and child abuse in the society. Through a baby factory called "Goodwill Nursing Home", Okoh paints a picture concerning the ordeal of rejected females who in an attempt to find solace exchange their babies for daily breads. In *Closed Doors*, the doors of the society controlled by men are permanently closed against Amina, an 18-year girl who suffers abuse in the hands of an Imam and herdsmen, Eki suffers sexual abuse in the hands of her boss who immediately applies the rule and she was relieved of her job. Same with Bola and Tracie.

The same issue of change is dominant in *Mannequins* and *In the Fullness of Time* where Adudu is repeatedly presented to be as an epitome of the perception of men that must be changed concerning women. Adudu's perception of women like most Nigerian men is captured thus:

Rises slowly as if in pain). I know women very well. They are wonderful creatures. Give them everything they are never satisfied. In addition, they want to possess you completely. Yet, they want their own freedom. If you refuse to listen to them, they become jealous, petulant, and crabby. You cannot even step out an inch before they begin to protest. Then, they start to whine, whither and shrink. Why can't women understand that by nature man is superior to woman? What a man can do, a woman can never do it. And as such they can never have equal rights. It is not my fault that fate blocks their ear to common reason. *(Gazes into the distance)* Ah! How stupid women are! *(Going back to his previous seat)* Very, very stupid... (34)

Okoh's call for change in all her plays is very clear that women are suppressed, victimized and denied of their rights due to their gender and must apply all legal means to untangle themselves from these oppression tendencies. In her plays such as *Our Wife Forever*, *Who Can Fight the gods*, *Edewede*, *Trials*, *Closed Doors*, etc. she has consistently presented a refined and self-assertive woman that questions the status quo of the African culture. Edewede in *Edewede* is one of such female characters Okoh uses to call for a change in the practice of circumcision, one of the oppression weapons of culture against women. In her expression, Edewede charges the women to resist circumcision because it is an indirect attempt to interiorize them due to their ignorance. She recalls thus: "Our mothers practiced circumcision because they knew nothing about anything. Except the laws and taboos imposed on them so that from childhood, they learn to be shy, silent and docile until they see themselves as objects for men's pleasure" (37).

Apart from the issues of tradition and culture, Okoh also calls for a change in the stereotyping of women as kitchen materials. Some Nigerian men including the current president of Nigeria Muhammadu Burhari see women as belonging to the kitchen and not in the public spheres. This is clear in Okoh's *Trials* where Sotonye and Ibisio battle for supremacy in their matrimonial home. For Sotonye,

the wife's place is in the kitchen to prepare his food and accept orders from him as the man of the home. However, Ibiso the redefined character that functions as Okoh's voice in the play feels otherwise. In her expression of persuasion to her husband and the society at large she argues:

Didn't our grand-mothers and great grand-mothers do so?
They went to farms and to markets far away from their
homes only to come back, sometimes, very late at night.
Some of them even went fishing in the high sea only to
return after many days of absence. Our history book tells us
about Queen Kambassa of Bonny. She was a great warrior
and she had a formidable army which she led personally
into war against her opponent... How did she acquire all
that wealth? Is it by babysitting her husband and children at
home? (18)

Apart from recalling the place of women beyond the kitchen, Ibiso advises her husband in particular and other men in general that the barrier that kept women outside the shores of public functions, economic and political participation is over and that a new dawn is on. In her lines she expresses thus:

My dear, open your eyes and look around you. The barrier
between the place for men and for women is crumbling
down. More and more women not work outside their
homes. They earn good salary equal to that of men... You
would have heard about Dora Akunyili... (24)

Similarly, Asigbo in *War of the Tin Gods*, *The Reign of Pascal Amusu*, *Once upon a School* and other plays x-rayed the issues of purposeful leadership and followership as panaceas for the needed development of his immediate environment, Nigeria. In *The Reign of Pascal Amusu*, Amusu the eponymous character is painted as a dictator that has no equal in the plunging of the Nigerian economy into poverty. He is so drunk in power that he does not wish to allow others come into it. Like many past Nigerian military leaders who have through one coup or the other ruled this country Amusu feels it is his birth right to remain in power directly or indirectly. In his boastful speech, power-drunk Amusu declares: "You see what I mean? We own this country. In fact, Odibo, for serving me diligently these past years I am going to make you governor of your state whether your people like it or not" (26).

Asigbo is bothered that the ideology that the youths are the leaders of tomorrow is impossible if leaders begins to recycle among the old hands. Without meaning to cast aspersion on any past leader, Nigeria from independence till date has had only Goodluck Ebele Jonathan who came outside the recycled landlords of Nigeria presidency. From the Olusegun Obasanjo to the Umaru Musa Yara'Adua and currently Muhammadu Buhari, our leaders are very familiar and rotational among the so-called owners. Amusu's following expressions attest that Asigbo is very direct and bold in his satiric comments on the leadership recycling in the country. According to Amusu in the play: "But seriously things have decayed in this country. All the infrastructure I left during my last reign have all degenerated... and to make matters worse, all these criminal rulers that came after me have looted the treasury of the nation to stupor" (13).

In *Once upon a School* Alex appears to be too direct and somehow historical as the characters in the play, the setting, language and dramatic actions are verifiable incidents in his undergraduate days. Prof. who is the Head of Department is tyrannical and vindictive against his colleagues over promotion and insists that his students must direct his plays as part of their practical exams. This is typical of some theatre/performing arts departments where some lecturers force students to direct their poorly written plays. In some cases, they fail students who dare disobey their orders. Asigbo's self-examination of his profession and field of service presents him as a true playwright that speaks to issues irrespective of his concern. In his plays, he calls for a revolution that will correct these leadership failures in all sectors of the Nigerian society

For Tracie Chima Utoh-Ezeajugh, her consistency has positioned her to be an extraordinary writer that is unbiased and committed to attitudinal change by women in their quest for equality in the name of feminism. Her critical works from her first experiment *Who Owns this Coffin? And Other Plays* She has maintained a stand that is painful and unacceptable to some braggart as she maintains that ' whoever goes to equity must go with clean hands. For her women who must correct men and call for equality in the political and social spheres must not participate in the crime some unscrupulous men are into.

Asigbo's description of Utoh-Ezeajugh's ideological commitment as a new breed of feminism is very revealing on her change mantra thus: "Tracie Chima Utoh, an up-coming woman writer who, it appears, is not content to follow the crowd in declaring either for or against feminism" (3). Similarly, in his preface to *Who Owns this Coffin? and Other Plays*, Femi Osofisan is bold to unveil her when he observes that:

Chima is a playwright who will not shy away from the reality, however painful and who is not afraid to challenge conventional wisdom ...Against a background of feminist activities, now all too familiar, in which female writers indict and vilify men for their prejudices against women, Chima surprisingly chooses to be different. Her attack is directed in *Who Owns this Coffin?* Not against men, the usual targets, but, in fact, against women who have set out to make a career out of their feminism. Chima bitterly reveals and denounces the opportunism of these mercenary women in our society. She shows how, through hypocrisy and cant, they usurp and divert the struggle, muffle the genuine voices of protest, and even kill off the true heroes. Thus, hers is a bold and welcome voice of caution at a time when the universal struggle for women's rights threatens into just another gambit for self-enrichment. (9-10)

One is totally in agreement with the above refined scholars and extends further that in the African soil of playwriting, Tracie is rare and will remain influential to upcoming playwrights who wish to distinguish themselves from the crowd. Interestingly, *Who Owns this Coffin* and *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again* are models to her critiques on opportunist and misguided so-called feminist crusaders on the African soil. While in *Who Owns this Coffin?* She comparatively presents two sets of women. The genuine ones with the ideal motive to redeem women from poverty and place them on a comparative advantage with their male counterparts and another set who weep up sentiments to achieve their selfish desires through the mantra of women liberation.

The genuine group in this play is objectively led by Chief Sijuade, a widow, businesswoman and the vice president of National Council for Women Societies, Mrs. Jaja (Shop Owner/Secretary of Dynamic Dance Group) and Mrs. Tansi (Nurse and Member of the Dynamic Dance Group). This group as crafted in the play, are committed to the plight of the rural women who are in dire need of empowerment through education and entrepreneurship. The other group comprises of Madam Ekwutosi (single parent/ former member of federal constitutional conference/president of the dynamic dance group), Mrs Amtu (Local Government Chairperson/member of the Dynamic Group) and Hajia Binta (Principal/ Treasurer of the Dynamic Dance Group) who use their positions to loot and weep up sentiments in the name of feminism.

This division of purpose is what we see in the play as clearly expressed by the Narrator in the Prologue thus:

It therefore becomes disheartening to observe cracks on the walls of the women's movement, long before the hurdles have been crossed and set goals accomplished. Periodic infighting and general dispiritedness among some of the women's organizations has prompted keen observers to ask in perplexity; do some militant liberationists speak only for themselves or the silent majority too. (17)

Tracie's dramaturgy calls for change in this misguided self-centred women liberationists as championed by Madam Ekwutosi and her cohorts. They are all soaked in the river of corruption and without recourse to the ideals of true African women. In an attempt to secure their respective political ambitions, they run to Chief Sijuade to weep up sentiments that they are being fought because they are women. However, Chief Sijuade disappoints them by rebuking their allegations and denying those help. In her position, she laments thus:

Hajia, I do not think that any woman or man for that matter, wants to pull you down. You are simply reaping the fruit of your corrupt practices. I must say am very disappointed in you. If I had not been part of the panel that investigated your case, I would not have believed you are capable of committing such atrocities. (55-56)

In *Our Wives Have Gone Mad Again*, a group of disgruntled and misguided politicians is paraded with a view to calling for a re-examination of the so-called feminists who are politicians. Prominent among the disgruntled politicians are Chief Irene, Funmi, Mairo, Ene and Ifeoma. These women are metaphorically presented as mad wives who set anti-social and anti-marriage rules all in the name of their selfish ambition. To express her supremacy in her matrimonial home, Ene rains insult on her husband before her friend thus:

(stands-offish.) Welcome yourself, foolish man (pointing)
Look at the clock. Is this the time your mates clean the house?
Lazy idiot! (Ene expresses her disgust and then marches to a settee. as the other women move towards the settee, Funmi ...)
(22)

For Emasealu, his attempt at using plays to advocate for change may have come very late considering his contemporaries in the theatre industry. Born an actor, trained as a director and metamorphosed into a director-playwright, Emmanuel Emasealu formerly known as Oga boasts of over ten plays lying cold in his personal folder but has published *The Gardeners* (2008) and *Nerves* (2010). These two plays have not only attracted the interest of scholars but directors have repeatedly produced these plays due to their multi-thematic preoccupations. *The Gardeners* projects the issues of power tussle, class differentiation, cultism and communal clashes dominating third world countries like Nigeria. *The Gardeners* is highly episodic as three in one drama. First is the plot that establishes the conflict of a befitting burial for the late King Ataome Idaomi between King-elect Chief Titus Udo, a wealthy businessman and chief Idoroma Ogete, the spiritual leader of the people of Uneme. The second conflict is between two cult groups, the Wild Cats and the Rough Riders over supremacy on campus in respect to the Student Union Government Election. The third plot the romance between Obaseki, son of Idoroma Ogete and leader of the Wild Cats confraternity and Georgia daughter of Chief Titus Udo. The story examines the disunity and the subsequent bitterness that exit in the Nigerian society.

As part of the change agenda in the *Gardeners*, Emasealu among other things calls for a change in our attitude towards the deceased. For him through the character of Udo, a burial ceremony for those that have served the community as traditional rulers should be a means of tourism and a development driven platform. In his declaration, Udo expresses thus:

...all I know is that in France, from where I have just returned, in America, Britain and in other civilized countries every great occasion is an opportunity to sell the country to the international community. World cup soccer competitions, the Olympics, great sociocultural happenings and the visit of great foreign personalities are moments of national rebranding. *The Gardener* to use the expression of Effiong Johnson is not necessarily a protest staged by disgruntled and dissatisfied farmers over a breach of contract in their employers' vineyard. It is rather a multi-thematic construct showcasing brute power play, crude cult displays, despair and passion. (6)

One important change ideology that Emasealu advocates for in *The Gardeners* is that of inter-communal and intra-communal marriage as a panacea for peace in

the society. In spite of the rancour that dominated in the play from parents to children, the two reveal families of Chief Titus Udo and Chief Ogete, their children Georgia and Obaseki were granted their marriage interest. Otokhodie declares in the resolution of the play thus “but you will do one thing: take Chief Titus Udo’s daughter as a wife and you have found that loyal and trusted slave (Georgia moves to Obaseki. They embrace. Blackout)” (102).

In his one act play, *Nerves*, Emasealu examines the uses and abuses of nerves expressed by the young and the old alike. In *Nerves*, the nerves of Babatunde Thompson, father of Tokunbo is put to test as through the counselling of her lovely sister Sander his only daughter’s (Tokunbo) proposed marriage with Philips Ayeni, president of the student union government is vehemently opposed. Similarly, the nerves of Tokunbo is subjected to cross examination as she brings in her lover Philip Ayeni to her aunt’s house under the guise of Hannah just to secure their matrimonial future. For Philips and Sander their nerves are expressed as both in their different official capacities (school Management and Students). In his foreword to *Nerves*, Bell-Gam exposes that “*Nerves* forcibly harps on the need for the development of an emotional bond or friendly relationship between children and parents in order to engender trust and promote mutual understanding as they share each other’s concern” (7). Indeed, Emasealu’s *Nerves* calls for parental trust and confidence in the choice of spouse by their children. The play which calls for family understanding, care and parental responsibility however, cautions over-ambitious and exuberant youths that there is the need for them to apply caution in their attempt to make rash and brash decisions. The tragic end of Philips and Tokunbo in their stiff-necked desire to disobey their parental counsels.

It is important to state here that Emasealu’s search for change as experimented in his two very topical plays *The Gardeners* and *Nerves* is multidimensional. In each of the plays, the Nigerian state is metaphorically presented with issue of unemployment, poverty, inequality, communal clashes, ethnic reveries, poor educational structure, youthful exuberance, gender inequality and over-ambition. For him these issues must be addressed for the country to achieve the desired development

Conclusion

From our observation in this study, Nigerian playwrights are in agreement in the search for change. However, the manner and commitment is what differentiates them in the dramatic scene. Perusing through the efforts of these selected playwrights and others on the Nigerian soil, their contributions are unique and very educating. However, their efforts appear more like a futile search that

produces nothing. If not how will one feel that of over ten plays by Okoh on the subjugation and victimization of the female gender and the different theories that feminists have advanced on the need for the women to be properly positioned yet the number one man of the country still feels that the place of the woman is in the kitchen and the ‘other room’ as he calls it. In the same manner, one feels pained that of Tracie’s readable and very entertaining plays on misguided and betrayals of the feminist cause by some selfish women, women are still fighting themselves. Those in the political sector are still soaked in corruption without responding to the plight of the rural women. In fact, most of those who echo feminism these days are wives of politicians, governors, house of assembly members, political appointees or educated women seeking cheap relevance.

Asigbo’s search for purposeful leadership through the trench is very sad as Nigerian leaders both in the political and academic environs have refused to heed the call of repentance. Even the satirized characters rather laugh and continue because they lack shame of what confronts them. The same is the case that confronts Emasealu who feels his directorial works are not far reaching enough due to the limited audience yet his call for an end to internal and external rancour and clashes appears to have given the perpetrators another style from he plays. In spite of the globalization and the so called civilization, undergraduate are still into serious campus cultism while parents still reject marital interest of their children because of class or tribe.

Interestingly, one should not feel that this paper is calling for playwrights to stop writing since their intentions are yet to yield the desired results but that there is the need for critics to advocate for a serious reading culture in the Nigerian state. Importantly, therefore, Nigerian playwrights must not be deterred with the present realities that appear to be demoralizing but must continue to search for change to engender the needed development in Nigeria. The day our playwrights find what they are advocating for, writing will cease but the more we are confronted with challenges the more our playwrights will continue to search for this change.

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COSMOLOGICAL AESTHETICS AS CHANGE INDICATORS IN SELECTED PLAYS OF ESIABA IROBI

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Abstract

*Change, as a constant factor, appears to be the only regular event taking place in Nigeria in recent times. When on May 29, 1999, the military regime formally handed over power to civilians, Nigerians welcomed democracy with enthusiasm and loads of expectations. How far have their expectations been met or dashed? Hence, dramatists respond to dominant socio-political, economic and cultural issues in their environments with varying verves of revolutionary stunts. They burlesque with the people's cosmological leanings and socio-political system to point ways forward touching the sensibilities of their audience. Esiaba Irobi is one of such dramatists whose **The Fronded Circle** and **The Colour of Rusting Gold** point towards directions of change through indigenous and cosmological forms. Since the society is in a mobile state of continuous flux, and critical theories have argued from the standpoint of the Formalist and Anti-formalist; of content and form, this paper adopts the concept of glocalization for conceptual backings to analyse Irobi's metaphors of change using content analysis. The research findings reveal that Irobi's implication of indigenous forms in the selected plays serve as resourceful paradigms from which to meditate on Nigeria's socio-political issues. This paper concludes that the juxtaposing of traditional techniques in a modern context and vice versa, will serve as potent idioms of change as it is not very possible to use foreign means alone to resolve indigenous problems.*

Introduction

Cosmological aesthetics is the abstract and material evidence of a people's origin, worldview, culture, norms and values that influence them collectively. These are manifest in the religious culture, myths, legends, rituals, folktales, songs, dance and historical origins that are peculiar to a particular people in meaning and significance. This includes their socio-cultural, political and economic structures. In this context, the total worldview of the Igbo, their way of life and methods of implicating moral, judicial and social controls become their cosmological aesthetics. Esiaba Irobi is one such playwright who has implicated cosmological aesthetics in his works as revolutionary means. The appropriation of cultural

elements as indigenous forms in Nigerian drama does not only serve spectacular purposes but are paradigms and indicators of change for sustainable developments.

Cosmological aesthetics appropriated in writing is not merely to project culture but to enhance the ideological and functional role of playwriting by using familiar elements to interrogate contemporary issues. It strengthens the claim that playwrights are visionaries who guard and guide the socio-political, economic, religious and socio-cultural issues of their community. But how have recent playwrights been able to express their vision for change? Are they writing with requisite commitment to engender change in the realms of politics, economic and socio-cultural realities of contemporary Nigeria? Are their works overt, covert or radical? Are there strategies or dramatic weapons that are peculiar to the playwrights whose plays orchestrate the need for change in governance as a way to abate corruption, armed robbery, bombings and kidnapping? The requisite commitment of the playwright is re-affirmed as Akorede states that:

The dramatist is the watchman in his society. He is the people's secret police. It is his duty to sift out information and to bring the 'culprits' to the people's court. The court on this sense is the open theatre where the hidden, the concealed and the guarded are exposed not for the people's pleasure but for their information and if possible necessary action. (55)

Thus, drama and theatre serve as the people's court where sore wounds are revealed and people's hopes are salvaged. To restore the people's confidence in the sociological function of drama, the playwright must blend his dramatic techniques and style with traditional/ familiar elements. This will according to Ukala, facilitate "the cardinal aspect of the politics of aesthetics, that of restoring the confidence of the people in the worthiness of their artistic patrimony, which immensely encourages the continued propagation of that patrimony" (31). However, a look at the Nigerian playwright is therefore of essence because according to Bakary Traore in his *The Black African Theatre and its Social Functions*, he affirms that "insofar as the theatre is a permanent feature of society the study of its functions in society is the most important branch of theatre sociology" (2). Quite on point, because the sociological function of every drama text is imperative to the audience. Olaniyan corroborates Traore' viewpoint when he asserts that:

It was asserted or implied that blacks either had no traditions of drama indigenous to them, or had traditions that in comparison with Europe and Asia, were merely photo-dramatic, cretinous forms in a state of developmental arrest in terms of style, esthetic canons, formalizations of techniques, and mode historical transmissions. (354)

The question that will arise here is; what has the African writer done to decolonize Africa? How have they been able to glocalize African indigenous forms in their writings? Rather, ours have been a total consumption of Western commodities and lifestyle. In fact, Nigerians propagate Western cultures and religion more than theirs and even teach their children to do so. Have we not condemned our religion and culture as barbaric? Have we studied our culture to understand it properly and appreciate it? What are the criteria from which we cast aspersions on our religion and culture as backward and barbaric? Since they say that religion is the opium of the people, does it not imply that it is the identity of the people? It must be noted here that through the people's belief and religious practices, their system of social, judicial, economic and cultural controls is marked out. Thus, Allison acknowledges that "every religion comprises the beliefs of a given community or a number of communities." (214). Hence, the people's religious alignments form their common conscience and their social and moral controls rests squarely on this.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept, glocalization, which basically gives prominence to local life captured within global processes, is the simultaneous integration of particularization within universalism. Glocalization is a process whereby the local form is customized within the global trend, an intersection of the global for the advancement of humanity. The word glocalization is according to Duru from the term glocal "which is a combination of global and local; indicate how this concept represents an attempt to find optimal and sustainable solutions to local and/or international problems in the era of globalization" (1). The English popularisers of this concept credit its first usage to Roland Roberts (1938), a sociologist and theorist of globalization whose definition of globalization is simply "the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole" (Glocalization 1). It is also alluded to Robertson to have in 1992 "coined the term 'Glocalization' (Glocalization, 1). But in defining the concept of glocalization, Andrew Horn describes glocalization as the "body of octopus, it

'touched down' on to the local surfaces by its forces, which functions as the legs (2). But Philip Hong says that "glocalization corresponds to the integration of local markets into world capitalism" (2). However, it is noted that the term glocalization independently developed in Japan from the word dochakuka, meaning "global localization...dochakuka evolved into marketing strategy when Japanese business men adopted it in the 1980's" (Glocalization 3).

However, in the academia, there is a proposition that "meaningful integration of local and global forces" should converge in order to achieve functional progress. Duru, records that Boyer and Drache (1996) have observed that the process of Globalization have created "problems for many cultures around the world, because there is incompatibility between human relationships and extreme exploitation of resources." (5). In agreement, one observes that in the area of drama and theatre, Nigerian plays are still clothed with Western aesthetics. This is a trap which Nwosu insists that:

It is still the African creative writer's inability to break the shackles of modernism that made him a bondsman of Western Aesthetics. Hence the goal of Afro-Postmodernism is to make the African creative writer "go back to his past" like Ukala says and dress his 'remembering' of his "early rural life" this time in multicultural aesthetics to contain the global politics of aesthetics creation and presentation. (31)

The Nigerian creative writer is therefore challenged to glocalize the Nigerian culture through the medium of drama and theatre by inculcating in his or her work those positive aspects of Nigerian culture that defines the people. This is because art and culture form the common collective emotion of the people emboldened in their myths and imageries, folktales, songs and dances, through which they express their pain, grieve and agitate for peace and identity. It is this collective memory that strengthened communal goals in China. Thus, the consciousness within the Middle East, especially the Chinese, at the beginning of the 20th century took a step to define themselves; who they are, and in relation to the West. They understood their peculiarities and how their culture is an essentially aesthetic one. However, the transactional encounter with Western thought undeniably, offered the Chinese a wealth of fascinatingly new ideas; it allowed them, to look for familiar concepts which could be aligned with their own tradition. It is the alignment of the indigenous forms with global concepts that enriches the aesthetics of African theatre, considering that Nigerians, especially

the conservatives are beginning to question the uniformity and globalization of social, economic, and cultural life as well as politics. Their consciousness is borne out of the realization that their traditional norms, values, and historicity are the sound base upon which they can build developmental goals. This analogy is strengthened by Robertson's slogan "think globally, act locally" (qtd. in Min. et al 1).

The need therefore arises to re-assess globalization in the context of the theatre and the local dynamics of revolutionary forms. To glocalize indigenous forms mean to blend the local forms with contemporary aesthetics that will enhance Africa's development. It therefore involves the appropriation of local elements such as concepts, costumes, beliefs and values into drama texts and theatrical performances

The Fronded Circle

The Fronded Circle presents from the Igbo experience, an account of an indigenous African tragedy. The tale is about Onwutuebe's ritualistic indulgence in a protective charm, *Ike-isi*, a mystical means directed towards the extension of earthly life. With the charm Onwutuebe buried in an earthen-pot in his yam barn, he is enabled to defy death seven times by swapping his life with that of his sons or male kith and this he has achieved by swapping the lives of his five male children. His indulgence in earthly pleasures which is the motive behind his mystic action becomes his dilemma as death resurfaces again. Since he is responsible for the death of his five sons, through swapping of their lives, Onwutuebe's life hangs between the living and the dead; a situation that is worse than death. To remedy the situation, his family would have to discover the charm, exhume and destroy it or use mediumship to help him confess his crime. But Onwutuebe's daughter Kelechi, would only be delivered of her child if a male relative from his immediate bloodline steps into the *Ese*-drum to confess and redeem him. But because of the inheritance philosophy of the Igbo, Onwudinulo connives with Diegwu, manipulates Nwannediya, to lure Gilbert, Onwutuebe's brother to play the substitute and confess on his brother's behalf, unknowing to Gilbert and Nwannediya, Gilbert becomes the sacrificial lamb that will redeem Onwutuebe while Onwudinulo inherits their property. To achieve this, Onwudinulo convincingly explains to Nwannediya that if Gilbert dances to the *Ese*-drum that the hidden charm will be discovered and Kelechi will be delivered of her child but the intent to kill Gilbert is hidden from her. However, Gilbert, a musicologist has returned from Europe with Gwendolyn his wife, a medical doctor. Onwudinulo promises to teach Gilbert the intricacies of African drums;

that he will train him to master the art of understanding the *Ese*-drum. Elatedly, Gilbert steps onto the potent *Ese*-drum, possessed, he confesses Onwutuebe's crimes; Onwutuebe and Gilbert dies. Onwudinulo's joy is caught short as both deaths liberate Kelechi from an over-due and agonizing pregnancy as she is delivered of a son who will continue the bloodline of Onwutuebe. Gwendolyn, Gilbert's widow avenges her husband's death as she aims her pistol at Onwudinulo.

Irobi's recourse to the mythological parable of a protective charm which in Ngwa cosmology is called *Ike-isi* is the playwright's medium to confront contemporary reality. The charm's efficacy defies death seven times with the swapping of the head of the male children or a male bloodline relation. In Phase One titled: *What a Beautiful Coffin*, the setting displays a signboard which reads: *ONWUSOAMAONYE EXPERT IN COFFINS AND COTS YOU CAN BOOK IN ADVANCE*. The signboard points to the direction of the play. The playwright's stage direction states that:

The carpenter is smoothening a piece of wood laboriously with his plane. On his right is a baby cot painted green. Beside the cot is a toddler's three-wheel cart. On his right, a finished coffin, painted red, gaudily decorated with a gold-coloured wreath inscribed "REST IN PEACE" is covered with a transparent polytene...(*FronDED, I*)

Death is much more contemplated here than life, the cot, the three-wheel cart, are symbolic of life in its green and fresh state, and red as the colour of the coffin signifies ebbing of life, the danger and fear that surrounds death. This fear is highlighted in the discussion between Okwu and Uka, the apprentices of the witch doctor Ikenga, in the following lines:

Okwu: I wish I had a choice...

Uka: But we have no choice...

Okwu: Except to run this errand of death?

Uka: Who says it is an errand of death?

Okwu: Don't you know what it is to unearth a charm buried years and years before you were born?

Uka: But our master said that it is an ordinary pot of medicine.

Okwu: Ordinary? Ordinary indeed what is in it?

Uka: I don't know.

Okwu: A man's head. An old man's head. The man buried his head in an earthen pot in his yam barn.

Uka: Why?

Okwu: You can go and ask the man himself. (*FronDED*, 1-2)

Okwu's revelation of how Onwutuebe insulated himself against death shows that the parable which Irobi appropriates here is a myth deeply rooted in the Igbo cosmological worldview. The playwright uses this familiar element for metaphorical treatment of Sit-tightism in Nigeria.

The Colour of Rusting Gold

The Colour of Rusting Gold is an evocative drama that re-visits the Igbo pantheon of gods, the meta-realm as well as the sociological function of the diviner-herbalist. Otagburuagu a principled Dibia, is the protagonist and can be likened to Ezeulu in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, he bears the burden of the community and mortifies himself for their propitiation. Otagburuagu is a revered native doctor. His mystic disposition as half-man half-spirit in the play is juxtaposed with the ailing society. Thus, the protagonist's ideals are in conflict with the moral decadence and depravity of humans in the likes of Ogidi- the apprentice who accepts bribe thereby perpetrate injustice, Nanimgaebi- a corrupt politician, Nnenna- an expectant mother, Orikanjonuchichi- the mad patient. So when Otagburuagu refuses to grant Nanimgaebi's request to eliminate his political opponent; Ezenwoke, Nanimgaebi attacks Otagburuagu's moral stance; reminding him that four years ago, he had removed Nketa's seven months formed fetus to save her life. This puts a question mark on Otagburuagu's moral philosophy and values. Even when Otagburuagu argues that his actions were based on people's plea to save the woman's life, Nanimgaebi insists that Otagburuagu had crossed that line and therefore cannot deny him his request, and so he is guilty. Angered by this, Otagburuagu accepts his guilt thereby allowing Nanimgaebi to take the suicidal oath that leads to his death and consequently Otagburuagu's madness as he finds himself in a dangerous corner and the Dibia's guild strips him off all sacred rights of a Dibia.

Esiaba Irobi's *The Colour of Rusting Gold* is a drama that situates between the secular and the meta-realm. Here, Irobi objectively treats the meta-realm with a dramatic technique of distancing and alienation. Powerful and evocative, the play is enshrouded in the African Traditional Religion, especially of the Igbo. Otagburuagu, a *Dibia*, a custodian of the people's religion and culture with strong philosophical and moral value system, is typified by the playwright inter alia:

Otagburuagu: (to Nanimgaebi) yes, my son, I have a name that resounds, Otagburuagu! (to audience) first and foremost I am a medicine-man: A man called to the service

of the gods. A man who lives in the spirit world; a man who bridges the gap between the shrine of spirits and the mud-walled world of men. A man whom the spirits he serves have decreed that he must not marry (pause). There are many men who have children but will never have names...with bare fingers I bring out the yolk of the moon before it hardens in the throat of men...Go and ask questions...How many barren wombs have I given children?...How many impotent genitals have I resurrected how many harvests that would have been ruined have I saved by making rain...(Colour 49)

The cosmological worldview of the Ngwa people is that the *Dibia* is the conscience of the people, the custodian of their religious tradition. But in the world of the play, Otagburuagu is human, besieged by the needs and desires of his client; his is in a tempting situation. Nanimgaebi's visit to Otagburuagu's shrine has favoured him in the past but Nnenna's account of him shows that:

Nnenna: Nanimgaebi started as a motor mechanic. Then people gossiped that he was an armed robber, that he bought stolen vehicles. Myself I never saw him, I only know he sold pistols. He sold one to my husband at nine-hundred naira. A revolver, twelve rounds...Then he gave us money to vote for him...He thinks he can brush me aside and go to see the *dibia* before me. (Colour 43).

Nanimgaebi's desire to run for another term is greeted with indifference. This, as reflected in *Nwokedi*, and *The Fronded Circle*, is an attempt at self-perpetuity. This theme is seemingly present in Irobi's dramaturgy. Even though the people are poor, they know the difference; hence the dialogues between the following characters reveal that the people know who cheats them:

Nnenna: We voted him in. if he gives us money again this voting season we will also vote him in. what do I do with a piece of paper that is not a receipt, that is not a land agreement, that is not a common certificate...I throw it into that coffin they call a ballot box. That is what I do.

Oriakanjonuchichi: Okay, this voting season you will use the bullet and not the ballot...I think you un'stand!...Now let us go over to this historical monstrosity, this

anthropological specimen, this political groundnut, sorry juggernaut called Nanimgaebi...Honourable Nanimgaebi (Nanimgaebi walks in sodden from crown to toe, dripping with water) Talk of the devil...(Colours, 44)

Irobi's grouse here ranges from the sick society, the parasitic leadership, the value system and the integrity of the healer (Otagburuagu). He revalidates the traditional ideals through language, indigenous elements and proverbs laced with traditional wisdom and aphorisms as evident in these lines:

Nanimgaebi: If a fight will make you more sensible.

Otagburuagu: (keeps the bowl) it is like a dog barking at a tiger. Yes, like a chick defying a kite. It is like a goat bleating threats at a lion. Tell me Nanimgaebi...how many hunters celebrate their first yams with the meat of a tiger...Tell me (stands charged)

Nanimgaebi: (cowed) Is that why the aged trap should blind its eyes to the hooves of antelopes and yawn for the legs of men.

Otagburuagu: (poking a finger) Mind your words before venom flows into my fangs. (*Colour*, 46)

The committed playwright is one who displays the socio-political wares of his society unabashed. Thus, Esiaba Irobi here comments on the greed, insatiability and evil mindedness of those we elect into political offices, and how they twist the hands of traditional institutions as well as the figureheads. As for Nanimgaebi, his selfish desire outweighs any moral value that Otagburuagu stands for; hence he attacks Otagburuagu's moral integrity, blackmails him in order to force him go against his ethics by engaging Otagburuagu in an argument:

Otagburuagu: You have tried your best but it is not good enough... What you are trying to make me do is taboo to medicine-men. It weakens the potency of herbs. It drives away the spirits, then saps the strength...

Nanimgaebi: Okay, do it for me as a father. This is only a gift.

Otagburuagu:...The stream can never flow backwards...have you ever seen gold rust?

Nanimgaebi: Yes.

Otagburuagu: What is the colour of rusting gold?

Nanimgaebi: It is red. Bloody.

Otagburuagu: Where did you see gold rust?

Nanimgaebi: Here.

Otagburuagu: When?

Nanimgaebi: Four years ago when I brought Nketa here. She was pregnant. Those stupid medical doctors had complicated her case. It was her seventh month of pregnancy. You, Otagburuagu, removed the fully formed foetus

Otagburuagu: Remember, I did not do it out of my own will. People persuaded me.

Nanimgaebi: But what matters is that you did it. You killed him.

Otagburuagu: (stands) No. What matters is that I did not put a deaf ear to the voices of so many. Only an insane man would do that.

Nanimgaebi: But gold rusted, you killed him (*Colour*, 51)

Esiaba Irobi points out here that Otagburuagu's relationship with Nanimgaebi is in the first place faulty because "a man who meddles with spirits must not mess up with men. For men are a neat mess on the surface of this earth where the spirits sit when they visit us" (*Colour* 27), it becomes a personal moral failure since he considers the people's weal against the injunction of the god. Otagburuagu is an example of those in revered positions and their flirtations with politicians. This is why Nanimgaebi appraises the Dibia's moral stance. This 'foetus' is symbolic of the General Ibrahim Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme, which became futile and aggravated the sufferings of Nigerians. The removal of the foetus symbolizes its futility, and on the other hand symbolic and futuristic.

Cosmological Aesthetics- An Inward Look

Esiaba Irobi volitionally mirrors in his dramaturgy the background from which he is writing. This he does through characterization, images, cultural depiction or by mentioning the exact locale. This demonstrates his mastery of the culture as he emphasizes aspects of it. Perhaps his intentions are not far from satirizing or promoting some aspects of that culture for its improvement, glocalization and or preservation. His deep knowledge of Igbo culture enriches the playwright with ideas of how to appropriate local elements, events or art-forms into dramatic

parables. *The Fronded Circle* demonstrates the playwright's ability to transform the Igbo life-swapping ritual from the point of the sacred to the secular.

The cosmological aesthetics used as dramatic metaphor and techniques in *The Fronded Circle* are the concepts of death and *Ese*-drum. These are encoded in the two deaths; Onwutuebe and Gilbert, and the theatrical elements and techniques employed by the playwright to achieve optimism. In the Igbo cosmology male children are mostly desired because it assures the continuity of the lineage, Irobi achieves a revolutionary measure against man's greed, man's inhumanity to his family and by extension the society. The play typifies the danger of a system that ruins the lives of those under it. It demonstrates how man strangles the future as exemplified in the poignant pregnancy of Kelechi and in the *Ike-isi* which Onwutuebe has indulged in. This unholy desire of Onwutuebe to live forever is analogous to the desire of those in authority to rule for ever. And by so doing, they strangle the destinies of many. Those around Onwutuebe suffer this injustice of *Ike-isi*, just like the masses are the ones that bear the burden of bad governance. The absent protagonist of this play is Death and the playwright uses it as permanence, a natural order that wants to take its course. Thus in defying death, Onwutuebe destroys a natural order. It illustrates that *Sit-tightism* is a destruction of an order in a nation's polity. This attempt at revolutionizing the status quo becomes the springboard for multi-dimensional experimentations in the play as an approach to destroy Onwutuebe's protective charm, by extension; the playwright destroys the system that strangles the citizens. Irobi borrows from the Ngwa philosophy of *Ike-isi* as illustrative of the parable of a despot and suggests an alternative using the aesthetics of the *Ese*-drum. Hence he presents a local problem and resolves it locally. By implication, he demonstrates that to achieve peace in a war situation, there must be casualties.

Ritual is one of the cosmological aesthetics employed in *The Fronded Circle*. Through the implication of Songs, dance, prayers, chants, incantations, repetition, gin, corpse, white cock, coffin, cot, and articles of ritual such as eggs and effigy, *Ese*-drum becomes the theatrical aesthetics and vehicle of instruction. The *Ese* dance in Ngwa cosmology, is not for the youths. It is called *Itu aka Ese*. According to Ngwa cosmology, *Ese* is used to celebrate the death of an old man who has also died well, and anyone who steps onto the potent *Ese* drum must have performed his father's second burial or is not lacking in any of the rituals associated with the *Ese*. From the ritual, we see the effects of the *Ese* drum on Gilbert whose discordant steps reveal that the dance is a strange one, and that he too is a stranger in this line of music. The secret of the ritual is hidden from him, yet its potency is assured. Because Gilbert has not performed his father's second-

burial, he is not qualified to dance to the *Ese* drum, and knowing this well, Onwudinulo “raised his right foot as he whispers” (*FronDED* 62) so that the efficacy of the ritual will not bounce back on him. The playwright here provides reasons why the masses suffer under a tyrannical government. First, it is because of their ignorance as exemplified in Gilbert. Again the playwright is insightful through the character of Onwudinulo whose motive though not right, can be harnessed to oust bad governance; it notes that though Gilbert has acquired western knowledge, yet it did not provide him with requisite know-how of how to handle African problems.

Also, in *The Colour of Rusting Gold*, the aesthetics focus on the suicidal oath-taking of Nanimgaebi. In Igbo cosmology, specifically in Ngwa cosmology, oaths are taken seriously. Originally, it was a means of detecting if one is telling the truth, because the moment an oath is taken with *Ofo l’ Ogu*, or the Ihi-njoku, the person is watched within specified number of days, months or even a year. It is believed that if after the stipulated period of time and nothing happens to that person, then the person is not guilty. Nanimgaebi pressures Otagburuagu to eliminate his political opponent; Ezenwoke, and the Dibia’s refusal is because he is aware of the consequences that will occur. Otagburuagu says to Nanimgaebi “what you are trying to make me do is taboo to medicine-men. It weakens the potency of herbs. It drives away the spirits, then saps the strength...” (*Colour* 51). But, blinded by greed and fury Nanimgaebi accuses Otagburuagu of shedding blood. In defense of his action, Otagburuagu replies to this blackmail saying:

Otagburuagu: Nanimgaebi, why? You have ruled for four years. Why not allow him rule...?

Nanimgaebi: After all what he has done to me? He has desecrated my name. You must eliminate Ezenwoke tonight...before he ruins me totally.

Otagburuagu: Then, you must swear.

Nanimgaebi: I am ready to swear

Otagburuagu: that in one way or the other Ezenwoke has tried to kill you; otherwise the whole thing will not work.

Nanimgaebi: Yes, I will. (*Colours* 52)



Figure 3: Ofo Dibia in Ngwa Cosmology

As it is customary with Ngwa tradition, a good Dibia will always base his judgments on *Ofo l' Ogu*- the symbol of justice, or with any of the gods among the pantheon in Ngwa cosmology.

The unfamiliar treatment of oath-taking is adapted here by Irobi manipulatively to achieve both aesthetics and ideological effect. Nanimgaebi's death in exchange for Ezenwoke's life is a revolutionary twist because Ezenwoke is a promising future and will restore what Nanimgaebi has destroyed. Also the ritual of the removal of a poignant pregnancy is another of Irobi's dramatic scheme symbolically to reveal the state of Nigeria. An insight will suffice here:

Otagburuagu: ...that girl would have died. She was panting to death, and bleeding too. You all besieged me and pelted me with all the please... one of the women you invited to beg said I should remove the child and save the life of the mother instead of watching two souls die. What could I do. I placed the root, she crossed it and in that cluster of plantain trees she ejected it. You were the midwife Nanimgaebi, why do you now turn to accuse me?
(*Colour 2*)

The symbolic essence of a dying mother and child and the fact that only one will survive is analogous of saving Nigeria from itself. In Igbo cosmology, a situation of this nature always favour the mother who is believed will conceive again. Whereby the child survives at the expense of the mother, it becomes a tragedy. This cosmological viewpoint appropriated by Irobi is prophetic, being that the

threatened pregnancy is Nanimgaebi and all that he stands for while the mother that survived is Ezenwoke; the future and hope of the nation. The ritual of oath-taking validates the Igbo belief in Ahiajoku (Ihi-njoku) as a just god. Its appropriation in this play is used to direct attention on the moral implications and the conduct required of a Dibia or a cultural/religious custodian; the chief priest, and by extension the Christian Priests and Pastors, to make a distinction from politicians and corruption because they are contagions that destroy the society.

Conclusion

Through the cosmological aesthetics appropriated in both plays, the playwright is able to achieve social change. His argument therefore is that local problems are solved with local paradigms. The *FronDED Circle* demonstrates the playwright's ability to transform the Igbo life-swapping ritual from the point of the sacred to the secular. This Igbo life-swapping ritual is the playwright's window into the rot, greed, and corruption that bedevils Nigeria. One of the irrationalities of life as shown in *Onwutuebe* is the attempt at self-perpetuity on earth. This negates the Ngwa cosmological world view on the essence of life, which Nwannediya explains "That a man should let his seeds sprout after him. To live after him so that the world can go on" (43). *Onwutuebe's* greed, love of life and earthly pleasure blinds him not to recognize the Igbo philosophy of family and the need for the children to project into the future and achieve greater feats than their parents. Also, in *The Colour of Rusting Gold*, the playwright's character Cues reveal that Nanimgaebi is translated to mean 'I will live alone'. He is a politician whose background informs us that he was involved in armed robbery, selling of guns and stolen vehicles. Irobi appropriates Oath-taking as a device for validation and elimination thereby resolving the problem in the play using local means. The playwright typifies this character as a metaphor for Nigeria politicians. Again, the playwright re-emphasizes that local problems are solved with local means through Nwannediya's action (*The FronDED*) as she tries approaching it through the modern way by begging Gilbert to "tell her to go and give *Onwutuebe* an injection that will make him talk" (*Colours*, 22), and this did not work because it is not possible to use alien means to resolve indigenous problems. Esiaba Irobi's recourse to our folk ways or what the Germans call *folkgeist* as paradigm, remains a viable means of glocalization.

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SOCIAL-DARWINISM AND CHANGE IN NIGERIAN DRAMA: A STUDY OF ENI-JONES UMUKO'S *THE SCENT OF CRUDE OIL*

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Abstract

*The contemporary Nigerian nation has been in the throes of civil unrest of different kinds. This paper using Eni-Jones Umuko's play **The Scent of Crude Oil** attempts to argue that these uprisings are often aggravated by the methodologies adopted by government and other establishment apologists to quell them. These methodologies the paper argues have their roots in the engagement style of the White colonial masters with the natives in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. Specifically, it argues that social-Darwinism which draws its strength from the warped notion of superiority of idea, action and development and which defines the approach of government to these crises has engendered anarchy and more conflict rather than peace and has. Hence the paper advances for a change of approach in tackling social unrest or insurrection in the country as the method often employed by the establishment to resolve civil unrest do not yield the desired impact which is peaceful resolution.*

Theoretical Preamble

Cultural evolution theories have been used by the West since the late 19th and early 20th century to justify the expansion of their empires to Africa, the Americas and South East-Asia (Nnamele 2). They classified these regions as backward and therefore unfit for survival unless "civilized" to live and act as Europeans did." This way of seeing African and other non-Caucasian societies came to be termed 'Social-Darwinism'. In creating its complex of ideas and imagination however, Social-Darwinism did not take into consideration the survival and successes achieved by pre-colonial indigenous societies. It rather created a new system, a mixture of European and African culture which has led to the loss of significant cultural grouping and description in most African societies. (Nnamele 3). The new practices as influenced by the Europeans however, did not go down without creating new problems for the indigenous society. Besides the psychological and economic impact on the people, the physical consequences continue to be a challenge which has eluded measures taken by the emergent African leaders who often apply Western cultural approaches in solving the challenges created by

contradictions occasioned by the new highbred culture. These challenges which hitherto had been ameliorated and resolved through African cultural approaches established long before the cultural evolutionist's racial ideology had become intractable to most countries in the continent (Nnamele 4).

Maudline N. Okpara in *Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies*, points out that the African approach “differs from the Western alternative dispute resolution” (69). She explains that “In Africa there are various traditions, religious practices and belief system... and these structures are utilized as instrument of conflict resolution” (69). Corollary to our thesis of social Darwinism is the issue of anarchism. Briefly, literal anarchism is a 19th century political theory opposed to all forms of repression of the individual and his culture. It is a rebellion against force and the truncation of an individual's freedom of choice. Anarchism only allows for voluntary cooperation and rejects any form of pressure from government organizations. It emphasizes the total control of societies by voluntarily organized groups and not by the political state. It is believed to be the most effective way each individual may attain their complete development (Russell 42-44). This voluntary cooperation often arises from cultural relationships and ancestral lineage and heritage of a community. This theory could perhaps be explained as a consequence or reaction to the Social-Darwinism. Thus, anarchy and Social-Darwinism will be employed in examining European intrusion and subjugation of Africa's indigenous cultures and the resultant change and its implication in the society. Eni-Jones Umuko's *The Scent of Crude Oil* will be the focus of our analysis.

Synopsis of *The Scent of Crude Oil*

Eni-Jones Umuko's *The Scent of Crude Oil* was published in 2010` and the plot revolves around a fictional Nigerian community, Esidi, in the Niger-Delta region. The play divided into sixteen episodes opens with the “Youth Election”. Tafa, a jobless University graduate vies for the position of youth chairman against Maku-Maku, a notorious kidnapper and illegal oil bunkerer. Maku-Maku and his friends, Jugunu, Pelele and Aluta are known to have been terrorizing and bullying the community through illegal oil bunkering and kidnappings. When it became apparent that Tafa is the preferred choice of the people in the election, Jugunu instigates a revolt against the community and their leader. They fire gunshots into the air scaring the people away and declare Maku-Maku as the elected Youth Chairman. After the election, Maku-Maku and his friends continue with their bunkering plans. Jugunu expresses his fears of fire outbreak and recounts how past incidents almost consumed their community and the neighbouring one.

Maku-Maku, Pele-Pele, Juguno and Aluta finally decide to kidnap a Whiteman and succeed in kidnapping Obobo, a ‘mulato’, whom they think to be a Whiteman. Tafa is contacted since none of them could read nor write to help them draft a letter to the oil company demanding for ransom. Tafa agrees, but instead writes a letter expressing gratitude for all the company has done for the Esidi people. In a community interactive session with a development organization, Obobo comes in time to expose the deeds of Maku-Maku, Jugunu, Pelele and Aluta and how he escaped from their captivity. Tafa corroborates with his story and reveals how he with assistance from Amparo created an escape route for Obobo. In shame and humiliation, Maku-Maku and his gang leave the interactive session with the plan to return to oil bunkering.

Tafa finds out their plan and alerts the community chief, the community members and the security agents. The school pupils are evacuated to Warri as they all prepare to stop the gang. Unfortunately, Tafa and his followers did not succeed in their attempt to stop Maku-Maku and his men. The bunkering leads to fire outbreak that engulfs Maku-Maku and his men except Pelele who left the crime scene after hearing the sound of a gunshot before the fire outbreak. The inferno razes down the entire Esidi community leaving just few survivors. After the incident, the survivors including those living on the outskirts of Esidi such as Keni, his wife Tahisha and Mama Jugunu return to the land of Esidi to rebuild it and start a new life. They gather all the dead from the inferno for a mass burial. Tombrifa, who is the chief priest of the community, first offers the traditional rites for the dead and the community, then teacher Johnson concludes the gathering with a Christian prayer as they all respond “Amen” to bring the play to an end.

Social-Darwinism in *The Scent of Crude Oil*

The issue of Social-Darwinism in *The Scent of Crude Oil* revolves around African traditional norms and value system and the use of force to achieve desired objectives as a result of Western influence in the society. The contention in the play appears more to be focused on communal responsibilities and peaceful existence rather than the devastating effect of oil exploration by companies in the region and government negligence (Nnamele, 23). Maku-Maku, Jugunu and their followers display gross disrespect for the tradition of the land and its constituted authority. This is perhaps as a result of defamation and subjection of African traditions by Western powers. The playwright reveals the first instance of such disregard for tradition through Jugunu in the election scene.

CHIEF HURI-HURI: From what my eyes witness, I
announce Tafa as Youth Chairman of Esidi community.

JUGUNU: Stop am! (*Brandishing an Ak-47rifle.*) Stop the nonsense at once! Na we dey on ground. Pelele! (18)

Being an accepted traditional ruler, Chief Huri-Huri embodies the customs and tradition of the people as ordained by the ancestors. It is through Western influences that most of these sacred African beliefs lost their relevance especially among the youths as portrayed in the characters of Jugunu and his cohorts. In terms of combat, the bandits also proved to be the stronger team as they are all armed with guns to withstand any form of opposition. Tafa who suffers the loss in the election attests to this thus,

TAFA: It would have been madness to stay back, unarmed, to engage a band of drug addicts, cultists and rapists who are armed to the teeth and ready to kill. (19)

The Esidi community through the activities of these few youths becomes a community where only the strong survives at the detriment of the weak majority. Chief Huri-Huri also affirms this state of helplessness in the hands of Jugunu and his gang when he says,

CHIEF HURI-HURI: No be lie even the youths get power pass me wey be them chief. Imagine the other time wey NDDC carry big generator come dash us Kamala, the youths drive the contractor wey e bring am. Dem say contractor must give dem ₦250,000.00 as “deve” before dem go allow am install the generator for our community. We beg dem tire say the generator go improve our lives but dem no gree! (61)

The proliferation of arms in contemporary Nigeria has led to an increase of armed minority groups terrorizing majority of the people as witnessed in the play.

The Scent of Crude Oil is an abiding statement on anarchism engendered by social Darwinism cast in vivid images of the insurgency that ravaged the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. The characters in the play are individuals that find relevance in our thesis of the evolution of social Darwinism into anarchism. Their motivations and actions also bear eloquent testimony to the argument of cultural hybridity that has ravaged the contemporary Nigerian state. The template for these conclusions could be found in the youths’ brazen disrespect for tradition and recourse to use of terror and violence. A surface reading of the play might create

the façade of young people fighting with a tradition that is not favourable to their plights of unemployment and poverty. A deeper probing of the texts however, throws up disturbing images of individuals buffeted by avarice, hubris and other besetting evil proclivities.

Change and Traditionl Ethos

Change and traditional ethos here are used literarily to highlight the feature of mediating modern and Western methods of conflict engagement and resolution with a measure of traditional African lore. As a result of social Darwinism, much of the indigenous system of conflict resolution has been discarded as archaic or primitive. However, Umuko's play seems to suggest a recourse to these indigenous methods as the Western oriented ones merely proved inadequate and contentious. The initial attempts in the play to employ the mechanisms of government and the contemporary political class proved abortive. It was only a resort to the traditional structures of mediation that leant success to the war against brigandage in the creeks. In the words of Uche-chinemere Nwaozuzu, these traditional tokens "form part of the indigenous lore and way of doing things by the people" (14). By engaging the warped social system and government which we have classified as a variant of social Darwinism with tokens of tradition and culture, the playwright suggests a synthesis between what we have learnt from the West and what we have in our indigenous culture.

The application of both traditional lore and Western methods of conflict resolution presents Eni-Jones Umuko's play as unique in its ability to bring all conflict into a peaceful resolution irrespective of the magnitude of the disaster created as a result of differences between parties. The vandals in the play were illiterate outlaws who had no regard for their traditional system or their educated elite. They were at a stage where survival was all they craved for, without considering the consequences of their actions. Several factors can be deduced from what brought about the peaceful resolution in the play. First, is the ability of the development organizations and companies to approach the communities through their traditional ruler Chief Huri-Huri and the elders.

ZIK, FECO AND ISI: (*To Huri-Huri, Sensecolo and the wives respectively*). Good morning, Chief. Good morning, Sir. Good Morning, Madam!

CHIEF HURI-HURI/SENSECOLO: Good morning, my children

ZIK: We are NGO officials. We are here to meet members of this community today as scheduled. (70)

By going through the traditional chief and elder, the members of the NGO were able to get the attention of the entire community and their approval. There was no further need to engage in any form of confrontations with the vandals who attempted to disrupt their purpose of visit. Also, the NGO members rather than employing the government security forces to force their aim down the throat of the community, gave room for Tombrifa, the Chief Priest of the community to carry on with his divination to ascertain if their mission is for good or evil, thus employing his services.

TOMBRIFA: Esidi! Eside! Esidiii!!! Na three times I call your name! Come see how they wan take your name do boju-boju good face and decide our communities O! as Chief Priest of Esidi, I must throw oracle first to know whether na wayo una come play us! Abi no be so, my people?

TOWN PEOPLE: Na so o!

TOMBRIFA: (*Brings out divination cowries and throws them*) kere eru be mimi-korubememe! Esidi say all go good. Itako meme-itako meme! Esidi say their message good, too. Gbesekokomeme! Make we listen to them. Karu koro Gbesengbese-gbese! Make the meeting start. The message na the same we dey preach since olden days. Esidi and SCD na the same message dem carry. So my people, make we listen to them because when good meet good na in good go happen. Esidi! Esidi!! Esidi!!!

ALL: Eeeeeiiii! (74)

The decision is unanimously accepted by the community as their chief priest announces that the intentions of the NGO members were good. Amr Abdalla, recommends this type of engagement when he avers that “A successful conflict intervention will also benefit from the strength associated with “the culture of relatedness” by drawing upon the community to get involved in the process of conflict intervention and resolution” (146-147). It is instructive that the conflict resolved when all parties in the community ranging from Tafa, Emma, Teacher Johnson and their co-Christians to Pelele; the only survivor among his friends that went for bunkering and Tombrifa the traditionalist come together under a united voice. Respect was given to culture and tradition when Emma and Tahisha who are Christians made it clear to Teacher Johnson a fellow Christian that their traditional authority must be acknowledged.

TOMBRIFA: Yes, even before we do the youth executing, one thing dey wey we must do to cleanse our community. Everybody wey survive this fire go go river where we go do the ceremony.

TEACHER JOHNSON: What mumbo-jumbo rites are you planning now? We must be and act as Christians or another pipeline fire will strike you heathen...

EMMA: Sorry, Teacher, but it won't be proper to start opposing the new traditional authority of Esidi at this time.

KENI: I am of the same opinion. Tai and I will like to understand the traditional cleansing rites; we are both Dada from birth and wish to cut off our dreads and make a clean break from the past.

TOMBRIFA: Yes, Keni and lolo Papingo, sorry Tai. Dem don follow me discuss their own before. Dem be strong breed and if dem marry the woman go die when she wan born pikin.

TEACHER JOHNSON: With all your university education, Keni...I'm alarmed!

TAHISHA: Our university education is not meant to cut us from our roots but to make us appreciate them better and probably improve on them for the good of all.

TAFIA: I cannot agree with you more. Chief Tombrifa, you can start the cleansing rites. (121).

The playwright here, suggests that despite the excessive quest for Western civilization and modernization, we must not lose our roots nor jeopardize our traditional system. We may perhaps toe the line of Ifeoma and Ifeanyi Odiye's submission thus, "the surprising thing about the effect of imperialism on China is that modern Chinese society in transforming into the Western political world and civilization still retains its traditional values" (15). And China despite sticking to their traditional values has been able to rise even above her imperialist masters in world economy. In Umuko's play, although the actions of government agents compounded the problem of the community, it was through voluntary cooperation by the community that a resolution was finally reached and all parties to the conflict appeased.

Conclusion

The Scent of Crude Oil speaks eloquently on the mantra of change in Nigeria today. It recommends the recognition of local peculiarities in the application of political and economic ideals fashioned in the West. It identifies with the need to harness the rich vein of traditional lore in tackling some of the intractable social and political problems that confront our nation. Arguing that most of the structures and ideologies we have borrowed from the West at the dawn of independence were foisted on us with the erroneous view that our ways still needed to evolve along the lines of the West. It recommends a tacit return to our roots for the solution of some of the socio-political problems we find ourselves as a nation today.

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RE-INVENTING THE POPULIST DRAMATURGY AND STAGECRAFT IN LITERARY NIGERIAN THEATRE

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Abstract

Modern Nigerian literary drama which seeks to lay bare amongst other things the social realities of the people, must begin to evolve a new postmodern theatre language, technique and collective indigenous style which will depict a slight or complete departure from the European “dry theatre”. Like the McKnight programme at the University of Minnesota and the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, professional standards in contemporary literary theatre in Nigeria must be revised and redirect its instructions towards training budding playwrights, directors and would-be actors to reflect an indigenous performative form and character. The paper diagnoses how the Nigerian dramatist/theatre director can creatively use dramaturgical exploration, through traditional artistic resources, festival masque and stage craft in the Nigerian literary theatre to realise a total theatre experience. It sues that; for a play script and its dramatic representation on stage to be considered as African, it must possess not just the embellishment of the African phraseologies, but an entire integration of a stylized expressive representation of dramatic idioms of music, song, dance, masque, mime et cetera in order to indigenize the modern Nigerian literary theatre. The literary theatre assumes a change ideology of serving as custodian of customs and traditions of a people who had or are still suffering from the effect of colonization. The paper concludes that the efforts by budding dramatists/directors and actors to formulate the dialogue of our epoch in Nigerian literary theatre and giving an expression to its aspirations, must be mainstreamed as opposed to the conformist ideologies laid down by the forerunners of literary theatre in Nigeria. In other words, literary theatres in Nigeria must act as change agents through the content and form of their performances reflecting a complete process of cultural decolonization.

Introduction

Zulu Sofola, Ola Rotimi and Wale Ogunyemi were (in fact the sole three) theatre practitioners – as playwrights, actors, and directors – who commenced the search for a new theatre language and technique, in a ‘restorative’ fashion, away from the deeply profound, terribly incomprehensive tradition/foundation laid by the notable pioneers of the literary theatre in Nigeria – Wole Soyinka and John Pepper Clark Bekederemo. (Obafemi and Yerima 4)

The citation above can be taken as a succinct reminder of the contribution of colonialism to provide models for the development of drama/theatre in Nigerian literary theatre. The consequence (colonialism) of this experience on pioneering African, nay Nigerian dramatists is that, they are slightly less frequently still digging in the creative sand using the absorbed Western strictures as their archetypal. Nevertheless, the time is near for the Nigerian literary theatre culture to begin a new artistic process of change management, self-esteem and psychological independence of its dramatic performances in terms of indigenous dramatic vision, performative style and spectacle. Indeed, theatre directors and dramatists laden with African traditional aesthetics must in a systematic and progressive manner strive to subvert the Western dramaturgical form of expression which was surreptitiously impose upon him/her to evolve an African performance aesthetics. It is an inward looking and relies on traditional canons, forms, and conventions for rationalising, at worst, a conscious amalgam of application of Western theatre practice vis-à-vis ‘a Nigerian personality’ in the arts in Nigerian literary theatres. This is especially so because, the sensibilities of the theatregoer in Nigeria is hitherto laden with African thoughts and ideological concern of a performance and even its structure. Therefore, instructors in literary theatres should go even beyond Western postmodernism in search of African, nay Nigerian postmodernism using multicultural theoretical approach as guide to theatre studies in Nigeria. This new pattern of dramaturgy and stagecraft should be akin to the one propounded by the concept and practice of the Brechtian theatre as if Brecht himself were an African. Perhaps it is why Osofisan, in a preface to Edde Iji’s book succinctly describes Brecht as one who:

broke away deliberately from the mainstream, classical tradition of Europe, and develop a new dramaturgy and new mechanics, which on close examination nearly approximates to traditional African praxis. For, central to

Brecht concept and practice was the reliance on non-deterministic, episodic structures, the incorporation of music and song into the weft of plot, and the shaping of the narrative in parabolic form, features the African dramatist recognizes as part of his own heritage. (iv-v)

This is a clear indication of a new configuration of dramaturgy and stagecraft which lay more emphasis on African theatrical aesthetics and traditions.

It is a theatre that is more of creating an alternative theatre space which is not only distinct from Western theatre, but that which encourages Nigerian literary theatre to concentrate her energies rather more on writing and directing her own plays in the best functional African style. This kind of theatre is that which Ukala, believes should rather be preoccupied with rural developmental concerns in which, “part of this theatre are the plays devised in collaboration with rural communities, aimed at solving developmental and health problems, disputably called ‘popular theatre’, or ‘theatre for development’” (32). Suffice to say that, from this approach, the language, the creative process of improvisational proficiency, audience participation and mode of dramatic composition will serve as a revitalization of the folk craftsmanship which is probably fast ceasing to exist in Nigeria.

Importantly, is the style of engaging the audience in a rapport with the performance through a narrator whose attitudes and mode of creative thinking is more in consonance with a folkist milieu. In this instance, practitioners and stakeholders in the literary theatre must provide -relevant skills in this direction. Directors, actors and dramatists must be equipped with traditional principles and the dynamics of audience participation during performances. In other words, actors for example, must be trained on how to be manipulative during a spur-of-the-moment interjection and/or physical involvement of the audience in the performance. It is against this backdrop that play directors must effectively ensure management of all theatrical devices or techniques employed in order to accommodate verbal and physical alliances of the audience with the performers on stage. The technique sought for is that which deliberately breaks away from the classical tradition of Euro/American dramaturgy and stagecraft which attempts to manipulate the audiences willing suspension of disbelief and style of presentation which removes the audience from the performance through the conception of aesthetic distance. Hence, the Nigerian literary theatre should explore a style that incorporates the ‘call and response’ technique through music, dance, and mime, song into the ‘spine’ of a plot thereby creating a psychological

sense of belonging to both actor and audience. To complete this circle, therefore, the director in this theatre must apply the dynamics of a presentational style in which actors or performers openly acknowledge the audience and sometimes even invite members to participate in the performance. By this method, the theatre director would have avoided the concept of vicarious atonement, where just one person can atone for the sins of another. Rather than having the audience pass through a vicarious experience, the director aligns them (audience) with the performance in a manner that, they feel empathy for the characters, be entertained, and yet still partake in the meaning and artistic merit of the performance.

Worrisome still, is the fact that the Nigerian literary theatre has continued to flounder in imperialist tendencies even in a post-colonial era. Goings-on still indicated that its programmes focused more on producing graduates who would be more grounded in the theories and practice of Theatre Arts as specified by European literature and drama. This has in more ways than one affected even the graphic representation of plays witnessed in literary theatres in Nigeria. The observation here, is that which simply describes the Nigerian literary theatre as an entity that is found playing tennis on both sides of the net. This is mind-boggling because, the content of the University curriculum with regards to African culture vis-a-vis drama/theatres is yet to favour indigenous performance techniques and philosophies. Suffice to say that if education is the process of transmission of culture from one generation to another, what then is the magnitude of education reforms that the Nigeria literary theatre requires for posterity? It is perhaps why Ben-Abdallah in an interview with Asiedu is saddened with even the way and manner our students conceive of issues being taught them in the classroom. In resentment he retells his personal experience with students: “We have developed an educational system that makes gods of teachers. When talking in class, what I hate most is students busy just writing”. (Asiedu 103). This scenario presupposes that, products of the literary theatre simply memorize all they are told hook, line and sinker as the whole truth and nothing but the truth. In other words, even the students are not ready to challenge certain generic ideas passed to them by Euro/American theatre concepts and practice. In the same interview with Asiedu; Ben-Abdallah had also given an account of how colonialism had affected our educational institutions and consequently, the ‘School of Performing Arts’ Legon-Ghana where: “The lethargy, the lack of creativity, the proliferation of quackery, the unwillingness to dare, to adventure, to do things, the unwillingness to confront the modern situation. People (are) locked up in the past...and that is what the students are

looking for” and all these in a way had effected the National culture (102). Indications are that, due to the Western drama orientation, most of the performances in Nigerian literary theatres put up by amateur directors are hardly integrated with the fabric and aesthetics of conscious African cultural dimensions/values and stagecraft. Against this backdrop, the role of the Nigerian literary theatre must be, particularly, to make available informed literature and other materials to correct existing distortions in order to redirect the character and trend of performance along paths that reflect our real achievements and in turn preserve our cultural heritage as a people.

Accentuating Populist Drama in Nigerian Literary Theatre

What is actually difficult for people is to see art as a powerful instrument that can affect, influence and bring about innovative opportunities of understanding our world better. Hence, a theatre that is accessible and connected with ideas and opinions of ordinary people would rather most appropriately give meaning to the role(s) we can play in it as up-coming theatre practitioners. In the context in which we experience and practice it (theatre) in Nigeria, we must strive to interrogate it (theatre) as something that is weighty and has meaning to human existence. Timothy-Asobele’s submission on ‘the future of African theatre’ puts it in perspective that; “our theatrical production should reflect African life in a realistic way. That is, attention should be focused on national tradition” (113). In this wise, the theory of relativity as developed by Albert Einstein which says that the way that anything except light moves through time and space depends on the position and movement of someone who is watching. In this regard therefore, the need for drama/theatre to be orchestrated by a recreation of a people’s reality through considerable technical proficiency or creativity, new applications for old remedies in building a theatre tradition in educational theatres must receive assiduous attention.

This is especially so, when one reminisces on the establishment of the British Arts Council in the late 1930s whose aim it was to encourage cultural exchange and cross-cultural transformation. It is significant therefore to mention the existence during this period of the British artists who made deliberate visits to the colonies with dramatic presentations laced with political underpinnings. It is these goings-on that Yerima perceives that:

For example, under the auspices of the British Arts Council, The Nottingham Playhouse, a British based Professional group brought *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night* and Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* to Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra

Leone. The emphasis on drama and its uses by the colonial rulers also had its political implications. The colonial masters were well aware of the new class of native that was growing, especially after the Africans had had the benefit of western education. (44)

These drama presentations bore fruits; hence the likes of Hubert Ogunde in 1943 had started his theatre which no doubt had influences of the Western culture in terms of concert songs, opening glee, and dramatic presentation. As if this was not enough, the issue of parochialism and the need for the theatre to have a nationalistic tone were reflected in many articles in the press at the time. The press had reflected that; although there were obvious manifestations of great creative resources and talent in stage craft by Ogunde's theatre, "one pitfall that has usually been in the path of African enterprise is individualism. Our local theatre as it is now in its infancy, should discard this weakness from the very beginning" (qtd. in Clark 29-30)

On the level conceptualised above, the Nigerian situation must not be so subsumed in the Greek-based Western perceptions of life which is obviously individualistic in nature. To push this further, Sofola reminisces on the African, nay Nigerian worldview, which becomes pertinent as she remarks that, "emphasis is holistic harmony rather than exclusionistic individualism of the European world" (3). Therefore, underlining the tradition of populism which proposes that rights and powers of ordinary people are exploited by a privileged elite(s) and therefore support their struggles to overcome this, would consciously evolve aegis of tutelage that will hone and enrich further, the dramaturgical explorations of the dialectical theatrical traditions already emerging in the contemporary Nigerian theatre. Although it is a political doctrine that appeals to the interest of the common people, it still would not be out of place for this emerging literary theatre with democratic principles to see art as not completely being adjudged from the European world view point. A view point that Azeez shares in, as his search for the social relevance of the Nigerian theatre in the twenty first century reveals that: "the modern artist or activist of the theatre must go beyond Brecht, beyond Picastor, beyond Satre and Beckett. He must, in Nigeria use Soyinka's experiment as a pivot to solve the people's problems" (46-47). Thus, seeing the stage is a catalyst to socio/cultural and political rejuvenation, the literary stage would require a "reconstruction on the prevailing artistic canons that have plagued the consumption and appreciation of our literature and entertainment art which has so much been shaped by stereotypes

foist on us by the exigencies of colonial experience” (Nwaozuzu 42). Our polemic here hints on finding out the extent to which intercultural interactions can transform the Nigerian literary theatre narratives to theorize for the nation and national development.

Thus, beyond the usual conceptual and theatrical performances, the literary theatre in Nigeria must assume a new posture with the understanding of the Nigerian culture and the adaptation of its elements for socio/political, educational and economic integration and development. This will serve as an enforcement within a cultural continuum that would strengthen not only our identity as a people of common origin and language, but creating a populist theatre with a manifesto aimed at demystifying completely Western theatre influence on the Nigerian theatre.

Writers in this context are required to be more exceptional in terms of even individual commitments in respect to championing certain ideologies in their writings rather than just claiming to be more Marxist than Marx for instance. It is on this pathway that Asigbo argues further in his cataloguing of the goings-on of Nigerian playwrights in the 70s and 80s which coincided with the peak of the cold war as well as the apogee of the Marxist cant. Asigbo had berated this seeming posture of deceit by certain persons in the academia who rather paid lip-service to the philosophies they seemed to be professing at a time. He rebuked that: “It was thus very normal then to see academics sporting Marxist beards and proudly claiming to be Marxist...because when all is said and done, there was really nothing exceptional that the second generation did both in their individual capacities and as writers to privilege them as being more committed. Notice also that that Marxist beards have virtually disappeared from our campuses” (21).

However, as already exemplified by the likes of; Ogunyemi, Rotimi, Sofola, Osofisan, Sowande, Ukala, Tomolaju, Asigbo, Utoh-Ezeajugh, Oyedepo, Yerima, Bakare etc, the Nigerian literary theatre will nevertheless serve as a premeditated workspace for domesticating Western theatrical elements. In fact, budding playwrights, directors, actors and other technical workforce not just within the educational circle, but even outside of it, would serve as catalysts for the furtherance of the theatre space in the larger society. As Nigerians, this will not only position them ideologically to confront the society they found themselves, but to also use theatre as a transformational tool either conversely or overtly. The optimal choice of this perception in contemporary Nigerian literary theatre is simply because drama or dramaturgy is rather more profoundly embracive particularly when the issues raised in it (theatre) are on the side of the masses. This approach was however typified by the theatres of Hubert Ogunde,

Duro Ladipo, Ojo Ladipo, Akin Ogungbe, Oyin Adejobi, the jesters, Ishola Ogunsola, Moses Adejumo (Baba Sala) and a host of others in the late 1990s. The expectation is that, this hypothesis should in the long run produce more dramatists, directors, actors, and theorists whose beliefs in espousing the rights, wisdom or virtues and growth of the social realities of the common people in a more profusely unflinching manner.

Hopefully, these now neo-liberal budding dramatists, directors, and actors with a view to professionalizing would begin to seek more pragmatic and indigenous methods to explore a new nuance of theatre language, technique and style embellished with all the African wherewithal of addressing issues of moral judgement, mores and cultures of Nigerian peoples and environmental factors as well. This ideological consciousness of a contemporary Nigerian literary drama could be likened to the “Mcknight Program” at the University of Minnesota which was established to promote students of theatre who showed interest in becoming both artists and scholars. This programme which was both sponsored by the University of Minnesota Theatre and the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre revealed clearly the misperception that could exist between the literary and professional theatre, and how both if creatively deployed could be of immense benefit to their society. It is this process of artistic creativity that Klein opines further that:

The program was predicated on the assumptions that educational and professional theatre could work together and that a good working relationship between the two theatre communities would prove beneficial to both. An appraisal of the program’s first four years reveals that its originators were not unrealistic about its potential. The first of the program’s projects, that of advancing the careers of the artist-scholars, has progressed satisfactorily. (182)

Indeed, the basic conception of a new populist dramaturgy in the contemporary Nigerian literary theatre should therefore reflect as a hard taskmaster upon which the professional theatre should draw inspiration from. Such inspiration must integrate and foster relevant indigenous scholarship on contemporary Nigerian theatre with the objectives of its originators entrenched with African aesthetics and cultural preservation in terms of theatre practice. According to Olufemi and Yerima; this will strengthen theatre practice in terms of its “resourceful deployment of the mechanics of indigenous performative mould, and spectacular” (4). This is particularly so because, in the long run it is the products of the literary theatre that are expected to eventually enter into a relationship with professional

practitioner with a strong view to maintaining set standards. Importantly too, the instructors of these contemporary Nigerian literary theatres would need to revise, re-direct their act, practice or method of teaching in the literary theatres to evolve a Nigerian approach of acting, stagecraft business etc that would reflect a total theatre concept form of expression.

This will fast-track and mainstream the contemporary Nigerian literary theatre in a fast changing world. On the face of it, it is understanding that; even though notions and concepts appear to move fairly fast, things (and that includes money, instructors, curricula and the like) tend to move more slowly inside the University than outside of it. To be realistic, it is wishful hoping that these notions and concepts from the literary theatre can be applied effectively in praxis beyond the educational institution. The corollary of this, is that, the literary theatre artist is often constraint with the establishment of a machinery for security, confident and pride of being as relevant to the society as any other professional. This implies that, instructors must intensify their efforts at identifying essential indigenous characteristics of actor-training, directing and playwriting to forestall the required qualitative transformation of the literary theatre that intends to rub elbows with professional theatre and together re-invent the African experience in the educational theatre. This will discourage the predominant ideology of conformism that the contemporary Nigerian literary theatre is still pre-occupied with.

By and large, theatre training in the academia would not only grow what is humanly and institutionally possible, but would also benefit student-artists with rather remarkable strides towards professionalizing to make a difference in the larger theatre space. In this context, Western theory should be pitted against the backdrop of integrating African dramatic idioms of music, dance, mime, song etc in its dramaturgy and stagecraft whose *raison d'être* is to formulate new ideas from the old as pertinent to our norms and culture.

Stagecraft and Change Management in Nigerian Literary Theatre

Decades after the denigration of African arts and culture by Western imperialism, some critics like Egwu (2010) censures the critical attention given to African literary arts that capture the people's traditional culture. He foresees an urbanised Nigeria where the younger generation are so distanced from traditional life as to create it in contemporary art forms. (Ezenwanebe 152)

The above assertion lends credence to the fact that modern Nigerian drama is an offshoot of Western education which has also conditioned the fashion in which we conceived of drama and stagecraft in Nigerian literary theatre. In line with this, Ahmed Yerima as (cited by Ajima and Shittu) attempts to trace the origin of modern drama in Nigeria as he brings to the forefront the likes of James Ene Henshaw, Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, Ola Rotimi and Mabel Segun. According to him: “These first generation dramatists employed a varied style of imitating the classicists or Shakespeare or the style of modern theatre” (34). This presupposes that in so many ways than one, the Nigerian literary theatre is self-possessed like a ‘theatre of surrender’. A theatre enmeshed in Western theatrical aesthetics and approaches that glamourize the weighing scale of colonial hangover of the classicists, romanticist with all the trimmings of ritualistic formalism of the Greco/Roman theatre. Suffice to say that, it is this outlandish Western dominance that Ihonvbere, (6) berates as “a culture of authoritarian nostalgia – where people begin to admire previous dictatorships- set in and demands were even made for a return to the colonial days”. To this extent, even though “the first report of a European-style play performed by Africans appeared in 1866...these plays did not assimilate traditional African theatre. During the colonial period, traditional African theatre was devalued and even suppressed, while theatres with Western stages, curtains, and proscenium arches were considered indispensable” (Downs, Wright, and Ramsey 242). Even in the later years, where Soyinka’s plays were observed to be deeply rooted in African myths, dance and rituals, one still got a reminder of his Western education background by Downs, Wright, and Ramsey. On Soyinka, they posit in the most succinct manner that: “But he was also influenced by Western drama, including ancient Greek theatre, Shakespeare and European non-realistic plays” (243). In other words, the literary classical styles known as classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism, symbolism, expressionism etc are still presented from the conventions of the Greco/Roman era without a clear form of relating same to Nigerian culture.

Therefore, the mentality that still considers the Western literary canons and all its theatrical elements more superior and the African indigenous one as hypothetically detrimental, requires a reassessment. It is perhaps this act of disparaging the dramaturgy and stagecraft in Nigerian literary theatre that has prompted a theatre scholar and social critic Ukala to put it another way: “Consequently, Western drama influenced African students of Western literature, as well as a great number of non-theatre-goers to interpret the world the way the colonial planners of the African curricula wanted them to and to imbibe the Western social habits and pastimes reflected in Western drama” (29). This gives

one the impression that most of the ideologies, styles and approaches observed in literary theatres across the country today are still laced with the profundities of Western dramaturgy. Though we can see that, Africa, nay Nigeria did not have theatres in the Western and Oriental sense before the advent of colonialism, we would like to explore a blend of certain contemporary stagecraft methods with how they can (methods) be deployed in traditional arenas like; shrines, courtyards, temples, king's palaces should the need arise.

Nonetheless, as a people with a robust culture, we must begin to systematically resist and seek the progress of replacing them (Western social habits and pastimes) with techniques that exemplify the functionality of the African life in all its theatricality in order to create an African, nay Nigerian postmodern theatre theorization and identity. Certainly, contemporary Nigerian literary theatre should as a matter of urgent concern encourage a dramaturgy of cultural renewal and revival of traditions that have been all these years suppressed by Western theatrical principles. This is on the premise that, Africa, nay Nigeria has entered the postmodern period with the rest of the world. Citing Synge, Asigbo and Okeke therefore observe that "All writers and artists are creative borrowers who dip their pen into their respective cultural wells for inspiration. In turn, the artist repackages such borrowed materials in ways that may be regarded as unique to the artist in question and represents to his immediate environment" (16).

Admittedly, there are traces of this in contemporary Nigerian theatre, however, more vigorous attention is required in order to sustain the momentum of those in the literary theatre. Nwosu Canice gives more impetus to this argument as he considers that: "Perhaps the difference lies in the fact that African postmodern theories negotiate boundaries and build bridges across gulfs using multicultural approaches...they transcend boundaries and shatter conventions and ideological rigidity" (95). This breaking away and finding of new boundaries like, neo-traditional techniques would in itself harness the distinctive indigenous features of the Nigerian literary theatre practice to perhaps becoming folkloric and performative in outlook. To this extent, Umukoro also re-echoes that:

The theatre of literary culture communicating predominantly in English, is largely a post-independence phenomenon which finds eloquent expression in the works of Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, and other western-educated playwrights who attempt to evolve a peculiar brand of dramaturgy which blends the folkloric elements with decidedly alien concepts.

Hence, in spite of the celebrated dichotomy between the professional and the academic streams, the flowering of academic theatre is the natural consequence of the inevitable cross-fertilization or artistic pollination by the age-long professional theatre. (129)

Still on Western influence, paraphrasing Graham-White's discourse on colonialism, Ukala observes that the nationalist struggle for independence created the negritude movement all over Africa to resist the assimilation policy of the French colonialists (108-9). Albeit these movements, especially after independence repositioned most African nations for revival of African cultures using their African intelligentsias. The likes of E'skia Mphahlele, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Chinweizu, Madubiuke et cetera are exemplified in this direction of seeking for African aesthetic independence. From this time, the options available to the contemporary Nigerian literary theatre, which is not even enough, ought to have rather stirred more reworked versions of Nigerian legends, history and storylines of heroes/heroines like: Kurunmi in *Kurunmi*, Kimathi Wa Wachiuri in *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Ame Oboni in *Ame Oboni*, Akpaka in *Akpakaland*, Otaelo in *Otaelo*, Emotan in *Emotan*, Queen Amina in *Queen Amina*, Caliph Attahiru in *Attahiru*, Ozidi in *Ozidi* Kinjeketile in *Kinjeketile*, Oba Ovonranwem Nogbaisi in *The Trials of Oba Ovoranwem Nogbaisi*, Akaraogun in *Langbodo* et cetera as a strategy to berate strict Western theatre conventions. This presupposes that: "students of drama therefore need to be able to determine something of the playwright's attitude to his audience and of their ideological assumptions, as well as the social and economic conditions under which they live" (Bradby, Thomas and Kenneth 236). This supposition becomes clearer, if we consider the problems of producing Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, a play from the medieval period for a contemporary Nigerian audience for instance. This is because, as a Nigerian theatre director, my interpretation of the play (*A Doll's House*) would largely be governed by particular set of social conjectures and the broad differences in audience assumption taking into consideration the difference in the two cultures.

Conversely, Ukala, while assessing theatrical translations/adaptations of African fables and culture by some artists like, Solomon Plaatje who translated into Setswana, Shakespeare's *A Comedy of Errors*; Julius Nyerere's adaptation into KiSwahili, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Dev Virahsawmy's translation and adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and a host of others, summarized the dilemma and flaws in these works. According to him:

In many cases, these plays do little more than faithfully reproduce their sources and, sometimes, have a narrator come in-between scenes to advance the story. They are also hardly critical of the African heroes and culture. Their primary aim is to show off the greatness of Africans and their culture, not to criticize them. This is a flaw, but it does not detract from the laudability of this pioneering effort in the African Literary theatre to cast away a deeply-entrenched colonial mentality, which caused the African to be ashamed of himself, past and artistic heritage. (31)

Discouraging to note also, is the unimaginative replication of the original Euro/American proscenium stage in most Nigerian literary theatres. The geometric design and configuration of this theatre is outlandish and as such devoid of the African order of unending continuum of a circle. This is simply that, this kind of stage does not provide the African feel with the past and the future meeting at the point of the present. Suffice to say that, the simultaneity of the African arena setting or theatre-in-the-round would enhance more physical and psychological intimacy between the actor and audience. The director in this theatre, “is free to experiment with movement and other element of directing to physicalize the dramatic action of the play in question” (Ejeke 23). Against this backdrop, the audience tend not to see the actors from a pictorial and illusionary point of view where theatre is presented as a real life experience.

That is the explanation for why as a Nigerian dramatist, one should not shirk conditions for creativity that will encourage strong identification with actors playing on stage. Hence, in the words of Ayckbourn, “as a playwright it may be your intention to build a vehicle to take us to the stars. But do make sure you have people aboard”. In essence, to make his play an actor/audience filled experience, the playwright in the literary theatre must transmit in a manner that his audience will be quick to respond. He must think of the African theatre as cyclical in nature, so as to impel a meeting of the ancestral with the unborn at the domain of the living. This establishes the fact that: “the traditional performance space in the African society is such that readily encourages the blend of...arts as the people’s way of life is closely incorporated into their performances” (Ogunbiyi 7). In other words, the African, nay Nigerian audience can never assume an inorganic posture, therefore the Nigerian dramatist must anchor his/her creativity on the way he/she says it than with what it is that he/she is actually saying. In fact, the choice of an opening glee, use of Western musical instrument, plot structure et cetera should

not be over glamorized at the expense of traditional dramatic instruction or entertainment forms in literary theatres across Nigeria.

This is essentially so, as it could create a distancing of physical and psychological closeness of the actor to the audience, thereby jeopardizing cultural affinity which is a common characteristic with the Western theatre where the audience is physically passive and non-participant due to the conventional apartheid allied with the proscenium stage. Ejeke strengthens further this contention by reiterating that: “The proscenium creates a technical barrier between the actors and the audience, a separation that alienates one from the other” (22). Hence, a suiting stagecraft technique would be to tutelage budding dramatists and stage directors in the literary theatre on how to construct adaptable theatres that can meet stage dimensions and home-grown style of dramatizing their narratives. Undoubtedly too, this will stimulate a new spatial relationship that could heighten and bring about an increased audience participation in literary theatre performances. It is a proposition that is African, indeed, Nigerian and sees, “culture as a product of their interfacing life, with the past in the present for the future” (Ezenwanebe 154). It becomes expedient therefore that: dramatists and theatre directors in Nigerian literary theatre have expertise on methods of inducing some sort of joint performance between actors and audience. In this wise, the stagecraft establishes a punctuation point in the course of a performance in which dances or songs are introduced in a total theatre practice with the expectation of the audience taking part in the performance.

Conclusion

The Nigerian literary theatre in its rush to improve theatrical training has more often than not, recorded a dereliction of robust indigenous components to dramaturgical principles and stagecraft. Its search-light is rather more focused on the use of Western standards and philosophies of drama and performance, particularly as imbibed and laid by notable pioneers of the literary theatre in Nigeria like Soyinka and Bekederemo. Nevertheless, exploring the dynamics of our indigenous stagecraft mechanism, our contemporary literary theatres should endeavour to provide a postmodernist framework for integrating multipart structure of interrelated cultures with a view to rationalizing Western stagecraft and literary canons on our stage. This will be on the strength of what people like Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Zulu Sofola, Kole Omotosho, Olu Obafemi, Ahmed Yerima, Ola Rotimi, Stella Oyedepo, Alex Asigbo, Tunde Fatunde, Ojo Bakare, and others had started.

Besides, when we consider the imperialist educational structure foisted on the black race (Nigeria) to chart a certain Westernized consciousness vis-à-vis our cultural heritage we may begin to realise the need to carve a new ideological framework to guide the goings-on in our literary theatre. This new theatre language and stagecraft should rather encourage a performative style that could heighten audience participation, and at the same time, exploring the use of music, dance, song, mime, masque dramaturgy etc into the weft of plots in the most Nigerianized manner. In other words, as colonized Nigerians that we are; we do not need to continue in an artistic manner that will warrant us citing Shakespeare or Marlowe's works in a more proficient English style than Shakespeare and Marlowe themselves would. Or better still, exhibit great directorial competence in directing Luigi Pirandello's plays better than we will of a Soyinka, Rotimi or Yerima's. Simply put: student-artists in our literary theatres cannot afford to be more English than the Englishman himself, in terms of his culture and theatrical sensitiveness.

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Special Feature

**NEGOTIATING IDENTITY:
THEATRE, PERFORMANCE AND CRITICISM IN AFRICA**

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The question of identity became dominant in African theatre at the onset of colonialism. The colonial masters imported into Africa their kind of theatre, which was in many respects different from the type that existed in pre-colonial African societies. As is to be expected, consequent upon the interaction between the two cultures, there now exist syncretic forms of entertainment, which are a fusion of the two theatre traditions. Since the early 1960s African scholars and theatre critics in particular have sustained the conversation on what features define an authentic African theatre. Today this conversation is still raging because of the twin burdens of globalization and colonialism. In most African cities, foreign entertainment forms still exist side by side the indigenous African performances. At the level of theory, both the African and European theatre traditions have their distinct aesthetic canons. Negotiating these canons is part of what makes the task of the theatre critic in Africa engaging but tricky. This paper examines the challenge of negotiating cultural identity through theatre, performance and criticism in Africa.

The theatre critic in traditional African society exists more as a performer than a literary artist. He is either embodied in the highly participatory African theatre audience or exists as that virtuoso multi-talented performer who understands his people's artistic tastes, values, social mores and culture. Like the modern theatre critic, he is one who can evaluate a creative work and make an informed statement on its artistic merits or otherwise. He is not just a performer but also one who continuously seeks to understand and interpret the social forces that interplay in his society and the extent to which these affect and influence social conduct, creativity and wellbeing of members of the society. However, unlike the modern critic, he doesn't have to reduce his criticism or ideas into writing. He communicates his observations either in the form of song, oral poetry, jeers, applause, and other expressive performances.



A folk Artist and critic in Performance (Photo Credit: E.S. Dandaura)

Perhaps, it is important to note from the onset that the theatre traditions in the fifty-four different countries in Africa are unique albeit similar in many respects. While not taking the uniqueness of each of the constituent traditions for granted, this paper concentrates primarily on those aesthetic values that are common to most African performances rather than those few distinguishing features. That is what has been referred to here as 'African Theatre'. Similarly, the paper has taken liberty to refer to Europe or the 'West' as if it were a theatre bloc whose aesthetic taste is defined by the Aristotelian precepts of literary criticisms. This does not mean that the paper is oblivious that Europe like Africa has its rich collections of theatre traditions whose texture differs from one nation to the other. In both cases the paper dwelt on the common aesthetic values in each region than the national particularities.

Orality was the basic character of indigenous African theatre and also key means of communication by theatre or social critics long before the advent of colonialism in Africa. This oral nature of theatre in African contrasts so much with the perception of theatre in Europe where in the words of Hauptfleisch:

the playtext is the thing thus, not the performance... The theatrical idea that the history of theatre is a history of the performances that took place, is apparently rejected...African theatre, even today, is a performance one, rather than a literary one, though colonial thinking has long sought to canonise the printed text. (2)

During Colonialism, indigenous African performance modes were suppressed and in some cases deliberately supplanted with Western performance modes. Mloma provides a clue to the intention of this colonial policy: “their intention was not only to entertain the European community in the colonies but also to inculcate European values and attitudes among the colonised as part of the cultural domination crucial to the colonization process” (57).

In school, children were taught how to appreciate literature and music from the perspective of the European child. For instance, through nursery rhymes the child was taught about snow and skiing, when in his lifetime, the African child may never see snow let alone ski in his community. They were taught to recite “there are four seasons in a year: winter, spring, summer and autumn”. Meanwhile most African children experience only two seasons in a year- rain and dry seasons. As a child I was also taught to recite popular nursery rhymes like

“London Bridge is falling down,
Falling down, falling down,
London Bridge is falling down,
My fair lady”

It didn't matter to my teachers then if I would ever get to see London, River Thames or any modern bridge for that matter. As we progressed into secondary schools, we were taught basic literary appreciation skills. It was then I learnt that the “London Bridge” poem was constructed “in quatrains”. I was taught about pentameters: iamb, trochee, dactyl, and anapaest. Again I learnt about Greek tragedies, and the concept of the well-made play. We were taught to read and regurgitate the works of great European playwrights from Aeschylus, Sophocles, Menander, through Shakespeare and down to Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. In the university, we were introduced to philosophy, theatre history, literary theory and criticism. From my young mind and orientation, I saw Aristotle as that nosy, larger than life fellow who has done all the thinking for humanity. As a young critic, I was well armed with detailed prescriptions of the Aristotelian poetics, structuralism, Marxist aesthetics and the like which I sought for every

opportunity to apply faithfully. Wole Soyinka's "The fourth Stage" in his *Myth, Literature and the African World* or Léopold Sedar Senghor's *Negritude* both originate from African, yet were additions to my critical canons that probably came too late in the day.

The nature of schooling which colonialism bequeathed the average African critic is such that the default canon for any aesthetic judgment is often the Aristotelian poetics or any other European precept. Sharing the East African experience, Mollel (1982) notes that by sticking to Eurocentric critical canons, modern theatre critics in Africa unwittingly promote the idea that the "only theatrical experience worth speaking about in Africa is the one inherited from Europe". Nothing can be further from the truth. Africa has long established indigenous performance traditions, which subsumes ritual, dance, song, storytelling, wedding ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, harvest festivals, puppetry, shadow theatre, dance-drama, dramatic enactments, mime, etc.

Aesthetic Moglelisation: African Theatre under Colonialism

At political independence, which heralded end of colonialism in most countries, African Theatre ended up as mongrelized aesthetic forms. Even today, most manifestations of African theatre remain an amalgam of both the *traditional* and *modern* (European) theatre traditions. The traditional strand is indigenous, eclectic, boisterous, diverse, and abounds in every community. This strand of theatre manifests in two forms. First, it manifested in the form of purely ritualistic performances, chants, masquerades, and festivals of the various ethnic groups in the fifty-four nations in Africa. Secondly, it also manifests in the form of age-long, entertaining and highly educative story-telling performances, folktales, fables, proverbs, idioms, praise songs, mimes, and dances performed during social events.

Besides the traditional strand, there is also the literary strand, which is a by-product of Africa's experience with colonialism and the intervening European theatre traditions. This strand of African theatre emphasises scripted plays, western literary canons, imported theatre technologies and box office collections. Rather than the eclectic, total theatre performance format of most indigenous theatre forms, the literary theatre encourages compartmentalization of the theatre enterprise into different professional callings as playwrights, directors, choreographers, designers, critics, etc. These professionals strive to earn their living by collaborating to *make* theatre in enclosed buildings, which are specially designed for such purposes.

While the new African political and middle class relish products from the literary theatre strand and other entertainment forms that originated from the West. The vibrant folk performances are conscribed to the ghettos and rural areas. The vestiges of Western entertainment forms, especially literary theatre, found fertile soils on campuses as new crop of playwrights tutored in Western (Aristotelian) aesthetics emerged. Olu Obafemi captures the situation succinctly:

Colonial hegemony in Africa did not only manifest itself in the political and economic life of the people, it also shaped the direction of African literature in a significant way. Early literate African art works, especially dramatic productions were largely informed by European entertainment forms like music hall, morality plays and operatic performances. (np)

Hitherto, there existed in pre-colonial Africa, indigenous theatre traditions, which were truly seen by the majority of the people as integral part of their daily existence. Theatre was part of what brought vibrancy and order to the existence of the Africans. It was free, accessible, performance oriented, oral, engaging, and relevant to the existence of every member of the community where it exists, regardless of social, political or economic stratifications. Suddenly, the visiting colonial masters redefined theatre for the young African school children as not just any performance but essentially a performance:

based on the 'well-written play or ...only possible on an indoor stage, under a picture-frame proscenium, arch and fancy foot-lights, and we still believe that there ought to be for any theatre performance a rigid demarcation between the audience and the performers, the performers on a lighted stage, raised above the audience who sit in a darkened auditorium below, to all appearances non-existent.

The above polarity in the conception of what constitutes good theatre subsists in Africa to date. This duality further complicates the job of the theatre critic in Africa. Often in reviewing a performance, the question that comes to mind is: should the critic pander to the established literary canons of the 'formal theatre' which, of course are Eurocentric, or should he yield more to the traditional African aesthetic values which are understood by the majority of the audience in

Africa. The dilemma is that should the critic opt for the formal theatre, the bulk of the performances, which are often episodic, site and time specific, will not qualify as serious theatre. The bulk of the performances which majority of the African audience enjoy and connect with may not be given the serious attention they deserve as worthy artistic creations.

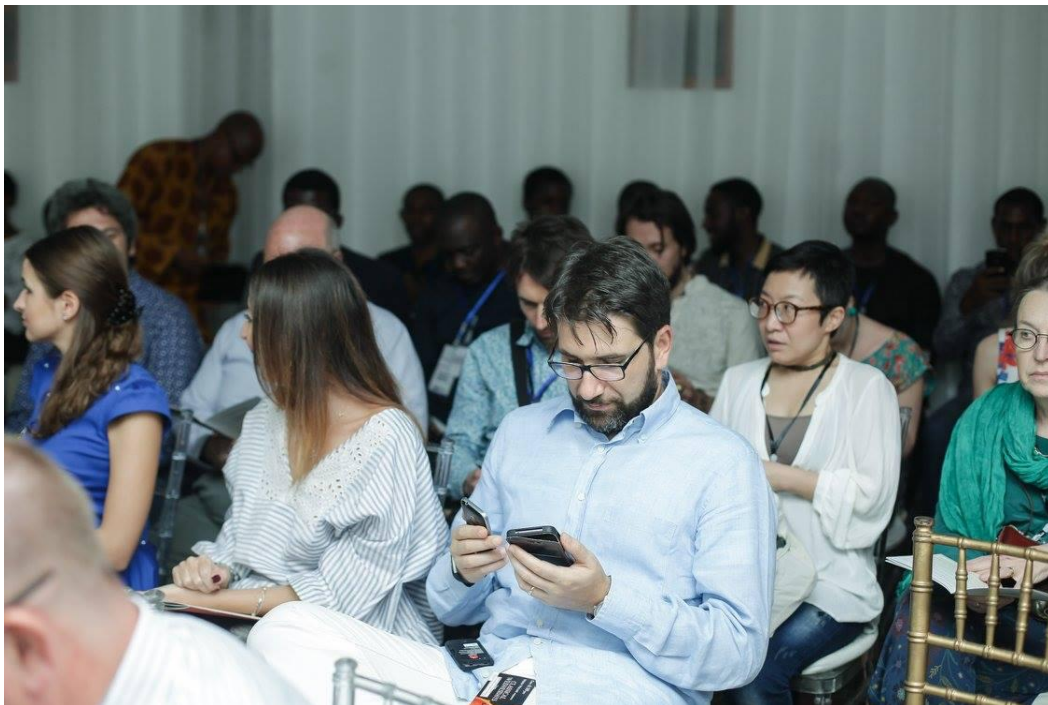


A Taste of the Critic's Challenge

In a syncretic theatre environment, navigating through the maze of which aesthetic canons to apply in reviewing a performance that is strictly speaking neither African nor Western can be arduous. This reality manifested itself recently in Lagos, Nigeria. As part of the 2017 Lagos Theatre Festival (LTF), on Wednesday 1st day of March, I accompanied three visiting colleagues and international theatre critics from Sweden, Romania and Hong Kong alongside twenty young Nigerian theatre critics to watch two performances: *Lagos Na Wa* at the Recital Hall, Muson Centre, Lagos; and *Vesta Violins' Wednesday Classics*, at the Banana Island School, Ikoyi, Lagos. The International Association of Theatre Critics selected the two performances as part of the field exposure for the twenty

young critics under its 2017 LTF-Young Critics professional mentoring programme.

Lagos Na Wa is a fast-moving, comic, improvisational performance created within the total theatre mould. It subsumes songs, drama, buffoonery, dance, mime, and music. The performance utilizes pidgin English, Yoruba and Nigeria blend of the English Language. *Lagos Na Wa* is a satire that expresses the frustration of most African youths who are exposed to untold harassments, exploitations and ultimately made to indulge in dubious acts in order to survive in the urban centres. The episodic performance utilizes popular songs, musical tunes, drama, day to day happenings, and characters recognizable in the daily hustle and bustle of the mega cities like Lagos. Its strongest comment is that the failure of government at all levels has greatly compromised the welfare and security of its citizens.



A cross section of the mixed audience during the 2017 Lagos Theatre Festival performance on 1st March 2017. (Photograph Credit: Courtesy British Council, Nigeria)

During the tripartite post performance interaction between: the visiting international critics; the young Nigerian critics; and cast of *Lagos Na Wa*, I

noticed an interesting development. While most of the young Nigerian critics found it easy to relate with the performance as a meaningful artistic engagement, my international colleagues found it difficult to classify what they just watched. “Could it be a musical drama”? a rehearsal in progress? or arrant balderdash? It was certainly not ‘theatre’ as far as the western theatre precepts are concerned. One of the European critics submitted emphatically that “there was no spectacle in this at all, and spectacle is a basic element of theatre”. On reading the review of same performance by the young critics the next day I realized that even the Nigeria critics that connected the with the actions of the performance were not in agreement on how to classify or evaluate it. They ended up with some of the following contradictory submissions:

The production style is largely eclectic, employing popular hit songs to deepen the message of the play...Generally, the directing and artistic vision of the production is good and to a large extent delivers the message of the play. (Shedrack Ukuma <https://dailynigerian.com/entertainment/lagos-na-wa-the-casual-rhythm-of-lagos/>)

This is a comedy of errors with a charm that makes it look like a performance thrown together casually (Ifeoluwa Nihinlola <https://guardian.ng/art/lagos-na-wa-just-like-awkward-rhythm-of-the-city/>)

Lagos Na Wa is a musical drama, that highlights a lot of vices. The script is impressive, direct and detailed. The musicals ranging from contemporary Nigerian hits, speak where dialogue is mute (Olamide Santos, (IATC-LTF Report).

It is a ‘mosaic of dance, music and drama...It’s a portrait – perhaps a painting achieved in broad strokes would be more appropriate – of rural-urban migration, corruption, sexual health and safety, and a repertoire of other societal issues (Falade Adeoye Dennis, IATC-LTF Report).

What is interesting in the above reviews of *Lagos Na Wa* is that the discordant submissions of the critics were basically as a result of each applying different aesthetic lens. Indeed, the lenses utilized to analyse a performance determines

greatly *how* the performance will be understood by the analyst. Surely if one is evaluating *Lagos Na Wa* performance from the Eurocentric lens, the likely conclusion will be that the performance was anything but a play. However, from the African perception of theatre as a story-telling performance whose relevance is measured by the extent to which it reflects and impacts life, *Lagos Na Wa* stands out as ‘good theatre’.



Guchi Egbuine leading the orchestra during *Vesta Violins’ Wednesday Classics* performance at the Banana Island School Recital Hall, Ikoyi Lagos on 1st March 2017. (Photograph Credit: Courtesy British Council, Nigeria)

Vesta Violins’ Wednesday Classics on the other hand was a concert that featured an international ensemble, which comprised Oana Craciunescu (Romania), Koumait Saleh (Syria) and a host of Nigerians led by Rosalyn Aninyei and the two amazing vocalists; Guchi Egbuine and Ranti Ihimoyan. The concert was just what a performance of “early music” should be: exciting, warm, soul searching, and nostalgic. The tones were no doubt beautifully executed with graceful ornaments, unimpeachable precision and Victorian panache. Ronti’s voice was eloquent, alluring, elastic and had this ringing purity, which kept the audience

mesmerized. Her graceful spontaneity as a singer came to the fore as she added little ornaments to the repeated laughter phrase “hahahaha” in the “laughter song” which was eventually voted the best piece of the night by the audience.

The above review is based on my impressions as a critic who has tuned his mind to the conventional aesthetic criteria of what elements define good classical musical performances. It was gratifying to note that my three visiting international theatre critics who didn't find ‘much theatre’ in *Lagos Na Wa*, that we all watched few hours earlier, found ‘good theatre’ in this concert. However, this was not the case with some of the young Nigeria critics who came to the concert armed with their African aesthetic canons. To such critics, the concert was extremely boring as there was not a single moment of the kind of ‘activity’ in the *boisterous Lagos Na Wa* fashion. Indeed, one of the critics whispered to me “I am wondering what message is in all this? There was no dance, spectacular movement, familiar musical tone or anything that the average Nigerian audience member will recognize or connect to”. Ofcourse, his concern is understandable when we appreciate the fact that utilitarian value of an art form, ‘meaning’ or ‘the message’ is an important element in African performance aesthetics.



Ranti Ihimoyan in performance of Vesta Violins' Wednesday Classics "the laughter song"

Photograph Credit: Courtesy British Council, Nigeria

African Theatre Aesthetics

The African theatre aesthetics differs in many respects from those of the conventional European aesthetics. One of these is the African preference for episodic narrative and symbolism as against the European emphasis on dialogue and syllogism of linear plot. As far back as 1934 Antonin Artaud who was impressed by the kind of theatre he found in Asia decried the prostituting of theatre by the West in his *Le theatre et son double* thus:

Why is it that in the theatre, at least in the theatre as we know it in Europe, for that matter in the West, everything that ... doesn't obey expression by speech, by words, or if you wish, everything that is not contained in dialogue... is left in the background?

Indeed, the difference between the African conception of theatre and the European notion of 'formal' theatre goes beyond the idea of orality versus the text. Every theatre seeks to entertain and engender communication between the performer and the audience. However, the approach towards entertainment and communication differ from one society to the other. As a cultural product, theatre is affected and shaped by the predominant aesthetic sense, goals and cultural realities of its creators. This presupposes that no two societies would have same theatrical expressions in so far as the cultural realities and artistic goals of the creators differ.

Theatre in Africa is approached as a communal activity, which involves the whole community. It is not a subjective activity of an artist or group of artists. The messages such a theatre communicates must necessarily be in tune the overriding interest of the community. In this kind of theatre, the audience is active and also engages in criticism of the performance as the show progresses. African theatre has what Ola Rotimi calls a "polaroid" character (referring to the instantaneous nature of their approval or lack of approval for any artistic product presented before them like the 'polaroid camera' which has inbuilt processing image processing capability that produces a finished print rapidly after each exposure). Unlike the 'discipline' audience in Europe that will patiently wait till the end of a scene or act to clap, or wait for the critic to dissect the performance in the next day review, the African theatre audience gives it judgment as the performance

goes on either by jeering at what it considers a bad performance or by clapping or hailing the performer there and then. Obafemi sums it thus:

The critic of African drama had been the audience, which we refer to as participatory audience because they were also at once creators, dramatists and performance. In the oral performance mode, the critical aesthetics revolves around narration, inter-narration and re-narration on the basis of participatory theatrical engagement.

Western influences on African theatre

Western influences on modern Africa theatre remain visible in many areas. First is the choice of language of communication. Most of the modern plays are written in the language of the colonial masters: French, Dutch, English, Portuguese etc. There are very few plays written in the local languages. Since majority of the population in Africa are not literate in these foreign languages, it means the consumers of such theatrical products are either foreigners or the urban-based elites who constitute a minority of the population.

The emphasis on written, verbal drama is also robbing modern African theatre of its orality, vibrancy and immediacy. The influence of the ‘Aristotelian trinity’ (unity of time, place and actions) means that modern African plays cannot afford to retain their traditional loose epic structures, which the people are conversant with. The action of each play now needs to be more concentrated, focused and made to revolve around a more tightly knit plot.

Also, the preference for indoor performance venues, with box office, actors performing on a raised platform, proscenium arc separating the actors from their audience, and all the razzmatazz of modern technology are new influences, which continue to change the character of modern African theatre. Also being challenged is the traditional idea of theatre as any free space available within the community where the performer and his audience commune regularly and freely too. Theatre in Africa was never conceived as a commercial or exclusive activity where the audience needed to buy tickets to participate in a performance. It was an open show on any free and accessible space within the community.

Perhaps, far more significant is the choice of themes and production style by some modern African playwrights. The preference for ‘universal themes’ and more ‘global production approaches’ that will appeal to a ‘wider audiences’ has continued to expand the chasm between the works of some modern African playwrights and majority of their audiences who find it increasingly difficult to

relate to the content of some of these plays. This has further diminished the audiences as most times the urban elites are the few who patronize ‘formal theatre’ performances in most African cities to date. The preference of urban and foreign-based publishers for plays written in foreign languages and styles has also made it difficult for authentic African theatre to be documented in print. This situation is perhaps what Eldred Jones bemoans few decades back when has declared that ‘popular plays never get published and plays which are published are never popular’.

Concluding Remarks

In these days that the human space has been reduced to a global village, no theatre tradition should accept an observer status. Thus, African theatre should take advantage of the increasing opportunities to contribute to the shape and character of global theatre practice. The critic has a role to play in mediating this process. He should be knowledgeable of the various cultures and aesthetic canons that govern both local and intervening foreign canons. He needs to adhere to his professional ethics demonstrate skills in knowing the appropriate lense to apply to performance from different climes. This is necessary if the critic must be proficient and effective in making meaningful contributions towards enhancing the development of theatre practice, as well as position theatre to generate positive impacts on society.

Perhaps it is trite to state that the engagement between Western and African theatre has its positive impacts beside the areas of concern highlighted earlier. For instance, the engagement stimulated the growth of professional theatre in Africa. It also ushered in many generations of playwrights and nurtured theatre critics currently servicing both the media and academic publications. Wole Soyinka’s nobel prize in 1986 and Femi Osofisan’s Thalia Award coming exactly three decades later (in 2016) signify the highpoints of global recognition for the contributions of modern African playwrights and critics to the growth of world theatre.

The introduction of modern theatre technology, indoor theatres and other theatre infrastructure in Africa has expanded platforms for theatre makers to exhibit their works. This has also boosted tourism and the economy of host African nations. The introduction of European styled theatre festivals has boosted creative enterprises and opened the African entertainment scene to multicultural participants. Lagos Theatre Festival, for instance, has motivate the creation of new plays and fresh opportunities for cross- fertilization of ideas between theatre producers and the rich mix of Lagos audience.

However, in these days of global terrorism, theatre has a role to play in helping humanity to regain its fast fading humane values. Playwrights, Theatre directors, critics and other artists need to deploy their creativity towards increasing intercultural and multicultural dialogue within and beyond national borders. It is from this perspective that I commend the design of the World Cultures Festival in Hong Kong which seeks to provide an annual platform for the showcasing the best global theatre performances. The critic should help the theatre makers to think local and act global always in the packaging of their productions. The idea is to celebrate diversity and the beauty of one world, many peoples, colours and expressions.

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Style: NTJ has adopted as its official guide the Publication Manual of the Modern Language Association, Sixth Edition. Consequently, all manuscripts must be in conformity with this MLA referencing style. Paper(s) should be typed, single-spaced, on white A4 paper, with wide margin. The submitted paper should be emailed to SONTA email address: sontaeditor@gmail.com. An abstract of not more than two hundred and fifty words summarizing the main points of the article, should accompany the manuscript. NTJ encourages that each paper submitted should deal with the methodology used in addressing the subject in proficient detail relating to the place of data within the proper methodological settings and all. In case of illustrations, it must be submitted with the final draft and must be of professional quality, and executed on white paper, in colour ink, with clear, medium weight, black lines and figures. Typewritten lettering should not appear in illustrations. Such should be numbered appropriately. Authors should use Microsoft Office Word Format of 16 font size for the title and name of the author, 12 font size for the body of the article, and 10 font size for indented paragraphs and a reference list format to list Works Cited (All in Times New Romans font style).

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