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RE-INVENTING THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN NIGERIAN FILMS: A CRITICAL READING OF TECO BENSON'S *THE SENATOR*

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Abstract

*The general impression in Nigeria is that, politics is the shortest cut to the top, the surest way to arrive in the society. To the average Nigerian, politics is a do-or-die affair; and if one has to enjoy its dividends, it is not to be played by the rules. The politicians: the military, civilians, or 'militicians' (retired military men in politics), speak from both sides of the mouth. Thus, the legacy of our political tradition is the determination of a group to get revered political authority, at all cost, and hold on to it as long as possible, until they are forced to leave. One shortcoming of the present Nigerian democratic experience is the electoral process that has lacked transparency. As it were, every film is a representation of the economic, social, political, religious, cultural, and technological developments of the producing country. Hollywood films have continued to reflect the American way of life – politically, economically, socially, culturally, technologically, and so forth. Popular films intervene in the political struggles of the day. Incidentally, the political film genre did not received serious attention from Nollywood producers, until the demise of the Gen. Sani Abacha, probably because of economic considerations and exigencies of the political landscape. From a critical reading of Teco Benson's *The Senator*, it is posited that the re-invention of the electoral process in Nigeria cannot be achieved with printed literatures alone; and that the films, like *The Senator*, could be used to bring positive developments in the country's political system.*

Introduction

The *New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary* defines politics as, the act of "scheming and manoeuvring with a group" (777). It is not surprising then that a politician is seen in a derogatory sense as, "a person engaged in politics merely

for personal gain” (*Webster’s* 777). Though the dictionary says, ‘in a derogatory sense,’ there is no arguing the fact that, this is the reality of the game of politics as played in Nigeria. There is the impression, generally, that politics is *the shortest cut to the top and it is the surest way to make it or arrive* in the society. The average Nigerian sees politics as a do-or-die affair; and if one has to enjoy its dividends, it does not have to be played by the rules. The legacy is the determination of a group of people to get into political office, at all cost, and hold on to power as long as possible. Little wonder then that the political process is characterised by intrigues. The general thinking is that the electoral process in the present Nigerian democratic experience lacks transparency.

However, every film represents the economic, social, political, religious, cultural, and technological developments of the producing country. This explains why popular films intervene in the political struggles of the day. A study of the contemporary Nigerian film industry, Nollywood, reveals that political genre films had not received serious attention from producers, until the demise of Gen. Sani Abacha in 1998. This paper posits that political genre films have a critical role to play in enlightening the electorate in Nigeria. From a critical reading of Tecu Benson’s *The Senator*, it is argued that re-inventing the electoral process in Nigeria cannot be achieved with printed literatures alone; and that feature films, like *The Senator*, could be used to engender positive developments in the country’s political landscape.

The Political Process in Nigeria

The political process in Nigeria could be delineated in three stages, namely, *the search*, *the moment of decision*, and *the time for rebate* (Ayakoroma 349). It is necessary to examine the stages to see how they are reflected in the selected film, *The Senator*. This is pertinent because the political process determines the quality of leadership that emanates in any society.

The search is the process of charting the road towards a political office in the sense that it is the time the idea is mooted and pursued vigorously. Very often, some persons who had had no political ambition are cajoled by followers or sycophants who believe that such a decision would be in their favour. This is the period campaigns for elective offices are carried out, and

every means is applied to achieve set objectives; it is also the time for alignments and re-alignments. As it were, terms like cross-carpeting, decamping, sellable candidate, campaign organisation, harmonisation, settlement, and many more, have found their way into the contemporary Nigerian political lexicon.

The *moment of decision* is the time the electorate decides who should rule; it is the point of no return in the political process. Elections have, over the years, become synonymous with the triumph of the highest bidder. They are characterised by ubiquitous wars – war of words, war of the media, war of party thugs, war of youth wings or vanguards, war of naira, and war of rigging techniques. Chapters IV and V of the 1999 *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, for instance, stipulate the requirements for election to the Legislative and Executive arms at the National and States levels. Unfortunately, such elections are almost always marred by electoral malpractices, ranging from printing of fake ballot papers, duplication of ballot boxes, over voting, snatching or vandalism of ballot boxes, falsification of election results, to sundry electoral violence to scare the opposition.

When an election is won, it is the *time for rebate*; it is the time to enjoy, just as the losers count their losses. Party loyalists are usually compensated with appointments while sycophants shout the praises of the leaders to get some attention. Sometimes, the post-election period could be characterised by legal fireworks in the law courts to keep or up-turn the mandate. Thus, for the winners, it is a time to extend a hand of fellowship to the losers so that they would not go to court. Again, these negotiated settlements entail promises of contracts to offset campaign expenses or appointments for the losers or some of their strong supporters. For a Presidential, Gubernatorial or Local Government Chairmanship elect, it is also a time to wave the carrot in the face of the Legislature to avoid being served impeachment notice for no just cause.

Paradoxically, once a person wins an election, it is believed in every quarter that he/she has *arrived*. It is a time for congratulatory messages to pour in; it is also a time for courtesy calls (or solidarity visits) by political jobbers and even portfolio carrying traditional rulers and elder statesmen. It is a time of celebration because there is the general expectation that such a person has to recover all the money spent in the elections, and that he/she has

to be financially buoyant for re-election. Furthermore, ways of *choking* (*dealing* with) political opponents are mapped out. Communities that did not give their support during the election are dealt with accordingly. This could be by not siting government projects in such communities, or not giving their sons and daughters political appointments. For strong supporters or those who worked for the candidate, it is a time of harvest: it is *their* government. To them, any contract they get is a form of compensation so they just collect the mobilisation, buy flashy cars, marry more wives, acquire chieftaincy titles, buy honorary doctorate degrees, and cap it with second burial ceremonies of long dead parents.

It is common knowledge that there are many contracts that have become white elephant projects due to the hydra-headed abandoned projects syndrome. This has been occasioned by the bid by unscrupulous politicians to get a piece of the national cake from the federal allocation, decided in the Federal Accounts Allocation Committee (FAAC) meeting in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory every month. The truth is that many states in Nigeria are not viable and cannot pay workers' salaries unless they receive the monthly allocation. The reason is that such states were created by fiat by past military dictators, who wanted to favour their friends and relations, and not with the real intent of bringing government closer to the people. Since most of them cannot generate appreciable internally generated revenue (IGR), they are wholly dependent on the Federal Government that metaphorically holds the *feeding bottle*, and workers bear the brunt as salaries and allowances are owed now and again.

The situation in the local government councils is even pitiable. Most of the Chairmen are never on seat and hardly having any relationship with the local populace. They barely undertake meaning development programmes in their council areas, only surfacing at the end of the month to share the monthly largesse. Furthermore, they are under the stranglehold of the Executive Governors, who, very often, deduct large chunks from their monthly allocations through the Joint Accounts Allocation Committee (JAAC) to oil their political machinery.

Over the years, those who seek to rule and despoil have adopted political killings and gangsterism as ready tools in the political process. This is

definitely not the disposition of those who seek to lead and build. According to Makanju, political violence is

a strategy to hijack the democratic process, an annexation and fraudulent conversion of democratic structures to the antagonistic family estate thereby annulling the majority wish of the people for self-serving purposes... the moment a candidate or a group of party loyalists conspire to rig an election, a political terrorist act has been perpetrated against the people. Political terrorism is not only an infringement against the individual fell by the assassin's bullet or his immediate family, it is equally an open, and a most unwholesome infringement against the collective psyche of the people (Makanju 3).

Incidentally, the Federal Government has effectively played the role of the chief mourner at condolence visits to the bereaved, via the visible presence of the President, his deputy and/or other top government officials. At such moments, government would consistently promise that justice would prevail, and that everything possible would be done to bring the culprits to book. This underpins the call on politicians, by the National Association of Seadogs (NAS), to put an end to such acts, as a matter of urgency, and spare the nation further loss of lives. It observed that justice remains the only instrument that can douse and assuage the psycho-social and political tension generated by political killings, and that anything short of this would remain, "a grand national illusion and an international humiliation" (Makanju 3).

Film and Politics

Having taken a brief look at the political process in Nigeria, the issue that will be examined next is the interplay between film and politics. The point had been made that every film is a representation of the economic, social, political, religious, cultural, and technological developments of the producing country. In analysing the relation between film and politics, Noel King states that in a broad sense, a cinema of political experience can be expected to deploy

realistic characterisation and narrative structure, and that there is need to conceive of politics as an element of the world waiting to be pictured or represented:

The cinema of political experience understands politics as “subject-matter” and makes its calculations in terms of how accurately and persuasively it pictures political events or adequates a subject’s political experience. One consequence of such a cinematic practice is that the viewer is conceived as an experiencing subject... a subject awaiting politicisation by empathy (King 2).

In further explicating the above, King quotes Tony Bennett as remarking that,

not all practices of textual commentary acquire their social effectivity by organising the reader as a subject who takes a meaning from the text with subsequent consequences for his or her consciousness and mode of relating to and acting within a generalised public arena. Others do so by producing the reader as an agent who performs a practice within specific institutional domains to become the bearer of specific certificated competences (Qtd King 2-3).

According to King, the notion of a cinema of political experience, contrasts to a cinema of political address, which operates on the assumption that the domain of the political does not exist independently of a set of apparatuses, techniques and practices, amongst which one finds cinematic techniques. In this understanding of the relationship between film and politics, cinema is itself treated as a material mechanism capable of various insertions in political domains. The cinema of political address does not try to evoke the experience of these domains (thereby effecting a politicisation of the viewing subject by way of the category of experience), but rather concentrates

its attention on the relation between itself as an institution (a set of techniques and practices) and those it addresses.

In examining film culture, politics and industry, with specific reference to India, Srinivas observes that, “film consumption is linked to politics on the one hand and the film industry on the other” (Srinivas 1). He argues that the promise of democracy, whether or not it is realised, is what makes the cinema political. Srinivas submits that film culture is political for two reasons:

It is founded on a democratic promise and it develops around the notion of spectatorial rights. I not only have a right to be present in the cinema hall but have the further right to make demands of the narrative, the star, etc. The cinema has to acknowledge my presence and address my expectations (Srinivas 3).

There is no arguing the fact that over the years, Hollywood films have continued to reflect American way of life – politically, economically, socially, culturally, technologically, and so forth. Douglas Kellner aptly posits that popular films intervene in the political struggles of the day. According to him, the Hollywood film, like the American society, should be seen as, “a contested terrain and that films can be interpreted as a struggle of representation over how to construct a social world and everyday life” (Kellner 1). Taking a cue from this perspective, undertaking an ideological critique of a film involves analysing images, symbols, myths, and narratives as well as propositions and systems of belief. To substantiate his position, Kellner carries out an ideological criticism of *Rambo*, noting that, simply attacking the militarist or imperialist ideology of the film is not enough; rather, an argument should be made for the fact that the militarism and imperialism implicit in the film serves capitalist interests by legitimising intervention in such places as South-East Asia, Central America or wherever.

As it were, *Rambo* is one of a whole series of “return-to-Vietnam films,” a film movement that follows the same formula of representing the return to Vietnam of a team of former veterans, or a superhuman, superhero veteran, like Rambo, to rescue a group of American soldiers “missing in

action,” who are still imprisoned by the Vietnamese and their Soviet allies. All of these post-Vietnam syndrome films show the United States and the American warrior hero victorious this time and thus exhibit a symptom of inability to accept defeat. They also provide symbolic compensation for loss, shame, and guilt by depicting the United States as good and this time victorious; while its communist enemies are represented as the incarnation of evil, who this time receive a well-deserved defeat (Kellner, 3-6; see also Ayakoroma 27).

In an analysis of the political imperative of cinema in Nigeria, Okome acknowledges the relative successes of Latin American filmmakers like Julio Garcia Espinosa and Miguel Littin in using the film medium to make incisive political statements, noting with dismay that the Nigerian filmmaker fights shy of his political self, not taking advantage of the medium’s potency as a tool for enhancing national growth and cohesion. According to Okome, unlike the significant role played by the print media, the film medium did not help in the political struggle for Nigeria’s independence, and not contributing meaningfully to the political history of the country. He states further that,

Still suffering from the vestiges of colonialism and saddled with a festering political situation, the Nigerian filmmaker vacillates between the mere glamorisation of aspects of Nigerian culture and the uncritical portrayal of some dim historical past, producing in the final analysis films that are politically innocuous and culturally patronising (Okome 73).

From every indication, the political culture in Nigeria is not one that can produce the kind of leaders that would be committed to serve the people that elected them into office. As a point of fact, every elected government has the obligation to provide the primary needs of the people: food, clothing and shelter. Add to these, roads, transportation, water, electricity, education, and primary healthcare, among others. However, when a politician buys his/her way into office, he/she will not be accountable to the people.

In the light of the foregoing, a critical study will be undertaken on how some Nigerian filmmakers have directed their creative imaginations toward portraying the country's political climate in films. This is of interest because the political genre had not received serious attention by film producers before now, probably because of the economic considerations and the exigencies of the political landscape. Stories reflecting political issues appeared to offer no success formula, until the demise of the maximum ruler, Gen. Sani Abacha; that was when *The Stubborn Grasshopper* was released. The success of this work seemed to have provided the impetus for the foray into political themes, as seen in *The Incumbent*, *His Majesty*, *King Makers*, *Queen of Hasso Rock*, *Executive Crime*, and many more.

A Critical Reading of *The Senator*

The Senator (2003) is a two-part film produced and directed by Teco Benson for TFP Productions. Since his entrance into Nollywood in 1994, first as an actor, Teco (as he is popularly called) has made a mark as an action-movie director, starting with *Waterloo*. He has also directed several Christian films for Helen Ukpabio's Liberty Gospel Ministries Films, including the highly acclaimed *The Price*, starring Richard Mofe-Damijo and Eucharia Anunobi. Some of his other credits include *End of the Wicked*, *Executive Crime*, *State of Emergency*, *Wasted Years*, *Broad Daylight*, *War Front*, and *Explosion*.

The Senator, one of the few films that reflect the Nigerian political process, portrays the innate desire of a young boy, Larry, to actualise his lifelong ambition of becoming a Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Right from high school, young Larry (played by Young Ujah) learns in a typical Machiavellian way that, "the end justifies the means," which explains why he uses the instruments of blackmail consistently to get whatever he wants. He capitalises on the amorous acts of his mother (Rachael Oniga) and father (Laz Ekwueme) as instruments of blackmail to collect money from them to take care of his financial needs. When Linda dumps Mike for another boy, Piccolo, Larry again blackmails Linda by threatening to reveal to her mother and the Principal of the school that at a very young age, she had

already committed abortion. Piccolo becomes his next victim for befriending Linda, as he confronts him with an armed robbery operation he (Piccolo) had earlier carried out.

In the university, Larry (Hanks Anuku) comes to the rescue of Mike (Emeka Okoro) when the leader of the Black Belt cult group, Jasper (David Nwajei), starts going after Mike's girlfriend, Rose (Nkiru Abazie), and threatens that he would bathe her with acid if she refuses his sexual advances. Larry decides to take the war to the cult group in line with the belief that the best form of defence is to attack. They take the fight to the hideout of the Black Belt cult group in the bush, late in the night, and kill Jasper and three others.

Faced with the problem of making Mike to pass his exams in the Department of Sociology, since they were admitted to read different courses, Larry contracts Magnus (Desmond Elliot), an intelligent classmate of Mike to help write the exams for a fee of one thousand naira per paper which comes to the sum of eight thousand naira for the eight papers, to pay half the amount before the exams and the balance after passing the exams. Complications set in after the fifth paper as the invigilator catches Desmond and Mike, thereby making Mike to fail the remaining three papers. To ensure that Mike passes all his exams and graduates, Larry blackmails Mike's lecturers, beginning with the Head of Department, Professor Adigun (Festus Aguebor), who had killed a colleague that had keenly contested the headship of the department with him.

As the plot unfolds, Larry meets a brick wall in Dr. Mrs. Eunice Okoro (Amaka Ezeonwukwe), in their final year. He records her husband on camera asking an orange seller out and brings the tape to her, thinking that it will make her accede to his request that she should help to pass Mike in her course. Unknown to Larry, Mrs. Okoro had been looking for strong grounds to divorce her husband for about ten years and he (Larry) had just provided her a concrete evidence to do so. Angry that the woman is obstinate, Larry assassinates her.

While Larry proceeds to do a Master's programme after their graduation, Mike opts to go into supply business since he does not have the intellectual ability for postgraduate studies. Larry dissuades him from the supply business on the ground that one is owed payments for years; thus, they agree to go into partnership and look for contracts in the construction

industry. On getting vital information that National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) is awarding the Obanikoro building contract, which Julius Berger is likely to get, Larry visits the chairman of the Tenders Board, Alhaji Bamanga (Michael Adingi), and blackmails him into re-awarding the contract within one week to their company, Tin Can Ventures. The damning evidence is a printout of the Alhaji's several foreign Swiss bank accounts, which run into millions of dollars. To secure the necessary funds to execute the contract, Larry again blackmails a Bank Manager (Val Nwigwe) to get a loan of thirty million naira without the necessary collateral. The manager capitulates out of fear because Larry confronts him with evidence that he is a fake "Toronto graduate" who had smartly married the governor's daughter, and so, cannot afford a scandal of such magnitude.

In another sequence, Larry faces a heavier business challenge when Mike informs him about a contract for the construction of the Bakassi-Ikom Road, worth five hundred million naira. In consonance with his *modus operandi*, he visits the NNPC Director of Finance (Tony Ezimadu), and blackmails him with the murder of his female lover, Rosa Martins, who had attempted to blackmail him to the tune of five hundred thousand dollars. Reflective of the soap opera tradition, the first part of the film ends on a suspended note, as Larry confronts the Director with photographs of the murder.

The story continues in **Part 2**, as Larry tightens the noose around the NNPC Director by disclosing that he had a video recording of the criminal act; and will not only tell his wife, but also the Police. He instructs the Director to influence the award of the Bakassi-Ikom Road contract to their company or risk going to jail. When the Director reports back later that one of the Board members, Professor Oyewale Banjo (T. J. Morgan), is defiant, maintaining that the contract can only be awarded to them, "over his dead body," Larry visits him to make a passionate appeal. The gesture fails to make any impression on Professor Banjo, and Larry double-crosses him on the road and assassinates him and his driver.

After completing the Master's Degree programme, Larry enrolls for a Doctorate degree in the Eastern University as part of his political agenda of becoming the Senate President. However, things take a fortuitous turn with

the sudden death of the military Head of State (inferring supposedly to the demise of Gen. Sani Abacha in 1998). The next military junta that takes over power signals some hope in the sense that it promises that within a year, power was going to be handed over to a democratically-elected government. This gives room for politicking and it dawns on Larry that it was high time he got into active politics. The first incredible thing he does in this direction is to ask to be quickly awarded the doctorate degree, when he had just spent 14 months, and still had 18 months left to complete the programme. To actualise this, he again uses the same instrument of blackmail and succeeds because the evidence he uses to confront Professor Onyeama (Philip Okpoko) is that in his bid to become the Dean, he had visited a native doctor and sacrificed his father as requested by the medicine man.

Larry eventually joins the PEP to run for the Senate when the position of Senate President was zoned to the East. For purposes of eligibility to contest, he adds six more years to his age. With Mike as his Campaign Manager, he plots his strategy, going to his home village to cultivate the right political atmosphere. He schemes in his usual way and gets the endorsement of the Igwe (Mike Manafa) of his community, gets a chieftaincy title, and crowns it by forcing Chief Nicholas Uwakwe (Enebeli Elebuwa) to step down for him. The grounds for the blackmail are that Chief Uwakwe's son had been involved in drug-related offences in the United States, while his daughter, Daphne Ifeoma Uwakwe, was a commercial sex worker in Milan, Italy. The road eventually becomes clear for Larry to coast to victory, not only as a Distinguished Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, but very likely the Senate President.

Within this period, Larry had also traced his background and found out that his grandfather had been confined to the evil forest when he incurred a debt while trying to sponsor his father to school in Onitsha. The poor man was wrongly accused of being a thief and was strangled, ostracised, and buried in the evil forest. Having found out what actually happened to his grandfather, Larry conveniently blackmails the grandson of one of the persons who committed the crime and makes him confess to the Igwe that his own grandfather had confessed to him. This clears all barriers that his questionable

background would have placed upon him, which was why the Igwe installed him as a red-cap chief.

Teco Benson calls *The Senator* a political explosion; but one would rather qualify it as a morality tale on the current style of politicking in Nigeria. It portrays the type of politics that is built on character assassination, blackmail, and elimination of opponents, among other vices. Incidentally, the plot of the film is very thin in the sense that there is nothing substantial apart from the instruments of blackmail which Larry uses from one victim to the other. In terms of structure, the usual trend in advanced film cultures is to handle crime stories in such a way that the criminal is brought to book, no matter how smart the person may be, so that the viewer achieves a certain level of purgation at the end of the film. This is not the case here because Larry is not punished at the end of the film.

The film portrays a society where vices like blackmail and murder are more or less glorified. This is the impression that one gets, as Larry, in spite of all his high level of criminality, was not brought to book at the end of the story. It could be recalled that he gave Mike money for Linda to procure an abortion; he mercilessly murdered Jasper and three other cultists, in addition to Mrs. Okoro and Prof. Adigun, all in the bid to have his way. Furthermore, to achieve his political ambition, he blackmailed his parents, Linda, Piccolo, university lecturers, Alhaji Bamanga, the "Toronto graduate" Bank Manager, the NNPC Director and Chief Uwakwe. Ironically, he is not brought to book because the film ends with himself and his friend celebrating. Most crime stories are usually morality tales in which the criminals are brought to book and punished. Rather than follow this structure, the criminal is let off the hook in the film, which subtracts from the whole story.

Secondly, the film exposes most of the intrigues employed by politicians against their opponents, except that other dimensions of the character of Larry are not really exploited. For instance, he is never found indulging in other activities, for example, drinking, meeting with political associates, going to the party secretariat, campaigning for the elections, and so on. The character is quite dysfunctional because the only thing that gives him pleasure is when he is blackmailing or killing people. The fact is that when a person commits a crime, naturally, some kind of nervousness is expected,

which is not the case with Larry because when he is committing a major crime (or after), he becomes extremely calm and calculative.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the intrigues of Larry, in his attempt to fulfil his dream of becoming not only a Senator but the Senate President, sustain the story. Though Nigeria is seen as a country where just anything goes, it is a little bit off-handed to write a story that seems to be a one-way track, in which Larry commits all sorts of crimes and gets away with all of them. Somehow, it is curious that Larry seems to know the past crimes of people before he gets to the spot and there is nothing to tell us how he got that power of clairvoyance. Questions as to how he got to know that his mother was dating a family friend, that his father was dating his secretary, that Professor Adigun killed his colleague, that Dr. Mrs. Okoro's husband is flirting with a mere orange seller, and that Professor Onyeama killed his father for a ritual, are all begging for answers. The exception here may be the classified information on the children of Chief Uwakwe because he actually called a friend to investigate and send him the findings through a courier service. This amplifies one joke of a stand-up comedian, Michael Ogbolosingha, that politicians should not waste time to write autobiographies because their opponents would write them (Ayakoroma 407).

In terms of thematic pre-occupation, *The Senator* centres on blackmail as an instrument of political advancement. Basically, this is the type of politicking that characterise most African countries, not just Nigeria, because the political terrain is replete with questionable characters, people who are prepared to engage in all kinds of projects in order to achieve their selfish aims. The film portrays Machiavellian schemes employed by Larry to achieve his political ambition. Larry grows up with a compelling dream to become a Senator and works assiduously towards it; and like many politicians, he is very ruthless and would not hesitate to destroy any obstacle that comes his way. Larry's parents, like most parents, did everything possible to put him on the path of morality because his mother kept reminding him that it was not advisable to use the instrument of blackmail to extract services, or as a way of asking for a favour. His father also kept reminding him that if he kept using blackmail as an instrument for achieving his goal in life, he will one day come across somebody who would not want to shift ground and that it was going to

greatly affect his ambition. It is thus not a matter of coincidence that this was confirmed in his encounter with Dr. Mrs. Okoro who refused to be blackmailed. In other words, his extermination of Jasper, Dr. Mrs. Okoro, Professor Banjo, and his driver, all show his ruthlessness to overcome every opposition. Added to the above is the series of blackmails he masterminded all in the bid to achieve his ultimate aim.

The filth in the academic system is also highlighted as Larry sets out to get his Doctorate degree in just 14 months, when he had up to 18 months to complete the programme. While the Dean says the institution does not award “Toronto degrees,” he capitulates under Larry’s threat of blackmail. The recurring decimal here is the rot in boardroom politics and even citadels of learning. People believe that once you are in a position of authority, you have made it; so, they do everything possible to get there.

In another breath, the film also explores the sexual excesses of the elites, especially the political class in Nigeria. Firstly, Larry capitalises on the extra-marital pleasures of his parents to blackmail them. Secondly, he attempts to use the sexual escapades of Chief Okoro to blackmail his wife though he fails, as the woman was very much aware of her husband’s base nature. Thirdly, he hounds Chief Uwakwe to step down, using his daughter’s involvement in prostitution as one of the instruments of blackmail. Also significant or symbolic is the use of costumes. For instance, at the beginning of the film, Larry wears jeans, and the jeans become more rugged when they enter the university; but toward the end of the film, he changes to the typical *agbada* dressing of the political class. Symbolically, his wardrobe had changed to reflect his new status.

The predisposition to maximising profits is reflected, among other aspects, in the production design. For example, to avoid the problem and huge cost of managing a large crowd in the handling of a political rally, the director resorts to footages of crowd from different events, a political rally at the Eagle Square, Abuja, and some other stadia in the country. The implication is that the sequence is more of an appliqué or mosaic of pictures, in the sense that the cut away shots of crowd, the picture quality, the mood, and the dais for the political campaign speeches, are all at variance or cross-purposes.

The Political Context of *The Senator*

At this juncture, it is pertinent to relate the film to the realities in the Nigerian political terrain. Despite the many politically motivated assassinations, as highlighted earlier, none of the perpetrators have been brought to book. For instance, sometime in May 2007, a former Inspector-General of Police, Sunday Ehindero, purportedly paraded suspected killers of Bola Ige, the assassinated Attorney-General of Nigeria, before a masked witness but members of Ige's family and the suspects countered that the whole exercise was a charade (Okezie & Ukpong, 2, 4). In the bid for politicians to get into coveted political offices, they perpetrate many crimes but go unpunished. It is therefore possible that the film is trying to highlight the abnormalities in our political landscape by putting the ball in the public court for us to judge.

However, it is also the case that once a producer is working within a particular genre, some level of adherence to the structure of that genre is expected, and in this instance, it is a crime story. Larry is somebody who wants to become a Senator, by all means, not even the moral scruples of his parents can stop him; and not even the obstacles placed in his way by his political opponents would stop him. He is an unstoppable political machine rolling towards and over all his opponents. In all of these, no conscious attempt is made to investigate any of the crimes. Nobody asks any questions on the murder of the cultists in the university or Mrs. Okoro. These aspects of the story violate the structures of crime stories. It is not true that the Nigerian society has become that depraved because even if the culprits of the several political killings have been not found out, attempts are usually made to investigate such crimes.

In the film, Larry dreams of becoming a Senator, and pursues his childhood dream assiduously. This is the reality of the political process in Nigeria because no politician thinks of giving up on his/her dream, unless there are circumstances beyond his/her control. Also, taking cognizance of the fact that politicians pay very high premium on paper qualification, Larry resolves that he needs a Doctorate degree as an added advantage. It would be recalled that Gen. Abacha was pursuing a degree programme in the University of Abuja before his death, though he never attended classes; and President Obasanjo was the first student that the National Open University of Nigeria

(NOUN) registered. There was the case of Alhaji Salisu Buhari, the first Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives in the Fourth Republic, who was disgraced out of office because his false claim of having a university degree from the University of Toronto. The same could be said of the Evan or Evans Enwerem case in Imo State. These are some of the reference points in the paper qualification craze in Nigeria, especially among politicians.

The film also straddles the Abacha transition programme up to the time he met his sudden death. To the Onuigbo, the demise of the maximum ruler was, “good riddance to bad rubbish.” This was the reaction of the notable radical lawyer, Chief Gani Fawehinmi (SAN), when Gen. Abacha’s death was announced. On getting the death news, Mike equally expressed concern whether the person taking over (obviously referring to Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar) would continue with the transition and hand over to a democratically elected government.

Despite the fact that royal fathers, as custodians of the people’s cultures and traditions, are expected to be apolitical, most of them are actively engaged in politics. This is to the extent that many of them are domiciled in their state capitals or the Federal Capital Territory, hardly seen in their domains; and some of them are even involved in businesses, actively bidding for juicy government contracts. Little wonder then that Larry consolidated his position by getting the backing of his traditional ruler, because the act of receiving the blessing of royal fathers to score a political point subsists in the country. This comes mostly in the form of chieftaincy titles, which evidently confer status on such beneficiaries. As a point of fact, such titles are highly monetised in the sense that persons acquiring such chieftaincy titles pay dearly and this goes a long way in enhancing the economic and social status of the monarchs.

It had been noted that the campaign period is always heated, and that it was a time to arm-twist one’s political opponents to step down. Chief Uwakwe as an experienced politician would not want a political neophyte like Larry to challenge him in the party primaries. He talked to him with contempt, thinking that as a starter, Larry would eventually come and beg to be settled, as it obtains in the political process. On the contrary, he was rattled when Larry eventually confronted him with a dossier on his rotten family background. He realised that news of his son’s involvement in hard drugs in

the United States and his daughter being a prostitute in Italy would cause serious damage to him at the polls, he had no option than to step down for Larry. It brings to the fore the self-centred disposition of politicians, because Chief Uwakwe stepped down for Larry in order to protect his children. This is rather unfortunate because in taking that decision, he heartlessly abandoned his followership mid-stream. This is the tendency of many a Nigerian politician, who while agreeing to negotiated settlements, do not consider their numerous followers.

The point of Larry escaping the long arm of the law is also of interest in *The Senator* because this seems to underpin the several unresolved political killings in the country. Many political aspirants, maybe because of lack of self-confidence, think that the best way to overcome the opposition is through outright assassination. Of course, they have no qualms doing that because of the failure of the policing system. Larry progressed from one blackmail to the other and from one killing to the other to actualise his political ambition. This substantiates the point about the assassinations of Bola Ige, Pa Alfred Rewane, Marshall Harry, A.K. Dikibo, and Funsho Williams, which are just a few of the unresolved murders that have shaken the country down to its foundations. Perhaps, this has given perpetrators of political crimes, in the likes of Larry, the confidence to carry on their heinous deeds with impunity.

Re-Inventing the Political Process in Nigeria

A critical look at the above analysis brings to the fore the imperative of re-inventing the political process in Nigeria. In this direction, the following recommendations, which are by no means definitive, need to be taken into consideration:

- 1) Operate the Legislative arm of Government at the Federal, State and local Government levels on part-time bases. This is premised on the need to for people to take political offices as a call to service, not as an avenue for self-enrichment;
- 2) Adopt practical *Fiscal Federalism* in Nigeria where States and Local Government Councils would control their resources and only pay agreed taxes to the Federal and State Governments, respectively.

- Where there is no *national cake* to share, the prospects of people scrambling for political offices would be reduced considerably;
- 3) Reposition Local Government Councils to enjoy some level of autonomy because they are currently being operated, more or less, as Parastatals of the State Governments, where an Executive Governor can dissolve and appoint Caretaker Committees, whenever he likes and whenever elections could hold;
 - 4) Abolish the States' Electoral Commissions as they are under the direct control of the Governors and are incapable of conducting free and fair elections;
 - 5) Adopt staggered elections on the six geo-political basis so that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) could conduct elections in about six weeks. This will enable the security agencies to provide adequate security in all the affected states and not work under very strenuous conditions;
 - 6) Ensure transparent electoral process – the principle of, *one man one vote* should be pursued vigorously so that the people imbibe the culture;
 - 7) Ensure that cases of electoral malpractices attract grave consequences to act as deterrent for future offenders;
 - 8) Review the educational qualification requirement upward for those aspiring for political and elective offices to a minimum of Masters Degree to reduce the propensity for unmitigated and uncivilised aggressions;
 - 9) Subject corrupt public officers to face the long arm of the law instead of their walking around with impunity; and
 - 10) Carry out intensive public enlightenment campaigns to sensitise the citizenry on the need to hold public servants accountable for their actions and inactions.

Conclusion

In concluding this study, it is necessary to reiterate that re-inventing the Nigerian political process is imperative to produce acceptable and effective leadership. Eventually, the leaders that are likely to emerge would have the

desire to serve the people and not to despoil them. This can only be guaranteed from an electoral process that is not froth with violence and all forms of rigging.

It could be surmised that the critical analysis of *The Senator*, produced and directed by Teco Benson, reveals the kind of politics that is not salutary to national development. The only thing that sustains interest in the film is the desire for the viewer to find out whether Larry would end up becoming a Senator or face retributive justice for all the crimes he had committed. It is when one sees that he achieved his goal with impunity that one is jolted and feels a sense of indignation.

It is apparent that the film acts a warning to the political class that there are better and more decent approaches to playing politics. Re-inventing the political process means engendering the kind of politics where the people would be highly enlightened to discern those who have the interest of the masses at heart; where leaders seek political offices to actually serve and that which is based on personal gains; where leaders emerge from credible elections that would be acceptable to all parties; where leaders are truly accountable to be people and are held accountable by the people at every point in time; and where the generality of the people will be happy with the quality of the leadership and would gladly re-elect them into office without being induced financially. It is only then that Nigerians would be proud to say the political process has been really transformed and re-invented.

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Selected Filmography

The Senator 1 & 2. Prod/Dir: Teco Benson. Perf: Hanks Anuku, Laz Ekwueme, Enebeli Elebuwa, Emeka Okoro, Rachael Oniga, Johnpaul Nwadike, Grace Amah, David Nwajei, Desmond Elliot, Young Ujah, Tony Ezimadu. TFP Global Network, 2003.

**POLITICAL SATIRE IN MODERN DRAMA: A STUDY OF NIKOLAI
GOGOL'S *THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR* AND FEMI OSOFISAN'S
*WHO'S AFRAID OF SOLARIN?***

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Abstract

Modern drama began as a movement which seeks to lay bare social ills in the society. From the work of its proponent, Henrik Ibsen in Norway to that of George Bernard Shaw in England, attention was placed on using drama as a tool for social engineering. In like manner, Nikolai Gogol and Femi Osofisan set out to satirise politics, politicians, political power, government officials and the corruption generated in their use, misuse and abuse of power. Against this background, this paper seeks to examine the depiction of political power and corruption in the two plays by isolating the nature of the satire and the elements of political satire employed to lay bare the oppressive attitude of the officials and the gullibility of the ruled. It goes on to engage in a comparative analysis of the art of political satire and the farcical elements that provide laughter as employed by the two playwrights. Adopting the New Historicism as its theoretical framework, the play attempts a critique of the sociocultural context that produces the type of leaders portrayed in the two plays. It concludes by stating that a society gets the type of leaders it desires or deserves by their action or inaction.

Introduction

The prefatory statement that opens *The Government Inspector* reads thus: "Don't blame the mirror if your face is lopsided" (17). This popular saying is relevant to the whole essence of satire as a looking glass that reflects accurately who you are (if it is not defective). It exposes you and the society as it sees it

and the targets should not blame anyone but use the satire as a corrective device and make amends.

The scope of this paper is the dramatic works of Nikolai Gogol (*The Government Inspector*) and Femi Osofisan (*Who's Afraid of Solarin?*). To affirm that these plays are satirical is not enough just as to say that they function as a satire because they expose socio-political errors. The proper analysis to make is to examine the extent to which elements of satire have been appropriated in the plays. Such elements as wit, humour, irony and farce have been noted as contributing to their satiric import. The aim of the paper is not just to isolate these elements in the plays but to establish the peculiar type of satire engaged by the playwrights. The paper will detail the peculiarities of the societies in which the dramas were written by portraying the moral decadence and vices of the Russian and Nigerian environments.

Background of the Study

The rise of modern drama in Europe and America saw dramatists who gave preference to issues of everyday life in their plays. There began a movement in which these playwrights paid special attention to social and political problems in society. From Henrik Ibsen to August Strindberg, Anton Chekhov, Luigi Pirandello, Bertolt Brecht, Arthur Miller, Eugene O'Neill, Samuel Beckett and John Osborne, man's relationship with one another and the stresses generated thereof in the society became important subjects of discussion. These dramatists focussed their dramatic lens on social ills and societal foibles with the hope of transforming the society. In England in particular, George Bernard Shaw was influenced by the Fabian Society whose beliefs he imbibed by writing plays such as *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Widowers' Houses*. These plays were a big shock to a society that was largely conservative. Shaw used the plays to radically wake the society up to its responsibilities.

Working within this backdrop this paper examines *The Government Inspector* by Nikolai Gogol and *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* by Femi Osofisan. Gogol and Osofisan believed in the power of art to change society by dramatizing its ills. Their attention was drawn to the character of the political leaders in their different societies and it is interesting to note that their discovery was similar. Both writers found gross ineptitude, sheer abuse of power and large scale

corruption. In exploring these issues they result to satire and farce. Political satire and comedy became prime tools to examine a corrupt society.

Operational Definition of Terms

Satire

An important term employed in this play is satire. Satire according to M. H Abrams is

...the literary art of diminishing a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, indignation or scorn. It uses laughter as a weapon and against a butt existing outside the work itself. That butt may be an individual..., or a type of person, a class, an institution, or even... the whole race of man (153).

Supporting this claim is J. A Cuddon's illuminating definitions from several English satirists: Samuel Johnson says satire in a poem is when "wickedness or folly is censored" while John Dryden believes "satire's true end is the amendment of vices" (599). Other notable satirists in English Literature are Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan. Aristophanes, in classical era, is the father of satire as noted in such works as *Lysistrata*, *The Frogs*, *Clouds* etc. In Nigeria, the master satirist is Wole Soyinka in many of his plays such as *The Trials of Brother Jero*, *Opera Wonyosi*, *A Play of Giants*, and *Madmen and Specialist*.

Satire as employed by these writers can be broadly divided into two: Horatian and Juvenalian. The first type is mild, tolerant, accommodating, sympathetic and gentle, criticises rather than attacks and warns with the hope that its butt will change. The Juvenalian on the other hand is bitter, more direct, harsh, aggressive, scathing and violent and it employs invectives, scorn and vituperations to out rightly attack its targets. The satirist sees himself as the custodian of societal morality. He is the standard that measures what is right or wrong. He assumes an overall overseer to correct the society and its members by ridiculing their follies and excesses and calling to order through

contempt the aberrations noted. In this sense, he is a protest writer as he subverts his indignation into ridiculing.

In this paper, satire will refer to the devices through which Gogol and Osofisan expose the ills in their two societies as exemplified in the plays chosen for analysis here. These mechanisms include verbal attacks on the aberrations in the society, the use of ridicule and contempt on the characters/subjects of the attacks, the gross exaggerations of the language and character of the butts of attack, the lampooning and pillorying of the events and situations, the use of irony, innuendoes and symbolism, farce and comedy. All of these tools combined to make up the satire in both plays.

Political Leaders

In this paper, the political leaders that are satirised refer to government officials and generally all who by virtue of their position rule over the common man. The major characters of the plays in use here fall into this category. All those involved as rulers of men are the butts of attack in the works. They include The Mayor, the Judge, the Police Inspector, the Postmaster, the Charity Commissioner, the District Physician, the School Superintendent, the land owners and the fake government inspector in Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and in Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*, they are Chief James Dada Gbonmiayelobiojo alias JDG who is the Chairman of the Local Government (henceforth to be called Chairman), the Chief Magistrate, Chief Medical Officer, Councillor for Education and Works, Price Control Officer, Councillor for Cooperatives and Agriculture, the Ifa Priest, and the fake Public Complaints Commissioner.

The people in government form the butts of the ridicule in both plays. However, the peasants, the masses who form the bulk of the ruled are also criticised for their gullibility and for allowing themselves to be easily taken for a ride. The two dramatists expose their complacency and their lethargy when they could have all risen against oppression. Even when they complained, it was to the fake government inspector who would not do anything to alleviate their suffering. The people are shown as too simple lacking in strength of purpose and unlikely to want to change their oppression. Rather, they were

willing to exchange one oppressor for another by bribing the government inspector.

Theoretical Framework

To assist in evaluating the kind of societies that produced these two plays, the theory of New Historicism is appropriate in providing the much needed in depth socio- cultural contexts of the works. In other words, New Historicism aids in establishing the social milieu of the two plays. It helps to show the type of contexts which can provide and allow such corrupt and easily permissible characters depicted in both works. New Historicism is a theory that sees literature as part of history but this view of history is more sociological than historical.

Michael Delahoyde expresses this idea succinctly in this way:

New Historicism seeks to find meaning in a text by considering the work within the framework of the prevailing ideas and assumptions of its historical era. New Historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature and with the concept of power, the intricate means by which cultures reproduce themselves. These critics focus on revealing the historically specific model of truth and authority (not a “truth” but a “cultural construct”) reflected in a given work (public.wsu.edu).

In other words, New Historicism is concerned with the study of an age. It is interested in how an era interprets its ideas and cultural views. The theory sees literature as a study of an age since whatever goes on in a period forms the meat for the literature of that period. Put in another way, the New Historicists are concerned with the fact that the literature of an age reflects the social, economic, and political temperaments of that age. The conflicting ideology and tradition find themselves as the focus of the literature of an era. Thus, the literary text and the historical context are both important to the New Historicism. On this important point dwells the relevance of this theory to this discussion. The social realities of the Russian and the Nigerian societies become glaring in shaping the social experience depicted in both plays. The

social experience reveals a society that is corrupt and morally decadent. Its citizens are gullible and easily fooled because of the high propensity to bribe their way. This corruption is not limited to the political elites alone as the poor citizens engage in it.

New Historicists are also interested in power in the society. Like the Marxist, they believe power emanates from a source and moves down but while the Marxists see power concentrated in the bourgeoisie, the Historicists believe that “human beings are never victims of an oppressive society, for they can find various ways to oppose authority in their personal and public lives.” The Marxists believe that there will be a revolution where all the proletariat will unite and overthrow the bourgeois. Lois Tyson explains the issue of power in the New Historicism as that which is like that of a dictator who does not wield absolute power alone but maintains it through various discourses such as religion, science, fashion and law. She believes that power does not reside solely on top but circulates in the community. Thus, The Mayor holds power just as the Judge, the postmaster and the police inspector have their own spheres of jurisdiction in Gogol’s play. All the sources of power are used to oppress the poor people. The major proponent of this theory is Michel Foucault. He was the first to question the discourses of the ages and study power dynamics. His essay, “Truth and Power”, deals with the diffusion of power in systems of authority and how truth is produced. To him, truth is a product of power which must be determined by the society and its controllers. Other proponents are Stephen Greenblatt and Michael Licona. In summary, New Historicists seek to ask the following questions in interpreting a text:

1. How do the language, characters and events present in the work portray the current events of the author’s era?
2. Are the events’ interpretations and presentations a product of the culture of the author?
3. Does the work’s presentation support or condemn the events?
4. Are the portrayals critical of the leading political figures?
5. Does the work take into consideration the poor marginalised people?

Crucial terms in New Historicism relevant to this analysis are such terms as “impossibility of Objective analysis”, “subjectivity”, “power”, “circulation”, “containment” and “hegemony.” The first point deals with the issue that there cannot be an objective analysis of a text which has not been coloured by one’s bias. This also dovetails in to the second point of subjectivity which refers to the author’s selfhood reflecting in the work. Power does not come from just one source but from different sources as it is seen in St. Petersburg and then, in the Mayor of the provincial setting. Thus, power circulates through a “never-ending proliferation of exchange” (Tyson 281) “Containment” refers to the ability of those at the top to keep those at the bottom perpetually subservient. “Hegemony” on the other hand, refers to the use of state instruments to dominate and oppress the people. This can be seen in Mayor and Chairman’s use and abuse of power in Gogol and Osofisan’s plays. These major characters misuse the apparatuses of government to further impoverish the poor. In this way, New Historicism is found to be useful in analysing the plays; it helps in the understanding of the various nuances of the power relations and the impact of society on the characters.

Nikolai Gogol’s *The Government Inspector* as Political Satire

The Government Inspector is a political satire in that it criticises the activities of government officials in Tsarist Russia of 1836. It is important to state that this play was staged around this time yet its message, content and form are still relevant to the present day Russia and the world in general. Abuse and misuse of power is a recurrent theme in modern drama all over the world. In the play, government officials grossly abuse power and oppress the people they are supposed to serve. Despite this flagrant abuse of power the playwright does not resort to abuse and invectives. Thus, the play’s criticism is not harsh like a Juvenalian satire but emerges as Horatian. This can be seen in the portrayal of the major characters. Gogol lays bare their corrupt activities through the tools of humour, wit and farce without making any recourse to scornful or derisive portrayals. He merely shows them up for ridicule without the use of angry words. The portrayals are enough to speak for itself. Satire to Gogol can be likened to the words of the preface; the mirror shows you to yourself in reflection. Gogol believes in the power of satire to heal and to purify a

decadent society. Satire becomes the tool to expose all the ills in society. It is a major feature of the play in so far as it is the mechanism through which the failings of political leaders are revealed. The Mayor of the provincial town is shown as ridiculous, ever jittery. This act stems from the fact that he has skeletons in his cupboard. He is afraid that he will be found out. Therefore, he can do anything, including bribing a government official, to cover his tracks.

The play begins with a mistaken identity where a young penniless man from Moscow arrives a small town and he is mistaken for an important government official who has come to inspect how things are run in the place. Because the town is badly managed, streets are dirty, hospital reek of disease rather than cure, school property is damaged, courts become poultry farms and traders and the people groan under a heavy load of exploitation and oppression, the political leaders become jittery. They know, as their conscience tells them, that they have not done well. Thus they look for the easy way out which is to bribe the government inspector. The story moves from this premise to reveal that the town has become a cess pit of some sort. The leaders are corrupt and morally decadent in the discharge of their duties. The Mayor like the others reeks in a stench of economic impropriety. He embezzles government funds and literally lives off the sweat of the traders visiting their shops unannounced and confiscating their goods arbitrarily for his personal use.

The young man from Moscow who is definitely a scoundrel fools the people by playing on their gullibility and rakes in a huge sum of money at the expense. He is without any money and is to be evicted by the Manager of the Hotel for his inability to pay his hotel bills. However, all this changes when he discovers that the officials mistakes him for an expected Inspector from Moscow. The rascal that he is makes him see a way out of his penury and takes advantage of their error and exploits it to the fullest. They fall over one another to “please” him and fulfil his flimsiest request. Before he opens his mouth, they are ready to “loan” him money and he is most too willing to jump at it. He makes himself rich at their expense. He milks them dry and also proffers love overtures to Mayor’s daughter and wife all at the same time. To show how exploitative he is, he even gets the best horse in the Mayor’s stable to plan his escape.

The naivety of the officials is added by the setting of the play. It is set in a small provincial town far away from the central government in Moscow. The vast distance gives the officials the opportunity to cheat, lie and corruptly enrich themselves without any watchdog cautioning or monitoring them. They live and operate in a seemingly secluded area away from the prying eyes of the real government official. It is thus, no wonder that when the rumour of the visit of a government inspector comes in, it is greeted with fear and trepidation.

All the officials whether in the school, the hospital and the court become jittery. They are sure judgement day is at hand. This is because, hitherto, they have been involved in shady dealings, bad leadership, financial impropriety, diversion of funds and inefficiency. In real terms, the court for example has become a poultry yard. Cases are determined according to who can pay more. The patients in the hospital are uncared for and they die recklessly. The postmaster opens at will all letters passing through his hands – “actually I always do it out of curiosity”, he says (26). The Russian society at this time is rife with corruption. The people are easily taken for a ride. They are all involved in bribery.

The society is shown as a class society where the rich ones are the ones in government and live in opulence. The others in the majority live in penury and at the mercy of government officials who molest them daily. The masses, who are the traders and the artisans, are easily deluded. They are exploited and oppressed. This society is also divided into 2 major units: the urban metropolitan and the provincial towns. These towns are far removed from the city where the seat of government resides. Thus, as earlier stated, aids the major mistake of the play that fuels the conflict. The vast distance enables the Mayor and his other heads of units to rule the people badly. They commit so many atrocities in dispensing their duties. In fact, their duties are merely ways of extorting and exploiting the people they are supposed to serve. As the New Historicists see it, the Mayor and his other heads use the power that emanates from Moscow to further contain the people in such a way that they live perpetually in fear of the Mayor. The Mayor does not only exploit the people economically and psychologically, he also physically inflicts pain on his

citizens. The case of the soldier's wife that he ordered to be flogged openly is a good example.

The play also employs the element of farce in the bid to expose and put to ridicule the antics of the Mayor. For instance, the Mayor asks for the box of hats and in his anxiety, he puts the box on his head instead of the hat. This creates laughter especially when the audience realise the Mayor's failings, vices and his exploitation of the poor. Gogol invents several situations of this same manner which ridicule Mayor and his partners. The depth of their monstrosities is shown when one of them tells tales about other to win the favour of the fake government inspector. It goes to show how ridiculous they have become.

Femi Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* as Political Satire

Who's Afraid of Solarin? is an adaptation of Gogol's *The Government Inspector*. Osofisan locates many similarities between the Russian society of 1836 and the Nigerian society of the 21st century. Osofisan holds an intertextual debate with Gogol by rewriting the latter's play and finds that many points of convergence occur between the two societies. The story is basically the same in the two books except that it now has a Yoruba setting in Osofisan's play. The characters also bear Yoruba names but the experience narrated in them are the same.

Corruption is one point of similarity between the two societies. Government officials like the Chairman of the Local Government, Councillors and Price Control Officers are neck-deep in to corruption. They are known to use government funds for personal use, divert and embezzle money not meant for them. The Magistrate imprisons an innocent man and impregnates the man's wife. The hospital is horribly congested and, like the Russian society, the court is littered with fowls. All these vices are revealed when the fear of the Public Complaints Commissioner grips them.

The Public Complaints Commissioner

Tai Solarin was the Public Complaints Commissioner in Nigeria at the time this play was written. As the Complaints Commissioner, he was fearless and performed his duties with sincerity of purpose, integrity and honesty. In fact,

he became a terror to those corrupt government officials that initially appointed him that he was summarily dismissed. Solarin was a social crusader, a human rights activist and he would not look on and see the streets littered with dead bodies who were victims of hit and run drivers or ritual killers. With the help of others he rid Nigerian streets of this eye sore and for that and other selfless responsibilities he put on himself, he was appointed a Public Complaints Commissioner.

To be informed that such a man was “travelling incognito with secret instructions” to a highly corrupt land with deeply morally inept officials was enough to send jitters down the throat of such people. In fact, the characters are shown running around looking for where to hide away from the prying eyes of the man whose job was to discover their evil deeds.

To escape the wrath of this no nonsense man, the Local Government Chairman insists they all swear an oath. This is one area of difference between Gogol’s play and Osofisan’s. This difference reinforces the ritual origin of the Yoruba people who traditionally will demand and believe in one’s total honesty only when an oath has been taken by the parties involved. To the traditional Yoruba man, taking or swearing an oath is not only binding but defaulters or anyone who betrays the trust is known to die. Thus, it is binding on the parties. It is the same reason why a man will lie on oath in the courts after swearing with the Bible or the Koran but will dare no lie if asked to swear with a cutlass- the symbol of Ogun; the Yoruba god of Iron and of war. In fact, the Chief Magistrate infers as much:

I’m on your side, JDG. Let’s all swear. In my court, I place their hands on the Bible or the Koran and then I whisper quietly to them that there’s piece of iron in the book. You can’t imagine what wonderful results I get. The truth is mercifully withheld and the client freed (7-8).

Again, Osofisan introduces the character of the Pastor and his daughter. Nigerians imbibed the western mode of worship while at the same time living with their traditional religion. The Pastor, in spite of his being the Reverend of a foreign religion still bears his traditional name that links him with Ifa. His

name is Ifagbemi. He takes in a man who looks like he has been attacked on his way as his religion demands yet, he invites Baba Fawomi who is the Ifa priest to his house to make divinations for him about the man in his house. In other words, the Pastor is a hypocrite. As a matter of fact, he is aware that what he is doing is wrong and waned the door and windows locked against intruders. The theme of religious hypocrisy is thus added to the many evils of the Yoruba leader in this case.

In addition, Osofisan introduces the role of an Ifa Priest who is not true to his religion. His religion becomes his trade and means of livelihood. He is called in to solve the officials' problem but he compounds it by making outrageous demands from his clients. He demands a huge sacrifice which will redeem them from their sins of fornications, adulteries, forgeries, small and big embezzlements and betrayals. For that, he wants five cows, ten goats, ten other goats and sixteen fowls just for invocation and for the ceremony proper, seven bales of white clothes among other items. Baba Fawomi is shown as living fat on the corrupt proceeds of the government officials. In fact, the playwright makes him say so many gibberish things that have nothing to do with Ifa divination.

The satirical presentation is high in the character of the Chairman. His low level education is revealed in his diction. Whether it is spoonerism or malapropism, Chairman distorts peculiar words in his speech. For instance, he says "mens" for messes and "expendition" for expenditure, "lettered" for littered, "aggrabevating" for aggravating, "pinch" for inch, "emergently" for immediately. The grotesque misuse of words shows how ludicrous the Chairman is. These amusing blunders give the satire more punch. Moreover, he is married to a beautiful woman who is a stark illiterate and disgraces him in the presence of his colleagues. The several intrusions that Chairman's illiterate wife makes to his meeting with his colleagues present us with great elements of farce. The woman wants to sell her goods to the people but her husband restraints her each time. To do this, he talks to himself as if to a third person, calming himself down:

(Shouts at his wife, as she enters) No, Tolu, no one's buying any lipsticks here! No, nor wigs

either! Please, go! (Pushes her out).” Oh my head! Control, control, Gbonmiaiyelobiojo...”
(9)

When this method seems to fail in restraining her, he calls her names:

“Gbonmiaiyelobiojo, control yourself, especially in the presence of Ifa. Tolu, please, I am begging you---“(But unable to control himself, he shouts at her)...you’re a none-skull! Your father is a zero-skull! Your mother is a minus-skull! And all of your wretched family are minus-minus-skulls! Get out! Go and find other clients for your saucepans! (She runs out) Oh my head. I’m sorry Baba Fawomi, for the interruption. It is my wife, she’s a bit--- (Gestures to his head). Please continue (20)

Another character that provides comedy in the play is the houseboy Polycap. He snores loudly the door breaks, eavesdrops and like one of the land owners in Gogol’s plays, the door falls in. The people think it was an intruder and almost killed him.

In place of Bobchincky and Dobchincky; two landowners who first saw the supposed Government Inspector, Osofisan creates two men who play the role of beggars. They are the first to carry the tale that the man they saw in the hotel and in the Pastor’s house was the visitor they were expecting. However, the two beggars are not mere beggars, rather they are informants for the Chairman.

In very much the same manner, the officials file in to give bribes to a man they consider as the Public Complaints Commissioner who rakes in so much money and has to write in his diary what fools he has made of the corrupt officials. Above all, he has the love of the Pastor’s daughter who he has promised to marry. They all realise at the end what fools they have been when the diary is read to everyone’s hearing.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to depict political mismanagement and political satire in Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*. It has demonstrated that such elements as wit, farce and malapropism have aided the satiric presentations of characters and events in both plays. It has established that Osofisan's play is an adaptation of Gogol's. Osofisan has seen similarities in the corrupt lifestyles of political leaders in Russia of 1836, also in Nigeria of the 21st century, thereby affirming that the human condition is the same everywhere.

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GASTRONOMIC ATTITUDE AS PANACEA TO DANCE CREATIVITY

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Abstract

“You are what you eat”. “You are what you dance and the way you dance”. This paper discusses the twin issues of eating and dancing. It sees eating habit as source for making or marring creativity in dance and translates it to the embrace of democracy and life in general. Excessive eating dulls or weakens the brain and the body system and hinders creativity in dance. In a democratic culture the temptation to over-feed with the nation’s resources results into corruption and lack of developmental creativity. Taking the analytical and systematic approaches, this paper considers gastronomy as a kernel for creativity in dance and democracy. Its findings are that; one, the dancer who maintains a good eating habit creates more, as his/her body will be full of zip and dynamically responsive, ditto the politician. Two, because the body and the mind are used for creativity, any morbid treatment of them attracts antithetical aesthetic value by the audience or the electorate. The paper concludes therefore that to be artistically creative, gastronomy is imperative.

Introduction

The dancer has only his/her body as the primary source or tool of articulating theatrical experience and function. In fact, the dancer’s body is the prime factor for expression and it is on it that other elements of dance are tied. It therefore means that that primary instrument of dance expression, the dancer’s body, should be adequately taken care of if it must continue to serve the society with creative and positive outputs. The relevance of dance to the society cannot be quantified. This significance has been stressed severally by some scholars. Udoka (163) summarizes it in this manner:

However, we now understand that humankind had long ago understood the value of the dance as the tongue of the soul moulding the symbols of value, goals, communication and homogeneity, and providing the interface between imagination and reality, then profane and the divine, the intangible and concrete, the very essence of existence nurtured through the secrets of breath, the nervous system and the physical body. Dance provides a natural, perfect and holistic strategy in relating to self and others...

Therefore, our concern here is the dancer and his/her health behaviour in relation to apt creative performance, useful and suitable to passing information, entertainment, education and aesthetics. The analytical approach to research is employed here to draw the attention of dancers and dance practitioners in general to the necessity of good health behaviour if they must stay longer on stage to continue to render useful, purposeful and creative services to the society.

Dance, movement, grace and precision begin with attitude to life and good healthiness of the dancer. The aphorism “everybody can dance, only a dancer can perform”, simply explains both the naturalness of dance as well as professionalism in the art. The first is sourced in the fact that dance is a natural thing to do because of the biological and natural disposition of movement from the day a child is conceived and born through to the processes of rites of passage to adulthood and, to death. The second relates dance to democratic thoughts in which the politician’s gastronomic attitude is mirrored in his/her quest for monetary gains, power and social sustenance. The stated dance creativity requires the dancer to be trained to be a trainer of trainee(s) and an intelligent and skilful performer. For example a dancer and choreographer, Mariam Iyeh (19) analyses her choice of movement in a libretto and in relation to the choice of movement by a dancer thus, “the choice of movement composition was influenced by my production style and other factors, such as theme, subject matter for each sequence, mood, music and songs, time limitation and the level of training of the dancer”. Here, the health of the trainer-dancer is looked into as key to professionalism and

proper output of performance since it is expected that a theatre artiste should be creative to sustain the audience attention and attract applause or commendation as it were. Lawal (35) observes that:

it is the hallmark of good acting to be creative in movement and gesture, to improvise within meaning and context, and thus make every performance of even the same production a uniquely memorable experience...mime is action without words while movement in an expressive gesture to complement the spoken word.

Interestingly, movement is the principal element in dance. The functions of dance in relation to the other genres in theatre are education, entertainment, information and aesthetics suitable to social requirements and advancement.

Dance as an art capable of the aforementioned functions turns towards abstraction from its consideration as a vital tool for the resuscitation of the society, particularly when such a society is bedevilled by quagmire of vices and corruption. Dance is considered as a time and space art. Akinseye (95) defined dance simply as that which:

involves the movement of the body which is a means to achieve physical fitness through the five fundamental movements of walking, running, jumping, leaping and hopping...is expressive movement of turning, twisting and rolling of the body (parts) to conform with the rhythm of a sound, beat or music.

In essence it involves the elements of movement, time, space, rhythm, dynamics, and weight and so on in their consequence form, styles and utility. For a dance to be adjudged performative and aesthetical precision to time and bars given to music in movements and steps suitable to a given rhythm, context and content is germane. For a professional dancer, there is no dance for dance sake. In other words, dance movements are not created in a vacuum. Every movement in a dance is geared towards a reflection of the purpose of its

phenomenal and contextual significance. Sandle (133)'s observation is apt here as he states that:

There is however, a fundamental difference between movement perceived expressively and movement experienced as communicatory of another person. In communication, awareness of movement and its phenomenal qualities will relate to the whole social context of the movement. Thus the qualitative significance of the movement will be partly determined by the nature of the perceiver's relationship to the other person and the actions and intended actions of each.

Dance as a Physical/Emotional Health

The human body, particularly, for the dancer, calls for good and healthy living. Dance is considered here as capable of providing good health to the dancer physically and emotionally. The idea of health encompasses, according to Oliver (187), "something more than freedom from disease and to regard it as a condition of efficiency both physically, emotionally and socially so that life can be lived to the full." Through dance, the human body is made physically and manipulatively a contrivance of movement for and by the dancer to accomplish a massive amount of things or actions simultaneously. Dance facilitates individual's anabolism. When we talk of movement it is the arrangement or distribution or coordination of body parts through the elements of line - shapes that the body assumed; colour, rhythm, dynamics, etc., in space. This is because the human body is made up of nerves, muscles, bones etc. The human body has the capacity to express a great deal of emotional tenderness, grandeur and suffering in whatever form. Dance as a physical/emotional act facilitates good and healthy physique in addition to a good emotional state.

The physical structure of a dancer is a great asset to him/her in a performance. Thus Ojuade, in a kinesiology lecture note, submits that "the physical form of a dancer is a physical attraction in dance provided it is well coordinated or executed". However, the dancer's training and movement execution must adhere to the shape, size and type of his/her body to be of a

physical attraction in motion and movement. Odeyale and Amuchie (19) affirm that:

Body types or somatotype is the grouping of the human body according to inherited qualities or characteristics...and these form the yardstick for differentiating among individuals. Body types influence performance and in some cases may be used as an indication of athletic ability.

The human body type or body dominance, according to Kane (98), has three elements and they are endomorphy (fat), mesomorphy (muscle), and ectomorphy (linearity). The explanation is that naturally the endomorph is fat, the mesomorph is muscular and energetic and full of vigour, and the ectomorph is slim, “insubstantial” and fragile. The above classification presupposes that an understanding of one’s body type serves to caution the dancer on the execution of possible movement, type of exercise, nutritional habit and the likes. It is consequently essential that the dancer takes good care of the body irrespective of the type. Some movements are beautifully executed in some dancers’ body than in some. For example, a fat (endomorph) African dancer with accentuated buttocks and other body parts will most likely move them better and beautifully than a slim (ectomorph) dancer. It is the same for others provided care and caution is taken to perfect the body to be flexible and malleable to externalize inner intention or thought in movements. This leads us to emotional health.

Human emotion is conceived out in an external manner in the execution of dance movement. This is carried out through bodily articulation experience in gesture and pantomime. What is conceived in the mind of the dancer as a thought, idea, feeling and so on is expressed in dance performative movements aesthetically. This relates to the mental/physical. It implies that the body has to be fit mentally, emotionally and spiritually at all times especially as a dancer. This is because all these are needed to be able to execute a well-coordinated dance movement. For example in dance, it is indeed difficult to separate body and soul of man since they are all actively involved in a creative dance movement. An emotionally circumscribed and melancholic

dancer is most likely a bad dancer because of the poor state of mind. The fact is that he/she will be hindered by lack of creative muse leading to inaccurate body expression and lack of kinaesthetic sense. Dance is needed in the improvement of health when it serves as therapy to the individual dancer. The human body in dance action digs deep into the mind to relate with the happenings in and around the environment. Dance is used to improve emotional health and this is characterized in the words of Layman (164):

...peace of mind, relative freedom from tension and anxiety, the ability to direct hostile feelings into creative and constructive channels, sensitivity and responsiveness to the feelings of others, the ability to give and received love, spontaneity of emotional expression in a form appropriate to the individual's developmental level, the ability to deal constructively with reality and adjust to change, a feeling of security, a sense of self-worth, enjoyment of human contacts, ... flexibility, an appropriate balance between self-sufficiency and willingness to accept help, ... and the capacity to enjoy life.

Kinaesthetic Sense in Dance

Kinaesthetic sense as an aspect of dance kinesiology is here considered a rightful requirement in the performance of dance. The dancer's health behaviour requires proper attention to achieve the kinaesthetic sense. Jeleel Ojuade in an undergraduate class note states that kinaesthetic sense is that which makes it possible for emotions, thought or views as conceived in form of ideas by the dancer to be expressed accurately through dance movement. Hence, it can also be called "movement sense". Cratty (54-56) considers the movement sense as that:

... including threshold of movement; position judgment, and repositioning judgments; threshold of direction of passively moved limbs; accuracy of direction of passively moved body part of movement of amplitude of passive movements; judgment of

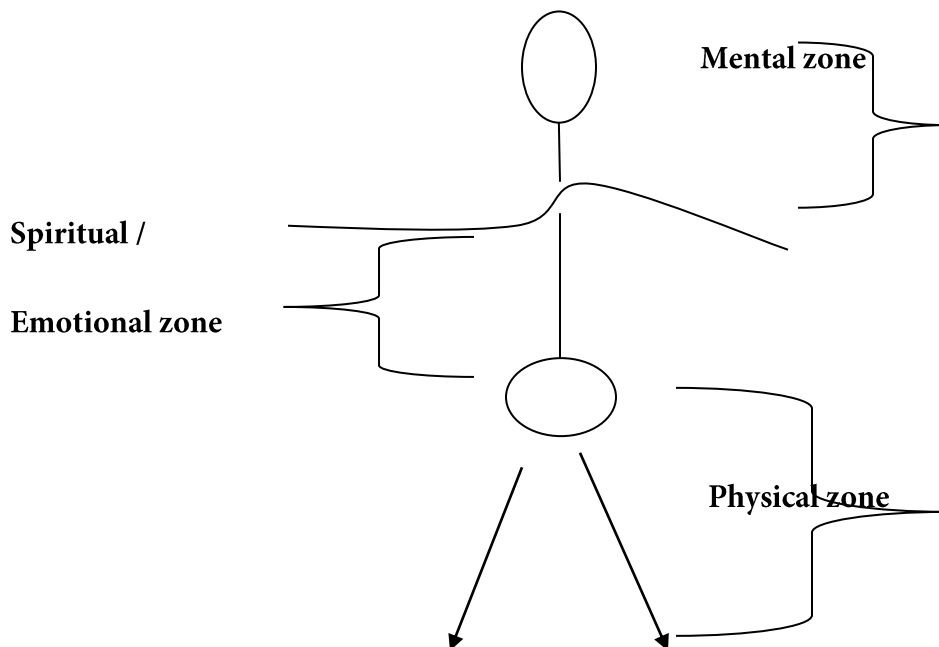
speed of movements controlled by experimenter; steadiness of movement; accuracy of the reproduction of muscular tension; accuracy of direction of movements initiated by the subject; and accuracy of speed of movement controlled by the subject.

Kinaesthetic sense is very important to any dancer because it is the source of the dancer's movement, and the articulation of the points listed by Carry above. Thus a dancer's awareness of his or her body anatomy is highly essential.

The dancer's brain and nerves have to be at alert at every point in time, kinaesthetic sense (movement sense) sends or transmits signals or impulse (message) to the muscular articulation, body joint, visual and auditory message to the brain that interprets them and put them to work in motion. The message sent informs the dancer of the muscle being used. For example, when a sound is heard, from an instrument, it is the brain that interprets and sends the signal to the part of the body of the dancer that should react or respond using the appropriate gestures, steps and movement. This occurs when tension, balance, sight and sound are interpreted and transformed into movement pattern in space. The entire framework of the dancer's body must be capable of executing various functions as an intricate instrument. The legs and feet and the rest of the body must be able to express the dramatic content of dance in a clear manner. This establishes that the face, neck, arm, shoulders, back truck, hand, etc., must contribute to the whole and will not only serve as subsidiary component that merely support the movements of the leg and feet, e.g., a dancer's expressive face is equally as important as other aspects of his or her body while making efforts to negotiate difficult steps. This is because a dancer has to convey diverse mood to suit particular role hence no part of the body is less important. It also informs the dancer on which part of the body that is not functioning properly and what manner are they functioning; for instance, in kinaesthetic the dancer is solely responsible for his /her mistake(s). A professional dancer must train well to develop the kinaesthetic sense. Kinaesthetic sense assists to allocate movements to the zones in the body. The human body in kinaesthetic understanding is divided into three zones with unique task to perform. In order word, the kinaesthetic sense

advocates all the three body zones in dance. The movement sense is meant therefore to transmit exactly the engagement of the components of the body being used at the particular moment.

The human body can be divided into three body zones in dance;; (1) physical zone which involves the lower truck and the legs; (2) spiritual and emotional zones which involve the torso and the arms, and (3) mental zone which consists of the head and neck.

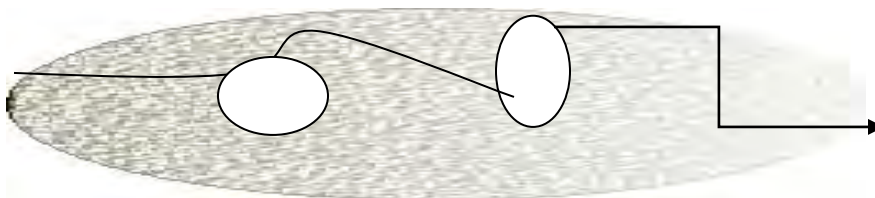


A graphic illustration of the three body zones

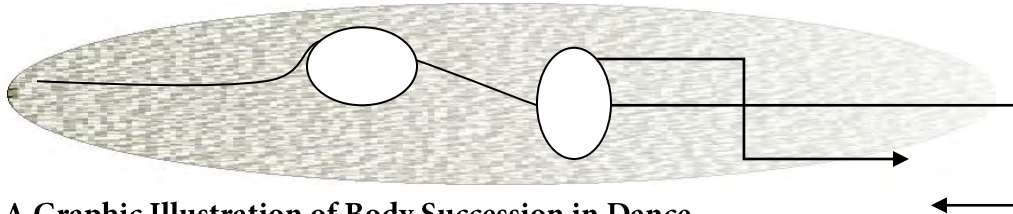
The three body zones work in harmony to generate movement in dance. It suffices to say that for a single movement to emanate from the dancer, the mental; dealing with the brain and other sensory organs around the head, the spiritual/emotional; with relations to the organs around the torso and, the physical; derivable from the actions around the legs, must unite to transmit expressions as intended by the dancer to the audience. The mental zone aids concentration, and creativity. The spiritual/emotional zone helps the dancer to

be dedicated and determined to perform to the satisfaction of, not him/herself alone, but the audience as well. And, the physical zone takes care of stamina, dexterity and space utility.

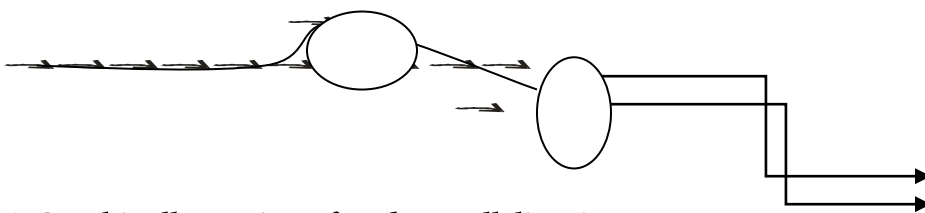
Similarly movement can be divided into three great order which are: (1) opposition which denotes the physical strength and brute force in space; (2) parallelism which is the physical plane and mental plane for decorative and stylized movement in space; (3) succession, that is, the highest order of movement passing through the body in space. It moves every muscle and joint as it comes in contact with them.



A Graphic Illustration of Body Opposition in Dance



A Graphic Illustration of Body Succession in Dance



A Graphic Illustration of Body Parallelism in Dance

It is observed that no sincere emotion can be express through movement of the body without some forms of succession. To actualize this successfully, the dancer needs to maintain a good and healthy behaviour. Ojuade further points out, “when viewing a dance performance we do not actually thinks in terms of

bodily zones but they are all part of the secret on why some dancers employ their bodies better than others in dance performances”. It is therefore imperative that the dancer takes very good care of the body to maintain a proper physical and emotional health which is desiderata for optimum performance.

The Dancer’s Apt Health Behaviour

In an attempt to attain skills, perfection and good techniques in dance, the dancer must practise very hard to attain a very high level of communicative body, mental alertness, good musical sense, visual and emotion perception and kinaesthetic sense. Dance encourages strength, beauty, healthy living, body carriage and gracefully look and so on. It is beneficial to the dancers body in that it makes room for a wide variety of muscular activities to be achieved thus it strengthened the limbs and helps to beautify the human frame but this cannot be achieved without an extended muscular mobility, which can best be gained through the following enumerated points:

Exercise/Gymnastics

Dance exercises or gymnastics are both physically and mentally demanding in other words, ordinary movements are not sufficient. This process begins with warm-up activities which are designed to condition the body and mind for the main exercise. They include activities such as simple walking, bending and turning the body in various directions and so on. Exercise is a conscious manipulation of the body to achieve some desirable results as regards to body fitness. Daily perseverance exercise and great deal of physical hard work helps to stimulate the muscle, nerves, heart, joints and all other body organs to more active and yielding to proper body expressions in dance.

Furthermore, the purpose of exercise to dance is to stimulate action of the body cells that are dormant and not regularly brought into action in daily activities. Lack of exercise could lead to the exhibition of weak, jerky and uncoordinated movements which spoils the grace, beauty and aesthetics of a dance. The advantages of exercise, particularly to the muscles, are further enumerated by Ajiboye (72):

- a) It increases the strength, endurance, speed and flexibility of the muscles.
- b) It increases the amount of connective tissues in the body.
- c) It increases the covering of the muscles.
- d) It brings about the formation of more capillaries in the body.
- e) Exercise increases the thickness of the muscles.
- f) Exercises enable muscles have greater endurance.
- g) Exercises help the muscles develop more hemoglobin (Red blood cells).
- h) Exercises help the muscles of the heart to beat faster and thus help more rapid circulation of the blood.

Other gains of exercises on the dancer are; flexibility, stamina, balance, youthful look, agility, better kinesthetic sense and so on.

Nutrition

This has to do with food quality. Good nutrition is necessary for good health. Nutrition is a science that links food, medicine and habit with public health. Uti and Ojeme (184) explain “Nutrition is concerned with the study of food and nutrients and an analysis of their qualities and usefulness to the human body”. Correct feeding habit is very important in the maintenance of human body in order to maintain fitness. The performance of dance activities like every other athletic activity requires energy (which is the ability to do work) and it is food that is the primary supplier of it. Uti and Ojeme (184) advise that “every human being, particularly sportsmen and women, must obtain the appropriate quantity and quality of food in order to excel in athletic performances” and this applies to the dancer as well. The body is the physical instrument of the dancer; therefore, it must be adequately cared for. There is the need to keep the body in good physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual state in order to facilitate its proper functioning. This the dancer obtains from proper food intake.

Food supply is needed for body growth and metabolism. Human beings need food or regular supply of food, water and air for survival. Energy is also supplied through food. It is the fuel for a dancer’s performance in space. Uti and Ojeme (184) further list out the different kinds of food thus:

1. Carbohydrate - yam, cassava, bread, rice, potato, and cereals such as maize, wheat, and millet etc.
2. Proteins - Meat, Fish, Egg, Beans, Plantains, and Milk, etc.
3. Fats - Egg, Milk, Ice-cream, Butter, Margarine etc.
4. Minerals - Calcium, Bone etc.
5. Vitamins - Oranges, Grapes, Lime, Green vegetable, and Tomato, (Vitamin D from Sun Light) etc.
6. Water

Healthy feeding habit builds a healthy and energetic dancer. Experts however advise that the energy value of food intake by a dancer is very paramount. The suggestion is that those foods with high concentration of carbohydrate that are converted, as it were, through digestion to produce glucose that is aptly needed for energy in dance should be considered. However, care should be taking not to over eat before embarking on a vigorous dance as this may affect the solar-plexus (the source of dance) causing sharp pains around the abdomen.

Rest

Rest is a state of quietness and meditation. A dancer needs a large amount of rest to function well as a performance. It is extremely crucial to the dancer and must not be miscomprehended with enjoyment because as Ajiboye (2004) explains that rest is helpful to the muscles and the organs of the body to build up their lost substances. It is also imperative that the dancer takes a shower to refreshing the muscle, body and the entire system. With this he/she will bounce back fully and ready to perform even better. It is necessary when one is tired, particularly after a long or hot and fast tempo dance is done.

Sleep

Sleep is a natural state of life in which the body is put in a very quiet situation and temporarily separated from the happenings in and around but with the body organs functioning though at a slow rhythmic tempo. That explains the reason why it is regarded as the “sister” of death. Just like dance, sleep can take place at any time of the day. It should be regular and adequate enough to

refreshing the mind, soul and body. Sleep is the ultimate of rest and relaxation. In the description of Ajiboye (2004) sleep offers the only perfect system of resting. The effect of sleep on the mental and spiritual well-being of a dancer cannot be quantified. It must be observed to keep the body in balance. Concerted effort should be taking to observe day-time sleep, otherwise known as siestas and also to sleep well and enough at night. Other benefits of sleep according to Ajiboye include prevention of fatigue, enhancement of the system to work efficiently, reduction of tension, among others.

Conclusion

Maintaining good health behaviour is a *sine qua non* for creativity in dance and performing arts in general. As a result, dancers should eat well and appropriately too. Also, the inviolability of strict and dogged compliance to the points enumerated above will facilitate longevity life for the dancer and the theatre profession. Further still, “you are what you eat” is a regular saying in health circle. One’s eating habit, living and work approach, combine to model one a fitted and skilful individual and help to beautify your body frame. It is important that a dancer exercises regularly, maintains good nutrition, rests or relaxes inevitably and sleeps on a regular basis for a prolonged life.

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A CRITIQUE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVE NATION BUILDING IN EMMA DANDAURA'S NATION BUILDERS

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Abstract

The quest for responsible governance and respect for human rights have over time engendered the need for a good government which can only be provided by democracy. However, in Nigeria a 'home-made' democracy is in place. This is an organized robbery consortium where the organizers convert leadership into what the former American president Franklyn Roosevelt had in mind when he spoke about a democracy that breeds unemployment, insecurity, hunger, and hopelessness. This paper discusses the stagnation of Nigeria's development and the attendant issues from Emma Dandaura's viewpoint because, several years after independence, it seems Nigeria has not gone beyond what the colonial masters handed over to its Leaders. Suffice to mention that political and economic failings in the polity substantiates the above statements as despair, frustration, fear, hunger and diseases are the daily companions of the generality of the masses who expect to reap the dividends of good governance from the political elite. The paper concludes among others that nation building and the associated developmental problems of Nigeria as highlighted in the play Nation Builders require the youth, men and women of deep vision, sincerity of purpose, selflessness, genuine love for their country that will resolutely refuse to conspire and aid politicians who parade themselves as leaders and mini-gods.

Introduction

Nigerian political history since independence from Britain in 1960 has been a circle of authoritarian military regime with episodic interregnum of civilian government. Rental politics in Nigeria has been characterized over the years by the dominance of electoral

machinery, comprising largely of wealthy former military officers and their civilian business cronies (Tignor 53).

The above quote aptly captures and summarizes the Nigerian political scenario for the past fifty three years, and calls for a repositioning of the Nigerian Youths to rise up to their responsibilities by bracing up to the challenges confronting and impeding the practice of ideal democracy in Nigeria in the 21st century. Since 1960, Nigeria had made several attempts at democratic rule but each attempt had been punctured by coup and counter coups until 1999 when leadership was handed back to the civilian administration headed by Olusegun Obasanjo. Even though civilian rule has thrived uninterrupted for the past sixteen years now, real democracy which supposedly is characteristic feature of civilian administrations has constantly eluded Nigeria and remains a mirage, as every civilian regime is contaminated by greed, selfishness, ethnicity, religious intolerance and corruption, thus making the practice of democracy almost impossible in Nigeria.

Democracy in Nigeria and Nation Building

Over time, the quest for responsible governance and respect for human rights have engendered the need for a good government which can only be provided by democracy. Democracy as a term is etymologically defined as rule of the people. Abraham Lincoln, one time American president classically defined it as “government of the people by the people and for the people” (Peter 28). Democracy as a political concept is obviously the most popular and acceptable system of civil governance. Its popularity stems from its status as a formidable guarantor of the freedom of the individual and respect for human dignity. Democracy is thus a sine qua non for progress, development and good governance. And a key element of any critical democracy is election, which in itself is the progress or act of choosing people for office, especially, political office (Chambers 21st Century Dictionary 4230). Thus, election is the central and most fundamental element in representative democratic governments. Unfortunately, the electoral process in Nigeria has always been a victim of rape by a group of greedy leaders, congenital thieves, political assassins and mediocre political engineering. Thus protests, violence and unending court

injunctions are known to have always characterized Nigeria's elections since organized electoral contest was introduced during the colonial times.

For any African, or third world country like Nigeria to understand, adopt and practise the democratic system successfully, the understanding of this concept from the context of the West from which it originated is pertinent. Democracy was first half practised in the ancient Greek city state of Athens (as a worse form of government according to Plato). What is called democracy in the West is really liberal democracy, a political system marked out not only by free elections but also the rule of law, the separation of powers and the basic human rights including private property, free speech and religious tolerance. It is a more deliberate act of giving power to the people based on competitive parties in which the governing majority respects the rights of the minority. Nigerian democracy *ab initio* manifests some peculiarities by the evolvement of a new form of democracy, the type recommended by the late General Sani Abacha referred to as, 'home-made-democracy', which contrasts and contradicts the model defined and prescribed by Abraham Lincoln.

'Home-made-democracy' is a government of the 'political jobbers', by political jobbers; it is a government of the looters and for the looters (Odey 14 -15). A home - made democracy is an organized robbery consortium where the organizers convert leadership into what the former American president Franklyn Roosevelt had in mind when he spoke about a democracy that breeds unemployment, insecurity, hunger, and hopelessness. What holds as democracy in Nigeria is a government by a clique - president and his cabal such as governors and the executives at the federal and state levels. Such a democracy smacks of individual empowerment whether economic, political, social or religious. The group described above can best be seen as an institutionalized oligarchy that strives to hold onto power as well as keeping access to central resources using all and any means at their disposal including political killings, election rigging, corruption, political alliance shifts and outright organizing of violence to destabilize governance.

The Report of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) 2008 aptly describes the oligarchy as a

... political oligarchy which exerts more control than do the formal institutions. The formal and the informal powers converge in the office of the president, who uses the enormous resources at his disposal to reward and cement his patrimonial networks. It is this oligarchic control of political power system that constitutes a major obstacle to the realization of democracy in Nigeria with its attendant complexities and dynamics (51)

This brings about exclusion of the masses who are the larger part of the population from full participation in governance and breeds situations in which legitimacy of elected officials is contested. Oftentimes, lives are lost as these contests end up in violence. Genuine democracy makes it possible for individuals to participate freely and actively in the developmental process be it religious, economic, and social. All aimed at building a stable and formidable national polity.

The Concept of Nation Building

To understand the notion of nation-building one need to have some definition of what a nation is. According to Carolyn and Stephenson (2005) early conceptions of nations defined it as a group or race of people who shared history, traditions and usually language (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). The people of a nation generally share a common identity and part of nation-building is the building of that common identity. Today the word nation is often used synonymously with state. But a state is more properly the governmental apparatus by which a nation rules itself. Nation-building therefore refers to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people or peoples, within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation-building can involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructure development to foster social harmony and economic growth (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Originally, nation-building referred to the efforts of newly independent nations, notably the nations of Africa to reshape colonial territories that had been carved out by colonial powers without regard to ethnic or other

boundaries. These reformed states would then become viable and coherent national entities. Thus, nation-building included the creation of superficial national paraphernalia. Such as, flags, anthems, national days, national stadiums, national airlines, national languages and national myths. At a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by moulding different groups into a nation especially since colonialism had used divide and rule techniques to maintain its domination.

Democratic process ensures and enhances effective nation-building. Nation-building that will likely contribute to stable national and international peace will need to emphasize the democratic participation of people within the nation to demand rights. It will need to build the society economy and polity which will meet the basic needs of the people so that they are not driven by poverty, inequality and unemployment on the one hand, or a desire to compete for resources and proven either internally or in the international system. This does mean, not only producing the final institutions of democracy but the underlying culture which recognize the needs of others both within and outside. It means development of human rights... political, civil, economic and social and the rule of law and also includes the development of health care systems and roads and jobs. Perhaps most important it means the development of education which is a sector that caters for the empowerment of the youths for a greater tomorrow.

Nation-building must allow the participation of civil society and develop democratic state institutions that promote welfare; democratic state-building is an important part of that. This is a multi-faceted process that will proceed differently in each local context. A democratic approach to nation-building refers to cases in which elected governments operate under inclusive institutions and the leader behaves in ways that strength democracy. This approach has the greatest potentials for creating a stable multi ethnic nation like ours. Unfortunately Nigeria has not yet successfully purged this path.

Youth and Nation Building

The youths' responsibility towards national development cannot be over emphasized given the fact that they are the backbone of any society that wishes to prosper in terms of economy and culture. The energy, agility, swiftness of

thought and indeed the physical manpower are the characteristics that make the youthful age more interesting than any stage of human existence. Youth population is the life wire of any society and the force behind a developing nation. Culturally, the youths are the inheritors of the society, heritage and custom. Therefore if the skill of this agile population is positively harnessed, a nation can be said to be on the path of greatness and development. The saying goes that “youth are not only leaders of tomorrow, but partners of today”. It therefore behoves on the leadership of today to groom and nurture the youth by planting in them for tomorrow’s harvest. This virtue of mentoring is greatly lacking in our society today. As a pointer, during this past U.S election, the republicans underestimated the role of youth in politics, something the democrats used to their advantage. The government and society at large have equal responsibility to provide the youth with an environment that is conducive to bringing about a mature and responsible youth population for the coming generation to lead a better life.

Nation Builders: Back to Back Exploration

The playwright chronicles in *Nation Builders* the issues relating to the construction of Nigeria, from the barriers of ethnicity, selfish regional interests, government’s ineptitude, and workers attitude to suggested solutions and long term recommendations with a high level of artistic dexterity. The playwright situates the play in a gigantic construction site, inferred to be a metaphor for the gigantic project called Nigeria.

As the play opens, the stage directions reveal the gigantic site: “From its size and other features, it is obvious work has been going on at this site for many years ... even though the building has not gone past the foundation stage” (Dandaura 74). This rhetorically questions the capability of the political leaders and is symbolic of Nigeria which was exactly forty five years old when this play *Nation Builders* was written in 2005, as officer inquires: “Now let us reason together. From the records here I can see that you have been on this site for the past forty five years abi?”(82)

Several years after independence, it seems Nigeria has not gone beyond what the colonial masters handed over to Nigerian leaders. Suffice to mention that political and economic failings in the polity substantiates the

above statements as despair, frustration, fear, hunger and diseases are the daily companions of the generality of the masses who expect to reap the dividends of good governance from the political elite. The stagnation of Nigeria's development from Dandaura's viewpoint can also be traced to parochial regional interests fuelled by ethnic diversities exemplified in the qualms over the measurement of the foundation of the structure on the site and which direction it should follow as the dialogue below reveals:

- Ade: ...This foundation is supposed to go to the south and not the central as dem dey measure am.
- Bala: Kai, the foundation should bend towards the North.
- Woman: Haba, make una dey reasonable now. E don reach forty five years wey dem award this contract but we still dey argue on foundation (Dandaura 78)

The menace of regional interest has indeed hindered national development and further heightened the ethnic intolerance in Nigeria which manifests in derogatory name-calling that often leads to hostility as these excerpts show:

- Okafor: Look, Ademola, You thos 'mgbati – mgbali? I have been telling you that you should not talk to Mazi Okafor anyhow like that...(75).
- Bala: Kutuman Buran Ubanka! You 'in yanmeri banza; and this (indicating Ade) 'mai kasha a kwano' should leave me alone fa...
- Ade: It's this akpu eater (Okafor) and Maigoro (Bala) that want to kill themselves...
- Okafor: You this rat eater (Terwase) so what were you saying when foreman was here (77).

Though this name-calls are inimical to peaceful co-existence they often help in the understanding and recognition of the personal idiosyncrasies that form peculiar attributes and characteristics associated with each ethnic group in Nigeria. In so far as it impedes and hampers meaningful, peaceful co-

existence, it all together brings out the sense in the national slogan 'unity in diversity'. The murder of old man by Odewale in *The Gods are not to Blame* simply because he was called him 'a man from the bush tribe' corroborates this ethnic hostility that has ravaged Nigeria.

Apart from ethnic diversity and selfish regional interests, the problem of stagnation in the process of development in Nigeria as in the site in the play as expunged by the playwright stems from both the leadership and the followership. First and foremost, the problem of underutilization of resources is identified in the world of the play by the young lady from the National Productivity Centre (NPC), simply called Officer, in her words; "From what I can see, there is a serious problem of underutilization of resources ... 'I mean your productivity it low' (83).

Underutilization of resources does not guarantee any meaningful development, it rather translates into low productivity, despite the various activities going on at the site, with various workers 'carrying the paraphernalia of his trade' (74), the work on the site, Nigeria remains at the foundation stage. The palliatives to enhanced productivity in any economy apart from maximum utilization of resources are the issue of workers welfare as opined by officers:

Officer: There is no doubt that to get the best from your workers,
you need to show some concern for their welfare (84).

This is one crucial area that has been overlooked by the leadership of this country, instead they prefer to enrich themselves and only empower youths with arms and weapons when they have political scores to settle by giving them paltry sums of money, to the detriment of the Nigerian workers. For instance, the ₦18, 000 minimum wage has been refused implementation by most state governors even though it has become a matter of law. Workers' welfare is not all about salary as claimed by Foreman of the site when he says:

Foreman: The workers get their salaries regularly. Indeed only
regularly. I reviewed their salaries and allowances
(85).

However, alongside salaries there has to be corresponding positive reinforcements from time to time as the following dialogue demands:

Tamuno: We need to be commended when we excel.

Ade: Not insults and commands all the time. (85)

These are necessary as they act as moral boosters and motivation for hard work towards higher productivity which 'is consequential to nation – building. Thus, human motivation is a complex business than any other factor that can account for the success of hard work apart from the provision of efficient working tools and equipment both in public establishments and industries as demanded by Terwase: "That is not enough; we need better tools" (85). This will complement motivation and positive reinforcements. Motivation here refers to 'rewards of individuals and corporate organizations that have excelled in their chosen fields of endeavour...' (Officer 85-86). This idea informed the setting aside of the National Productivity Day, whose celebration and commemoration is done in the pockets of overseers of the National Productivity Centre. On the part of the workers, to enhance productivity, Officer opines:

Officer: As for you workers, I have noticed within my short stay here that, you need proper orientation concerning your attitude to work (86).

A positive attitude to work, total rebranding of attitude and the restoration of dignity of labour are *sine qua non* for efficient nation-building in addition to proper time management. This total orientation is imperative for both employers and employees in both public and private organisations. This is affirmed by Foreman when he says: "I see what you mean now. Both employers and employees have roles to play in the match towards greater productivity...(87)

Development is not just the business of the leadership alone; the followers also need a greater commitment as compatriots if productivity must

be improved, as Officer attests: “Indeed, we all need new orientations. Above all Foreman, we should have better planning...Hard work plus planning plus motivation equals greater productivity” (87).

For any nation or economy to develop effectively and efficiently, the above requisite ingredients are pertinent and indispensable. With the fire for a new national revival and orientation rekindled, Mama Put confirms: “This your advise remind me of the song wey dem dey sing for radio every morning” (87).

Though the National Orientation Agency might be doing the best it can, their best would not be felt until the beautiful jingles and adverts on our radios and televisions are translated into implementable policies and strategies for national growth. Ehiedu Iweriebor (1990) in Akintokumbo identified six criteria for measuring the progress of the nation-building process to include: leadership, transportation and communication networks, economic development, national education, pedagogical nationalism and civil society (www.transparency.com/index.php/me...).

The players who were earlier on, in the course of the play divided along ethnic lines and regional interest now discovers the need for togetherness and collective struggle towards the achievement of a common national goal after the new orientation by Officer are enjoined by Woman to come together and chart a new course as they sing ‘Hard work dey bring better’. This brings to an end the tensed atmosphere of hopelessness, despair and disconcertment crated at the beginning of the play by the song:

Wahala dey
Wahala dey
Na wetin we dey talk
If you chop make me chop
Longer throat go quench (74).

‘Wahala’ is a *Hausa* word that means trouble. Its use in the song advocates, responsible governance that is sensitive to the plight of the masses and above all, the song projects the dismal situation in Nigeria where one class has so much while the other scavenge to survive. This song paints a scenario for the

general misery and poverty characterizing the workers who all together represents the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

In the world of the play, the playwright strongly projects the issue of national unity with a focus on the people understanding themselves and learning to co - exist. We see a representation of the geo – political zones of north, middle belt, south west, south east, and south - south represented by such names as Bala, Terwase, Ademola, Okafor, Tamuno, and Ndah respectively is a display of artistic ingenuity with a deep understanding of the problems of ethnic diversity which the playwright condenses at the end of the play with a song calling on Nigerians “to rise and collectively build our father land. In his words:

Yoruba, Hausa, or Ibo
Abi, Na ‘minority’
No Matter Where you come from
No matter your profession
Rise up let us build our father land
For a better tomorrow (88)

This is a stand up call for real patriots to rise up and collectively build the nation despite their differences. This requires “selfless and visionary leadership based on honesty, commitment, and competence of citizens and leaders within the polity” (Mbachaga 132 – 133).

Conclusion

A democratic approach is the best path to nation-building in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria. As we have seen in the Nigerian experience with nation building, it is difficult to pursue a non-democratic means of reform without aggravating internal unrest and international censure. Sadly, lack of democratic mandate, poor institutional design and bad leadership has made it nearly impossible for successive Nigerian governments to pursue a democratic approach. The massive corruption scandals of successive governments, the poor state of the economy and the fraud that has characterized our electoral

process since 1999 all have been made possible with the collaboration of poor masses. In the words of Mbachaga:

What we need is reorientation that shapes us and prepares us to look at ourselves as Nigerians, whose first love and loyalty lies with the nation state than a particular section or religion. It becomes imperative to eliminate divisive and tribal forces which militate against national unity and progress in a bid to move forward (Mbachaga 133).

Nation-building and the associated developmental problems of Nigeria as highlighted in the play *Nation Builders* require the youth, men and women of deep vision, sincerity of purpose, selflessness, genuine love for their country that will resolutely refuse to conspire and aid politicians who parade themselves as leaders and mini-gods. Nigeria needs the youths to reject the design of self-serving political charlatans who recruit them as political thugs. The masses also, should rally around people who understand the meaning of nation-building; people who will shun tribalism and ethnic politics, corruption and nepotism. These are people who can build nations.

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DIRECTING IN NOLLYWOOD: A CRITIQUE OF MAHMOUD ALI-BALOGUN'S TANGO WITH ME AND TUNDE KELANI'S MAGUN THUNDERBOLT AS AUTEUR

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Abstract

The emergence of the Nigerian movie industry some decades ago through the pioneering efforts of theatre-turned-film artists such as Hubert Ogunde, Ade Afolayan, Ola Balogun, Moses Adejumo, etc., and its rise to a popular culture in Nigeria and beyond, using the video technology, through such films as Living In Bondage 1&2, Glamour Girls 1&2, Rituals, Isakkaba, Highway to the Grave and so on; has led to a thriving film culture - Nollywood - now regarded as the third largest in the world behind Hollywood and Bollywood. Though early productions in the Nollywood era were marred by slap-dash scripting and amateurish directing, with little or no attention paid to aesthetic quality, in terms of lighting, sound, costume, set design and overall picture quality; the consolidation of the industry has led to the emergence of a new breed of directors who view themselves as artist, with unique creative ingenuity, striving to stamp their style and originality on each of the works they've produced. The Nollywood directors in this category include the likes of Tunde Kelani, Kunle Afolayan, Mahmoud Ali-Balogun, Gugu Michael and so on. This paper shall thus critique some of their most recent works by using the auteur theory and the descriptive studies methodology to factually and systematically describe how these directors' personal creative vision are made manifest in their works through their mastery of the medium and technique. This paper shall pay significant attention to the works of Mahmoud Ali-Balogun and Tunde Kelani, especially, Tango With Me and Magun Thunderbolt and shall recommend that in the process of assigning directorial functions in Nollywood productions, producers should not merely

focus only on the director's potential remuneration and availability alone but significant attention should also be paid to the director's creativity, mastery of the medium, technical competence as well as their commitment to quality.

Introduction

The growth of the Nigerian film industry commonly referred to as Nollywood from a somewhat mediocre beginning where producers were interested only in financial gains, to a thriving film and popular culture in Nigeria, Africa and beyond has often been described as phenomenal. The meteoric rise of the industry is more mind-boggling when compared with other film cultures; other sectors of the Nigerian economy and even more so, when viewed from the perspective of the prevalent little or no support from government, national or international, to the industry. Nollywood has emerged as a fairly independent, popular film culture in Africa with no outside influence or funding as compared to other film cultures in Africa (Okome 1).

Though its beginnings has been attributed to the harsh economic climate of the late 80s and 90s, which resulted in the collapse of the early cinematic tradition, and the attendant socio-political upheavals; Nollywood was reinvented using video technology with the release in 1992 of Kenneth Nnebue's block-buster *Living in Bondage*. Nnebue's success served as a clarion call or eye-opener to other entrepreneurs who made forays into movie production, mostly, without the necessary skills, experience and competence in film-making (Mbamara, 2004; Haynes, 2005; Onuzulike, 2007).

The influx of these inexperienced entrepreneurs, on the one hand, has aided the industry's growth to a level where it's ranked as the largest in Africa, second to Bollywood in terms of volumes of movie production and third largest in the world (Mbamara, 2005).

Apart from this, Nollywood has become a major source of Nigeria's foreign exchange and the largest in terms of employment generation (Adejumobi, 4). On the other hand, this had resulted in the vagaries of low quality productions which has bedevilled the industry in recent times. However, a new dawn seems to be evolving with the emergence of a new breed of directors who are not only creative and competent in the art of film-making but who, also, are

committed to quality and strives through artistic ingenuity to bring to the fore their impressions of the society through careful manipulation of the medium. The directors who fall into this category include Mahmoud Ali-Balogun with *Tango With Me*(2011); Tunde Kelani with *Magun Thunderbolt*(2001), *Narrow Path*(2006); Gugu Michael with *Unge's War*(2010), Kunle Afolayan with *The Figurine* (2009), *Irapada or Redemption* (2007); Chineze Ayaene with *Ije: The Journey*(2010) and so on.

This paper shall as such, attempt a criticism of some of their works using the auteur theory and shall specifically direct its focus on Mahmoud Ali-Balogun's *Tango With Me* and Tunde Kelani's *Magun Thunderbolt*. But before drifting into this, we shall briefly look at the art and techniques of the film medium as well as the role of the director as a major creative force in this distinctive art form.

The Art of Directing and Film Authorship

Directing is a major artistic field both in the theatre and allied dramatic media such as radio, television and film. Directing have been defined in various ways but the basic elements involve the management of artistic personnel and creative devices towards a deliberate moulding of a perceived vision into its most sublime form (Johnson 57). Wills describes the art of play directing as "the process of transforming personal vision into public performance"(3). This definition takes into cognizance the creative vision of the director in the interpretative process which really comes to the fore during the performance proper - be it on radio, television, stage or film. In the theatre, for instance, the director is usually responsible for the overall stage picture of a performance as he integrates and co-ordinate the arts of the actors, scenographers, sound, light, costume and make up designers into a composite picture on stage to interpret the playwright's intentions in the play. He carries the can for failure or shares the plaudits with the playwright, if the project is successful (Taylor 23).

Barranger notes that apart from serving as an interpretative artist to the playwright by translating the script as faithfully as possible into theatrical form, the director can sometimes over-step the playwright to become the creative artist who fashion scripts into an original work of art. He does this by

altering the play i.e. changing the period represented, cutting the text, rearranging the scenes -and practically takes over the authorial role (12). Because of this, there's been a raging controversy on who really is the boss in the theatre which have attracted the views of many scholars who lends their support either to the playwright, actor or director(see Johnson 1-20). The same scenario seems to have occurred between the screenwriter or scenarist and the director which led a group of cinema enthusiasts who wrote for Cahiers du Cinema to argue that film should reflect the director's personal vision, which actually led to the emergence of the Auteur (French word for "author") Theory. The theory holds that a director's work reflects his personal creative vision as if they were the primary auteur (wikipedia).

Though the art of directing does not differ much across the media of theatre and film, Dancyger notes that in a film production, the director is responsible for translating a script (words) into visuals(shots) that will be turned over to an editor to pull together into a film (3). Bordwell & Thompson explains further that the director coordinates the staffs to create the film; even though his/ her authority isn't absolute, the director is usually considered the person most responsible for the final look and sound of film (17). As such most cinematic scholars regard the director as the film's primary "author" because it is the director who makes crucial decisions about performance, staging, lighting, framing, cutting and sound. He is the one who shapes the film's unique form and style, and these two components are central to cinema as an artform (Bordwell & Thompson 33-34).

However, Dancyger observes that the directors were not always the central figures they have become today in the world of filmmaking. He traces the pivotal events in this development to critics such as Francoise Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Eric Rohmer and so on whose works on the Cahiers du Cinema under the editorship of Andre Bazin, studied and wrote about the creative geniuses of John Ford, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Anthony Mann, and Sam Fuller(5). These filmmakers were considered to be auteurs of their films. The effect of their adulation was revolutionary as directors came to be widely regarded as the auteurs or creative king-pins of their films (Dancyger 6).

The auteur concept or theory of film directing was adopted by cinephiles in England including Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson, who wrote and directed films in the freer more personal style of the French "New Wave" filmmakers. Auteurism have influenced directors such as John Cassavetes, Arthur Penn, Mike Nichols, Sidney Lumet, Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas, to mention a few, in America. Global trends and technology have contributed to the growing influence of the theory around the world which has made the director to occupy the pinnacle of the film hierarchy.

Creativity, Film Art and Techniques

Arts as a genre of study has its base in the ability of the artiste to imagine, create and recreate things without limiting him/herself to the basic knowledge acquired. Creativity has been described as " a phenomenon whereby something new and valuable is created such as an idea, joke, an artistic or literary work, a painting or musical work, a solution or invention" (wikipedia). It could be noticed from the above that something "new" or "different" is created from the existing state. Creativity in filmmaking involves bringing to life what never existed or what existed in the imaginative world of the artiste or film maker from the conceptualization of a story to the actualization where we watch the story either as video or in cinemas. The ability to use the imagination to develop new and original ideas or things, especially in an artistic way becomes the spotlight of every filmmaker. This creative process in filmography is divided into different stages namely pre-production, production, and post-production.

At the pre-production stage, a script is developed and creatively written. At this stage ideas are turned into storylines for the filmscript which differs distinctively from other genres of creative writing- prose, poem, folklore, short stories and so on. The distinction is made manifest in the fact that the appreciation of other art forms ends in reading and interpretation by an individual or a group while in film, the exercise /entertainment goes beyond the cinema screen or television where viewers watch and appreciate the film, into shaping or influencing culture, attitudes and lifestyles in the society. In making the filmscript, the scenarist needs to ponder on how the

story is to be arranged i.e. a new and unique perspective or form he/ she wants to present the story or narrative to make it quite different from what the viewers might have seen before. This is what Glebas attempts to explain through his analysis of the relationship between creative writing and directing. According to him, "the ideal story is like a wave. It builds, rising up until it can't hold up anymore and comes crashing down ...the director controls how and why. Each section should have different amount of information given to the audience" (295).

It is pertinent to note that though stories portrayed might not be different from what the viewer may have been exposed to, it is however possible that the story be told in different ways - a perspective which is dependent on the scenarist's creative impulse. This however does not mean that a screenwriter should write out of the basic principles of film arts. Rabiger points out some basic questions the screenwriter should have in mind while writing the story thus;

Whether you write your own stories, work for someone else's script, or choose something to adapt, you will always face these central questions: how am i going to use my developing skills in the world? What kind of subjects should i tackle? What can i be good at? What is my artistic identity? (16).

These and more are some of the creative issues the scenarist or screenwriter must take cognizance of or put into consideration in order to put to birth, as it were, a virile screenplay or narrative.

Before proceeding into the next phase which is the productions proper, the filmmaker must sort out issues bordering on the screenplay, storyboarding, location, talents and crew members and so on. This stage or phase, also known as principal photography or shooting, is where the director's creativity is best showcased. This stage of film making combines the director's knowledge of film/video arts with the creative impulses embedded or developed in the story. The director coordinates the creativeness of the artists and crew members towards achieving the best possible picture in line with the resources at his disposal. It has been established somewhere in this

paper that finance is one of the major problems or challenges of film making in Nigeria. Therefore it must be emphasized that even so-called big budget films would struggle to recreate desired production aesthetics if not creatively managed, and even more so in the case of low or no budget films. For instance, a critical survey of most film production sets in Nigeria would reveal that several aspects of production were achieved through creative manipulation of available materials and devices. For example, moving shots are meant to be achieved with the aid of crane, mini jib, track or dolly but these shots in most Nollywood sets are creatively achieved through the use of constructed tracks or wheel chairs. Since the stage of principal photography is the level of actualizing the long dream of artistic expressions, an important thing a creative film maker should be aware of is that he/she must not limit his/herself to the use of conventional shots or photographic expressions. These are what Block recognizes as real and induced movement or simple and complex movement while Bordwell and Thompson call it compound shots (241, 74).

Shots composition is vital in filmmaking because it strongly determine what the film looks. As such, it is the duty of the director to ensure that the Director of Photography captures, as much as possible, the images or shots that would creatively express his composite picturization of actions, ideas, idioms and other cultural / aesthetic milieu he intends to portray in the film. The same dexterity should be applied in all elements of the production be it costume, make up, set design etc.

The post-production stage is also known as the editing or assembly phase. It is during this phase that images and sounds are combined in their final form. This process involves cutting pictures and sound, executing special effects, inserting music or extra dialogue, and adding tricks (Bordwell & Thompson, 15).

It must be noted and stressed that during the assembly or postproduction stage, the editor works with the director to make creative decisions about how the footage can best be cut together.

Video/Film Crafts and Techniques

The art of telling a story through the use of video camera or cine camera has gone beyond arts to craft. Originally, the video system was meant to be an event recording machine but through creativity and innovations, Africans especially Nigerians began using it for film making. We might be dwelling more on the use of video in film making as a result of its dominant use in telling a visual story.

The first thing a film maker should understand is the nature of the video system; its mechanisms and why it's different from the celluloid camera. This art of video filmmaking involves using video to tell a story. Video camera is predominantly known to record sound and picture together unlike the cine camera which records audio and visual in separate mediums. Again for the independent film maker who wants to explore the industry through creativity, the quick play back system of video becomes an advantage. The video system allows for a quick playback of the footages thereby encouraging a reassessment of what he has done and what he is to do.

The techniques of film making are embedded in the principles of film making. In as much as we are discussing creativity, it is pertinent to say that a creative film maker must first understand the basic principles in film making before using them to create a style technique. One of such principles is the principle of light. Video must be shot with light; it could be day/natural light or artificial light created by the film maker. According to Barsam,

Lighting is responsible for the image we see on the screen, whether photographed (shot) on film or video, caught on a disk, created with a computer or, as in animation....it is also responsible for significant effects in each shot or scene. It enhances depth, emotions, and mood in a shot (16)

The totality of what is done in a film shoot is recording patches of light and darkness. It might not matter the type of light used but what matters is its usage to achieve a presentable story free of blurred view, appealing to the eye, arousing emotions and strongly believable.

Film is acted in a given space and the action must be under a specified time. Unlike the stage where space is minimized to make believe the illusion of reality, most film space takes place in a real life environment and has the ability to be compressed and expanded. On the other side, every action that happens in a movie takes place in time and space in what Erwin Ponofsky, cited in Barsam, describes as the “dynamization of space and the Specialization of time” (11). The creative film maker must bear in mind that he is not limited by the space created by the screenwriter but must search for a convincing locale where he has the freedom of camera and technical expressions.

Film is otherwise known as movie because it has to do with movement. It could be movement of actors or movement of other filmic elements e.g. light and sound. The principle of movement belies that movies should move or at least have an illusion of movement. This illusion could be achieved in many ways. It could be through the blinking of one shot to another or through the movement of the camera from one focal point to another. On the other hand, we see an entire movie as an uninterrupted movement in a sequence. The illusion we experience in movies is achieved by persistence of vision and the phi-phenomenon. According to Barsam,

Phi-Phenomenon is an illusion of movement created by events that succeed each other rapidly, as when two adjacent lights flash on and off alternating and we seem to see a single light shifting back and forth (2)

Thus, suffice us to say that creativity is the ability to move from the known to the unknown thereby taking the world into a realm which we may not have thought of. Film making is very expressive and thereby endless. Therefore, creativity in filmmaking might involve the breaking of filmic conventions but these are permissible insofar as it ushers us into a new and appreciable world of creativity.

Magun (Thunderbolt) and Tango with Me as Examples of Auteur Directing in Nollywood

The film *Magun (Thunderbolt)* (2001), based on Adebayo Faleti's book of the same title, is a story of two lovers (Yinka and Ngozi) who stumble across each other during the National Youth Service Corps. Ngozi is finishing her stint as a teacher in a village school while Yinka is already working as a construction engineer in a nearby city. The two lovers finally got married but Yinka becomes jealous when his friend suggests that Ngozi is having an affair because "Ibos are untrustworthy". To add to Yinka's suspicion and insecurity, Ngozi inherits a family fortune of #250,000 from her grandmother, which could in essence make her a financially independent woman. In order to regain his control over her, Yinka resorts to placing the curse of MAGUN on her so that any man who has sex with her will die. Ngozi is warned of the curse by an old man (probably the spirit of an old relative) who informs her that 'her innocence is her saving grace' and warns: "Take heed of your health, or else you will die a shameful death soon. Heed my words or else death will hit you like a thunderbolt." Despite her skepticism, Ngozi discovers that her husband Yinka is responsible for the MAGUN, she feels betrayed and therefore undergoes a long and painful treatment overseen by a native doctor or herbalist to rid herself of the curse. As the time of her death approaches, her husband and an old lover refuses to go to bed with her but she finally convinces Dimeji, a medical doctor who had displeased her earlier because of his advances. Dimeji is stricken after the copulation and is saved by the intervention of the native doctor. Ngozi and Dimeji are reconciled and would become partners despite her former antipathy and marriage.

The film explores the myth or reality of Magun. Magun, is a charm placed on a woman suspected of infidelity, the effect of which, it is believed, is to render male adulterers impotent or to cause their death, either by making them crow like a cock, somersault thrice or by vomiting blood. Magun is a potent and popular charm in certain African communities.

Murphy asserts that the film explores the disunity among African peoples, the role of supernatural beliefs and folklore, sexual politics in Nigerian society as well as the conflict between modernity and African traditions (par. 1). To follow Murphy's assertion, Tunde Kelani captures these issues in an

enthraling and unique perspective, weaving them into a commanding spectacle of betrayal, solidarity and triumph of unity. The film is presented as a quest into the core of our beliefs, values and customs as Africans. The film opens with a scene where Veepee tells the schoolchildren of an African adage which holds that a well-behaved child is the child of the father, and a wicked child is the child of the mother. Beginning from this popular African notion, Kelani attempts to debunk certain trado-social and even contemporary beliefs and perceptions about Africa; as well as re-orient the African himself. He creatively builds the actions of the film around the notion that a portion of blame to the women folk when certain things go wrong in the family or relationship. The validity of this notion is gradually debunked as it emerged that Yinka acted wickedly while Ngozi remained loving and faithful.

We see the issue of national or African unity portrayed in the relationship between Ibo and Yoruba cultures - marriage of Ngozi and Yinka. Despite warnings that marriage to a Yoruba man cannot work, Ngozi, an Ibo, is determined to make her marriage to Yinka successful. She endures Yinka's brutality, respects him as her husband and remains faithful despite his suspicions. When Veepee comments that Yinka is lucky to have a disciplined and obedient wife, Ngozi takes it as a compliment rather than a censoring of Yinka's ill-treatment of her. However, Yinka's jealousy and the curse of MAGUN forces Ngozi to become what she was falsely accused of being - an adulteress. Though she is devastated at the collapse of her marriage due to Yinka's betrayal, she is, however, not deterred in her belief that people of different ethnic background can live in harmony as she not only remarries a Yoruba man, Dimeji, but her assertion that "there are only two tribes, good people and bad people" in response to Dimeji's inquiry on her thoughts on Yoruba men evidently buttress her belief in unity and validates Veepee's statement that "An evil man gives a bad name to his race, even when that race contains a host of angels, but a race is a race; a man –a man."

In the film, African medicine is explicitly compared to Western medicine in a conference attended by Dimeji. In fact, Dimeji agrees to have sex with Ngozi as an experimentation so that he could use the experience to publish a paper debunking African medicine. Throughout most of the film it remains uncertain whether the MAGUN really exists (most African viewers

would at least relate to the existence of the phenomenon in one form or the other in their communities) and Dimeji's collapse after intercourse with Ngozi is a validation of the efficacy of traditional African medicine. Dimeji's medical colleagues stand helpless as the herbalists jump into action, and they later remark "You should thank those herbalists, they saved your life" and "I saw it with my own eyes. You are lucky, man. You are so lucky."

What makes the film interestingly unique is the direction. Kelani uses a combination of techniques, including transition devices like simple fades and dissolves as well as what he calls a 'third dimension', which is an experimentative technique on a fusion of western filmic expressions and Yoruba traditional traveling theatre storytelling conventions. His composition and framing of the scenes takes in detail not only the depth and nuance of the action but also the fills of characterization and locale.

In *Tango With Me*, the story revolves around Uzoh (Joseph Benjamin), Lola (Genevieve Nnaji) and their young marriage. The couple got married not so long ago but their marriage is already tethering on the brink of disintegration following an unfortunate incident during their honeymoon at Abuja. Using the flash back mechanism, it is revealed that the couple met some three-years back at an Investment Bank Lola had been posted to during her National Service. She had not been thrilled about serving in a bank and would have preferred a school where she would have taught and experimented on her theatrical skills in choreography, being a theatre arts graduate. However, in the course of her work in the bank, she met and fell in love with Uzoh, and after successfully surmounting in the hurdles of tribalism, differences in Christian denomination and values; as well as achieving her dream to be a ballet teacher in a prominent private school, she ties the marital knot with the love of her life to settle into a blissful married life but tragedy struck on the first night of their honeymoon at an expensive suite in Abuja. The "new" bride, virtually untouched by the husband, is raped, in the presence of the man, by several armed men who mistakenly strikes at the wrong room number. This unfortunate circumstance threatens to dissolve the marriage right at its inception. The situation deteriorates further due to Miss Bankole Smith's advances on Uzoh and the

discovery that Lola had been impregnated in the 'rape act', as well as the traumatic puzzle of whether to keep or get rid of the pregnancy and so on, which led to the couple seeking psychological help in a bid to rescue the fast crumbling union.

The film deals with how to manage or handle certain unpleasant events and happenings in life without giving in to regrets or self-pity, which could worsen the situation. The issue of tribalism and religious disunity is also brought to the fore as well as the controversial debate between the pro-life and pro-choice campaigns. *Tango With Me* is shot in the cinematic style using 35mm. Although other Nollywood films have been shot using the cinematic format, most notably, Jeta Amata's *Amazing Grace* (2006) and *Mary Slessor* (2008), *Tango With Me* is really outstanding due to the creativity and mastery of the director. From the shots composition to the variety of camera angles explored in the telling of the story, Mahmoud Ali-Balogun brings his craftsmanship, directorial experience as well as mastery of the film medium to bear in the work. As a regular participant at the Cannes Film Festival and a part of MNET New Directions film project, Ali-Balogun has won much acclaim as a director.

In the opening scene of the film, the establishment shots help the viewers establish the problem of the film to be a failing marriage. It reveals the couple, Lola (Genevieve Nnaji) and Uzoh (Joseph Benjamin) sitting apart on a sofa opposite an off-screen marriage counsellor. Their forlorn looks and body language tell of the crisis threatening to tear their young marriage apart. The technique of not showing the counsellor adds a certain mystique to the scene and the wide range of thought - provoking answers from the off-screen psychologist seem to enhance this mystique. The quest here is to help or encourage members of the audience who have had such a traumatic experience to let go of the hurt so as to experience a much more deeper and exhilarating freedom on a psychical level. It must be noted that over two years of research was spent in the conception of the film, with inputs from clinical psychologists and victims of rape. Okon notes that in all over five years was invested in the *Tango With Me* film project (par. 5).

Observations / Conclusion

Though the films *Tango with me* and *Magun Thunderbolt* could be described as aesthetic masterpieces both in terms of directorial creativity and quality, the films are plagued with the challenges prevalent in Nollywood. Rice, commenting on Nollywood, states that "most movies are awfully marred by slapdash production, melodramatic acting and ludicrous plots"(par. 5).

The validity of Rice's assertion cannot be gainsaid as several other scholars including Haynes, Shaka, Onookome, Gugler and so on, have made the same observation on the production quality of most Nollywood films and some of these are evident in the films considered here. For instance, a number of inconsistencies are noticeable even in carefully crafted films like *Tango with Me* and *Magun Thunderbolt*. We must, however, state here that our observations are purely academic, to engender further analysis/discussion or appreciation of these cultural texts. In this case, the inconsistencies observed do not mar the overall quality of the films. This could be traced to the directors' experience, mastery of the film medium, directorial acumen, and attentiveness to details.

Film is often described as a realistic medium due to the fact that it brings us closer to some actual reality; this serves as the basis from which films are shot. To this end, Ali-Balogun have made effective utilization of the medium as a tool of tourism by featuring tourist sites as locales in the film (shots of Lagos, The Beach, Eko Atlantic etc. are featured in *Tango with me.*). Balogun goes a step further into product placement by featuring Arik Airline, Shoprite, Temple Preparatory School, MTN, NTA Logos and an ace broadcaster Cyril Stoba reading out news stories actually linked to a scene in the film and so on, these added realism to the film. We must at this point comment that the realism was less obvious in the rape scene. Most movie audiences are aware of the reality of such violation against womanhood, as such, the jerking act by one of the

armed men with shots on Lola's facial expression weren't real enough. It is apt that victims struggle with their attacker, who in the end overpowers them to commit the deed. But in *Tango With Me*, there was no struggling; just a slap from one of the armed men was seen before carrying out the act. The realism of the act would have been more instructive on the psychological wavelength of the film.

Also, Lola in *Tango with me* is portrayed as a theatre artist, who is 'passionate' about dance but the fact that throughout the entire movie she's not seen dancing (in either a solo or group performance) beside carrying out standard performances with the kids is questionable and does not justify her 'passion' for ballet or choreography to the level demanded in the story. Apart from that, in keeping with the psychological undertones, dance can momentarily get a person's mind off their problem, thus easing the mounting stress or trauma within. Lola should have been more expressive in her arts.

The use of Flash Back technique in *Tango with Me* intermittently to unravel a story of such psychological and emotional magnitude was not ideal in terms of audience involvement and identification with the situation. Also, the emotional reaction that came via the prayer angle was not well utilized. In such traumatic circumstances, forgiving those who have wronged you is the hardest thing to do but, when you're ready to let go of the hurt, there's purgation as streams of tears flow down your cheeks as you recall the event that necessitated the hurt and declare the release words to heal your heart and soul in prayer. This act is emotionally draining but at the end highly refreshing. The filmmaker could have adopted this angle in propelling victims of such traumatic experience to let go of the hurt.

The viewer would have been more connected emotionally to Lola's pain and grief than as it was. The 'termination' debate stemming from Christian principles was ironical, though; this was alleviated when the couple decided on the adoption alternative. Also, we observe in *Magun Thunderbolt* that there is a direct comparison between the MAGUN curse and AIDS. Such a comparison is somehow far-fetched and could to a large extent, have negative implications on the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa. The

reason being that, as explained in the film, "MAGUN is not a disease. MAGUN is death, put on you so that anybody who commits adultery with you will die. [...] MAGUN is African AIDS, worse than the one they tell you on your radio or television"; this comparison could contradict campaign messages that that AIDS is not a death sentence. Many unlettered African communities could interpret this film's explanation as a validation of their perception of AIDS which could in essence hamper sensitization campaigns on the disease as films have a way of influencing perceptions on certain social or societal issues.

As noted earlier, these inconsistencies do not mar the overall quality of these productions because of the directors' competency in the art and craft of filmmaking whereas in the hands of an amateur, the reverse would have been the case.

The curious thing is that most producers in Nollywood do not prioritize the director's creativity and mastery of the craft and technique of the film medium as a pre-requisite in appointing directorial functions as well as consult the director during production planning but rather lay much emphasis on the financial aspects and quick delivery of the films which results in the haphazardly made movies or films that currently flood the Nollywood market.

Recommendations

It has been commented elsewhere that there seem to exist a dearth of "oppositional culture" in the film industry, that is, a relative lack of interest or willingness from producers and directors in engendering robust political cum social debates through targeted representation of burning political issues facing the nation as is noticeable in other sectors of Nigerian cultural production such as literary drama, popular music, print journalism and so on (see Haynes, 511 - 533). The reasons for this discontinuity or hiatus is not far-fetched as the film medium, even with the advent of democracy in the country, continues to be very much under the control and censorship of government through the National Films and Video Censor Board (NFVCB), whose guidelines and operational framework, it appears, are still based on the hegemony entrenched by the military instead of democratic best practices in terms of freedom of information, expressions, ideas and so forth. This too has

translated into a system of internal control within the Nollywood sector (see Ugor, 1-22), where directors are not given a free-hand to achieve both the creative visions embedded in the screenplays they work with as well as their creative ingenuity as appropriately demanded. A close survey of most Nollywood film production sets would reveal a barrage of interference from producers and marketers, who tend to call the shot or impose their will even on matters relating to performances - how particular scenes must be acted, choice of acting personnel or talents, locations, camera shots and angles etc., which ordinarily, should be under the purview of the director. In fact, these essayists have witnessed first-hand, numerous cases where directors have been replaced mid-way into production proper or shooting, for not yielding to the whims and caprices of interfering producers and marketers. Apart from budgetary constraints and inadequate equipment, such interferences, do not only, stifle the creativity of the director; it affects and interrupts the flow of performance, deflates the morale of talents and mars the overall quality of the production. It is in view of this, that this paper makes the following recommendations:

The directorial functions in film productions should be assigned by producers on the basis of directors' creativity, technical competence and know-how of the film medium as well as their commitment to production quality and standards. This should be done after a careful review or assessment of their previous works in the film medium. Directors should be allowed to revise screenplays and make inputs before production processes are kick-started. This is a function of them being granted the free-hand to coordinate the creative aspects of the production from pre to post-production, without unnecessary interference.

Auteurship should be encouraged among directors (especially in the film medium) just as Total Theatre aesthetics is encouraged among theatre practitioners. It is glaring that film directing combines both creativity and mastery of the medium's craft and technique and as the director plays a central role in the conception, packaging and delivery of the film's message, he exerts a palpable influence on the perception of the viewerviewers or spectators. As such, if this influence is utilized in the envisioning, promoting or strengthening of democratic ideals in tandem with the popularity of

Nollywood films, the message could go a long way in enhancing the entrenchment of democratic culture in the country. Thus, this paper sees auteurship in film directing as an approach that will not only aid the creativity and overall quality of films produced in Nollywood, but could as well, aid the propagation of democratic ideals through effective and targeted conception and communication, as well as sustain audience viewership or spectatorship attraction.

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SUSTAINING NIGERIA'S NASCENT DEMOCRACY: A STUDY OF OLA ROTIMI'S *IF...* AND OJO RASAKI BAKARE'S *ROGBODIYAN*

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Abstract

*Theatre as an expressive and dynamic art is always alive to the social realities of the people and will continue to serve significant function from one era to another. Nigeria's democracy is one achievement that is partly credited to playwrights and theatre critics who acts as watchdogs and social crusaders in the society. Through their various works they were able to protest against the autocratic system of government under the military rule which denied the people their fundamental human rights to express themselves and have a voice in matters concerning them as citizens of a nation. Playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima, Ola Rotimi, Ojo Rasaki Bakare, Zulu Sofola among others, stood against bad governance, denial of justice, and corruption. They also, fought for democracy and pointed the direction in which it can be sustained. This study focuses on Ola Rotimi's *If...* and Ojo Rasaki Bakare's *Rogbodiyan* as plays that address the need for purposeful leadership and good governance. Both playwrights advocate that the people are the government and that if democracy must be sustained; the people should be part and parcel of the process. The study observed that corruption, bad leadership, insecurity, moral decadence, poverty and so on stands as impediment to the growth of Nigeria's nascent democracy of which the plays in focus recommends the total eradication of corrupt practices, inequality, greed, and self-gratification against the general development and the wellbeing of the people.*

Introduction

The theatre like other arts is a social force that has been alive to its responsibilities. As an expressive art that promotes culture, it represents and identifies with the people through the various performance art mediums which includes: drama, dance, and music/songs. It usually constitutes a “play text” as the creative work of a playwright who is usually preoccupied with the reconstruction of the social reality of the people either historically or satirically. In a bid to project their needs and aspiration, the playwright’s work consciously or unconsciously bothers on the political issues of the time and governance. Nigerian playwrights right from the days of Hubert Ogunde during the colonial dispensation to Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Zulu Sofola, J. P. Clark and Ola Rotimi as post-independence dramatists and Ahmed Yerima, Bakare Ojo Rasaki Bakare, Don Pedro Obaseki, Julie Okoh, Tracie Utoh, Sam Ukala, Tess Onwueme and a host of others continue to contribute their creative ingenuity to the growth and development of theatrical practice and the wellbeing of the people of Nigeria. Through their works they strive to promote national consciousness and democratic structures. The fifteen years of uninterrupted democratic government is partly a product of the collective effort of dramatists from the different generations whose commitment has always been to give the people a voice. The nation for about three decades was on the grip of military dictatorship which facilitated the breakdown of social structures and national moral and value system. According to Oghale:

During these years of military rule Nigeria was plagued with socio economic and political uncertainties, societal decadence and damage, institutionalized violence and ethnic strife, destruction of the rule of law, the accentuation of ethnic, religious and cultural polarization of the country stunted institutional development, grinding poverty, corruption, weak governance and a range of other pathologies. (127)

All these have posed serious challenges to democracy today; the shadow of the military rule still hovers around. The playwright as a committed artist has helped to identify these problems and pointed to the direction to which they

can be surmounted. The choice of Rotimi and Bakare is borne out of the fact that they belong to different generations of playwrights but are still committed to the same course of enthroning a government of the people, for the people and by the people. *If...* and *Rogbodiyan* the two plays in focus, expose the ills plaguing the Nigerian society as they concern the rulers and the ruled. This paper is concerned with the ideological stand of the playwrights in relation to the sustenance of good governance under a democratic dispensation. This is where Rasheed Musa's article "Sustaining Nigeria's Nascent Democracy: Playwrights and the Need for Content Reappraisal" becomes relevant to our purpose here. Musa raises concern on crucial essence of the need to "allow our creative power to sustain national ideas and foster unity among the heterogeneous tribes in Nigeria" (44).

The Concept of Democracy

Democracy is a system of government that seeks to promote a liberal state that engenders the participation of all her citizens in governance. With its current wave, it can be described as the most popular system of government as it has penetrated a good number of nations in the world including Africa. According to Oke:

The universal acceptance of democracy as the best system of governance is incontestable. This is premised on the participatory opportunity democracy affords the citizenry in the selection and election of their leaders and representatives. It guaranteed some recipe for good governance and the fundamental human rights of all law abiding citizens (32).

Agbefe describes democracy thus:

Democracy in its unadulterated sense entails the active and substantial participation of the citizenry in their affairs. It is the kind of government in which the people have a decisive say not only on who governs them, but on when that person who governs them should be shown the way out, through the ballot, when he

fails to measure up to his leadership obligations translated in development democracy (128).

The concept of democracy confers the opportunity to participate in decision by all adult citizens, which to an extent guarantees a collective effort towards national stability and development. It complements the traditional African society which is communal and collectivist in nature as every adult citizen to an extent contributes in the governance and development of his society right from the family unit. Nevertheless, the ongoing democratic experiment in Nigeria since May 1999 has not lived up to the expectation of her citizenry. It is yet to engender good governance and present purposeful leadership which ought to be its core values. Today, it is characterised by a high rate of unemployment, inflation, deteriorating of social institutions and structures as well as the increased erosion of our core norms and values which binds us together as a nation. This negates the view held by many which states that: “get democracy and all other good things shall be added onto it” (Agbefe, 127). The Nigerian democratic scene has been held siege by unscrupulous individuals who constitute the political/ruling class whose only agenda is to pursue their own selfish interest at the detriment of the people whom they supposedly serve. According to Femi Osofisan:

the elite and their allies still gobble up the wealth of the land, leaving the vast majority in abject poverty. It is pathetic to find that at this stage of world development, we (Nigeria) in Africa have not solved even the basic problems of modern living—we do not produce enough food to eat, we cannot supply sufficient drinking water, electricity supply is still erratic (17).

Thus, Oke, attests to the fact that:

Governance in today’s Nigeria is such that has portrayed and presented a mockery of the widely acclaimed symptom of good governance and democracy... to the extent that citizens now experience despair instead of hope, insecurity instead of security,

tragic and untimely death instead of long life and high life expectancy, illusion instead of expectation, deficits instead of dividends, militarization instead of civility, dictatorship instead of rule of law, political selection instead of election, etc. (34).

The reason for this is not farfetched; Nigeria's democracy today is characterized by corruption, civilian authoritarianism, economic and infrastructural decay and a host of others vices which has eaten deep into the soul of our civilization. Thus in line with Oke "the Nigerian political landscape seems headed for disaster" (34). Hence, Osofisan submits that: "the implications for us, as theatre practitioners, are immense. ...we had come to agree that the theatre should be part of the struggle of our country and our continent for political and economic emancipation" (16). This has made it a point of call for various creative artists most especially the playwright whose commitment is on social reforms through the correction of societal ills by exposing them in order to stimulate change in the political class as well as the entire citizenry.

The Playwright as a Creative Force

Playwriting is one of the oldest arts in the theatre. The playwright is one amongst the various artists who is conferred with the capacity of not only beholding the society from an objective view, but also contributing to the change of our social consciousness. Through their creative ingenuity they are able to assemble materials from the nation's historical past and the present, which highlight issues that bothers on social development and the wellbeing of the people which includes: corruption, political exploitation, economic backwardness, social dislocation and leadership question, which has remained a burning issue in the front line of Nigerian politics. They creatively weave these issues into dramatic actions exposing its consequences on the wellbeing of the people and the development of the nation while presenting ways to which it can be dislocated to pave way for a prosperous nation in the face of good governance and economic development. Dating to Nigeria's independence in 1960 to the present, radical dramatists like Soyinka, Rotimi, Osofisan, Kola Ogunmola and a host of others have consistently dispelled

their creative force in their dramaturgy to shape a new Nigeria. According to Osofisan, “recent works of Soyinka, Rotimi and even Achebe are bold excursions from the camp of radicalism which seek no longer to merely describe the world, to ‘mirror’, but patiently to influence it, to alter it for the better”(16). Akoh on the other hand submits that:

Nigerian drama has, arguably, never had a dull moment in theory and practice. From the traditions of the pioneer dramatists through the second generation to the new voices, it has presented itself as an ever dynamic, ever-growing genre. Consequently, throughout Nigeria’s chequered history (the constitutional anomaly of the First Republic, the fratricidal carnage of the Civil War, the squandermania of the Yakubu Gowon regime and its attendant oil boom lavish, the lasciviousness of the Second Republic, the tortuous years of military misrule to the present democratic experiment), the role of drama and the dramatist in moralising, identity and character formation, etc., has not only been enterprising but also purifying (246).

The playwright constantly dream of a nation where there will be equal distribution of wealth and a situation where the common man will have a stake in the affairs of his social wellbeing. These clamours have supported the movement against capitalism and the enthronement of an egalitarian society which will favour even development and accountability of our leaders to the people whom they serve. In one way or the other, this agitation, has brought us this current democratic experience and the consciousness of the people in the happenings in the political sphere. For our fledgling democracy to survive, the people must come first in the minds of leaders, and the good of the land must be ahead of any other agenda. The following section will examine Rotimi’s *If...* and Bakare’s *Rogbodiyan* as a way-out for the Nigerian state and how the nascent democracy can be sustained.

Rotimi’s *If...* is a play that bothers on the need to promote national consciousness, identity, unity, self-determination, socio-political change and purposeful leadership taking into cognizance the hues and cries of the masses

in a capitalist system. Set in a multi-tenanted building housing all manner of people from diverse social ladder in Diobu, Port-Harcourt, the play exposes the bad state of the nation where the rulers oppress the ruled. The landlord in a bid to satisfy his selfish political appetite decides to apply the mechanism of electoral oppression on his tenants to get their votes. When it becomes evident that the tenants are not ready to accede to his political demand, he introduces a divide and rule tactics by exorbitant increase of house rent in a building lacking normal comfort. Papa an elderly man in the compound is used by the playwright to project unity of purpose in achieving desired result in a nation like Nigeria as he calls for a meeting of all the tenants with the sole aim of resisting all forms of oppression from the landlord by agreeing with them on the need not to quit the house or pay the new rent increase as propagated by the capitalist landlord. Rotimi uses Papa and Hamidu in the play as his mouth piece by pointing to the direction through which good governance can be enthroned by the electorate in selecting responsible leaders.

Papa: Join us then (*Betty sits on the ground, unsure of being part of the group*) now, what I want to say first is simply this: we must let the landlord know that we all here are one. If because we refuse to take oaths to vote for him in the coming elections, this now is his way of punishing us, fair enough. But let him punish all of us. No exceptions. I see divide and rule tactics at work here and we must resist them at all costs (13).

This goes a long way to show that in a country like Nigeria where we have various ethnic groups, if we want to achieve all-round development, abandonment of sentiment of any kind is of paramount importance. Papa is quick to draw the attention of his co-tenants on the need for purposeful leadership from an ideal leader who must work hand in hand with the led by using the dustbin analogy as captured in his statement thus:

Papa: patience, patience, gentlemen. No need to attack ourselves.
Hm. Let me say one thing since the political angle has crept

in. I believe in this: if you go to a place and you want to know how the people live-that is, their character, their values, their entire life style...don't go into their houses. Mhm. Go to their dustbins...the dustbin is the most sincere reflection of the tastes of a people...the same goes for the judiciary of the nation. A forthright judiciary is a reflection of the confidence it derives from the ethics of the people. The people then are the last hope for safeguarding that ethics through the kinds of persons they put in power... (14).

Papa goes on to say that the electorate should be objective when choosing their leaders: "any vote cast for a politician tomorrow on the basis of sheer fatherhood by birth; or of brotherhood by clan; or sisterhood by religion, is your doom and my doom" (14). Hamidu's explanation of the reason why the landlord exempted him and papa from the quit notice letter is a ploy by the landlord to destabilize the co-tenants from having one voice in tackling the issue as evidence in our society today where some persons are paid huge amount of money to cause confusion in the political scene serving as distraction from the main thing.

In sustaining Nigeria's nascent democracy especially in the fight against corruption and bad governance, everybody must be part of the process as nobody is irrelevant since it is a matter of national concern. In Rotimi's *If...* Garuba who has been wounded psychologically by the system and Betty who is seen as a prostitute, are all part of the meeting that will bring about change.

Hamidu: Nobody should be deemed useless in a struggle against oppression. Not even our already chosified brother here-Garuba. The same goes for Betty. And you...Chinwe, and me, and all of us. Nobody is useless. That is why, sir, your insisting that Betty join in this meeting is commendable... (17)

Onyema's recitation with a group of neighbourhood children during Mama's birthday/40th Marriage anniversary is an expose' on the generational rot in our political system that must be collectively wiped out if we are to make any meaningful progress as a nation.

Onyema: describe the enemies of our land, in the words of Major Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu!

Children: (*in unison*) January 15, 1966. According to Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu, the enemies of our land are: "the political profiteers; the intellectual swindlers; the foreign business puppets ; the men in high and low places who seek bribes and demand 10percent ; those who seek to keep the country permanently divided and poor so that they can remain in power as VIP's of waste and decay ; the tribalists, the nepotists ; those that make our motherland look big for nothing before the world ; and all who try to put the social, economic and political calendar of Nigeria back, by their words and their deeds. "Those are our enemies (58)

Papa's lesson to the children, Hamidu's dictation class to Akpan and Chinwe's Bible class with Betty are all indices that leaders should be morally, socially and politically responsible to the people they are leading. Hamidu for example, in his dictation class with Akpan outlines the recipe for the electorate in voting in their leaders.

Hamidu: (*dictating from manuscript*) my criteria for voting are therefore as follows: one, a good party does not simply promise it will give you this, it will bring you that. A good party also tells you how it can be done. Two, the man at the head of the party. The voters must ask themselves this: is the leader of the party capable of controlling and disciplining his party men? Now, I say this is most important because the collapse of a nation

begins with indiscipline in the ranks of those who rule or govern us. Therefore to any political leader who aspires to a successful rule of this nation, I say, the fundamental secret to that success is this: discipline your disciples and you'll control the country (31).

In building and sustaining our nascent democracy, there is the need for the inculcation of discipline on our children whose generation we expect to be better than today because they are the leaders of tomorrow and as followers of today, they must be taught the right thing. This is seen in how Papa handled the children who could not recite what he has taught them.

Papa: No? I see...what's not correct about that? It's fine. This is Nigeria, young man. Anything goes. Say anything, do anything. What matters is the fact that you're saying something, or doing something. Good, bad: it doesn't matter. Right? (*Ominously pulling his belt in the air*) Now you silly, little gremlins...and when I'm through with you, you go home and report to your parents who spend all their time running after corruption and disease contracts...prepare your minds for a rough life tomorrow which your parents do not seem prepared to make better today...(30)

Bakare's *Rogbodiyan* does not differ in the quest for a better and an egalitarian society where every individual will benefit from good governance and progress of the land. As a satire the play lampoons the wailings of Koroju, a community enveloped in corruption, greed, selfishness, abuse of power, moral decadence and materialism occasioned by self-imposed leadership. 'Rogbodiyan', which simply means trouble, disaster or confusion, is a clear picture of the state of the Nigerian nation as individuals tend to buy leadership positions for selfish reasons unleashing suffering, pain and frustration on the people they rule which leads to despair, disillusionment and perhaps eminent disaster.

Rogbodiyan calls on the need for purposeful leadership if a society must achieve any meaningful development. In the play Princess Adebunmi the Regent, in a bid to cause political change in Koroju having being in the

corridor of power for so many years, decides to kick start the process by carrying everybody along as regards the leadership of her community. This is captured in her statement:

Regent: (Pause) a very important thing that quivers my liver gave birth to this call (pause) it has not been easy ruling this land since Adeakin, my father, left us to join his ancestors. That was seven years ago when I became the Regent. You all know we have tried since then to choose a new king but this has not been possible...I want others to be given the chance to rule. The land does not prosper when it is only one man that does the tilling (10).

Since democracy is anchored on the involvement of the people in the affairs of their community or society, the Regent decides to keep to her promise by announcing to them her sincere intentions. **Regent:** ...to further show my sincerity, I have decided to hand over power before this year's Oge festival which comes in seven days' time (11). This singular act by the Regent to bring about political change in the community triggers the dramatic action in the play as individuals like Asagidigbi, Gbadegesin (two candidates for the election) and even the Kingmakers source for avenues to enrich themselves taking advantage of the political situation as is obtainable in our society today where people are "empowered to deliver" their choice candidate. The play is a true representation of various degrees of corruption, misappropriation of power, bribery, greed, corruption, amongst others as reflected in the characters pointed above. For example, Asagidigbi is said to have inherited corruption from his forefathers as hinted by Aloba-head of the Kingmakers in a meeting among the chiefs in analysing his potentials to be considered as a prospective king.

Aloba: ...apart from wealth, what again is the good thing Asagidigbi and his lineage possess? They have wealth, but is that enough? What about morality? We all heard stories of his great grandfathers who ruled this land before we

were born and we all as children witnessed the reign of his father. His father plunged this town into disaster and the wounds have not healed... (21).

The Nigerian society today is not far from generational transfer of corruption from political leaders to their offspring who they plant in political offices in order to maintain the status quo of corrupt practices or in the guise of 'godfatherism' and loyalty, thus, acting as an impediment in the wheel of national development. Just like Asagidigbi who happens to be a potential king, political leaders tend to exhibit some negative trait they feel is paramount of a good leader.

Asagidigbi: (*stands up with pride*) I am Asagidigbi...the Big Eagle "you all know the eagle is a powerful bird. That is what you want for a king-a powerful man who has the stamina to withstand the rigours of leadership...my honourable friend calls himself the horse. Yes, the horse. Now, we all know what a horse is. A stupid animal, which allows every idiot to whip it.To ride it...I am the big eagle...I have big power, I am the big eagle with big influence...I ask you to give me your vote (14).

He uses his big influence, money and power to bribe the kingmakers in order to get access to the throne. He uses his wealth to pressurize the king makers like 'dangling a bone before a dog'. Asagidigbi puts it appropriately:

Money, man, money. Ego, wazobia! In each bag is contained what all of you combined cannot earn in twenty years. Give me the throne and take the money or give the throne to Gbadegesin and die in poverty. The choice is yours (25).

Gbadegehin, the other candidate for the position of the king, popularly referred to as the 'Horse' is not left out of this unpatriotic act. During his manifesto to the people, he promises to be loyal.

The horse also has strength and what does it do with it? The horse uses its strength to serve the people...the horse carries on its back, you and me. The horse is a helpful and serving animal, that is what I am...Give me the crown and you shall be served (15-16).

This scenario paints a picture of the happenings in our society today where people vying for political positions do all sort of shoddy things just to occupy political offices. Leadership positions have been reduced to a mere commodity that they buy from shelves with paltry sums. Politicians have reduced the people to mere beggars who only eat when there is fall-out from their tables. The people gladly accept money from their 'would be' leader or choice of candidate as against the normal way of electing their leaders. They sell out their conscience and eventually throw merit to the wind which in turn closes the door to development. The Narrator aptly captures this situation thus:

Narrator: ...Koroju, a land where merit is thrown to the winds, Koroju, an entity controlled by nonentities, Koroju abode of religious hypocrites and political sycophants...a land of corruption where material and political wealth are worshipped and the falsehood of them is encouraged is bound to be stricken by Rogbodiyan (7).

This situation as replicated in the play under study is worrisome as some politicians before elections, render lofty verbal promises in order to get votes from people only to turn deaf ears to their hues and cries when they assume office. This act of desperation by politicians in our society today has led to various militancy groups who had access to arms as supplied by these politicians during elections. In *Rogbodiyan* even the kingmakers meant to serve as role models for the people, end up mortgaging the future of their

community because of greed. Aloba (head of the kingmakers) who is supposed to be a custodian of culture and tradition is not left out. Even when he pretends to be a moralist, his action later reveals his true identity as he collects money from Asagidigbi: “I got your message. Your men brought the money to my house” (27). Eto who is also one of the kingmakers is a true example of a political sycophant who dances to the tune of any favourable circumstance available to him provided he benefits from the situation. Abere describes Eto as a ‘bat’ who is neither an animal nor a bird, neither here nor there. Eto, in defence of his action, responds:

(Not bothered). Yes. That is how I get what I want, by belonging to all the camps. The only politics I play now is the politics of my stomach and probably that of my immediate family. How to continue remaining the number one citizen in my house and not give my wife the chance of overthrowing me in this era of women liberation. That is the politics I play now (20).

This is evident in our society today as so called politicians migrate from one political party to another for their own selfish interest. After the installation of Asagidigbi as King in Koroju, he could not keep to the promises he made during his manifesto about his stamina to withstand the rigours of leadership which includes sacrifice for his people as he gets himself drunk and even defiles the Arugba-Oge who is to remain a virgin before the Oge festival in a time he is supposed to be in seclusion as part of the traditional demands of a new king.

Agogo is used by the playwright to preach the message of discipline, morality, responsibility and the ideal purposeful leader who must be ready to do what it takes to consider the interest of the people irrespective of the challenges or circumstances if development of the entire society must be achieved. The failure or the otherwise of Nigeria’s nascent democracy is anchored on the issue of purposeful leadership which Bakare clearly x-rays in *Rogbodiyan*. For the avoidance of disaster or calamity in our political, economic or social environment, our leaders must exhibit discipline, accountability, good governance and selflessness if the nation must thrive in

her democratic journey to greatness. Agogo points to this issue in this manner:

What makes us men is discipline, not strength of our loins! A king must have discipline or his subjects cannot hope to have any. What kind of a king is he who cannot observe the seclusion rites even for a few days? (36).

Asagidigbi's wrong moral action of drinking and defiling the Arugba-Oge as a king in a time of seclusion eventually affects the entire community as they all suffer from different diseases. This is a clear consequence of bad leadership whose rippling effect is felt in all segment of the society. The Narrator aptly captures this in his statement to the audience thus:

(Points to the townspeople) yes, catastrophe brought upon oneself by oneself. When the child does what he is not supposed to do, his eyes see what they are not supposed to see. They are now victims of self-inflicted disaster, because the people dine and wine with injustice (7)

Individuals like Eto, Salotin, Abere, Akigbe amongst others represent modern political sycophant who sweet tongue their leader even when he or she is doing the wrong thing. The play draws our attention to the side effect of bad leadership as it affects the leader and the led thus crippling the economic, psychological, emotional, political and spiritual aspect of the people. As the play approaches its crescendo, Adegbani, the deliverer of the people of Koroju from calamity asks a vital question when he returns from River Awogbarun with the healing water.

Adegbani: ...Asagidigbi brought you disaster, but I, Adegbani have brought you the healing water. Who may therefore rule this land...when power is given to you, what do you do with it? You squabble amongst yourself and mess up. You cheat and lie and play

games. And we, of the Adeakin family, have to come and clean after you... (55-57).

This statement from Adegban in *Rogbodiyan* is a warning sign to our democratic leaders on the need to handle power with caution and use it to the betterment of the country and its citizens or the military may stage a comeback to disrupt our current democratic government in protest of the inhumane attitude of our political elite. This will take us back to the days of agony under military junta.

Conclusion

Our study of Rotimi's *If...* and Bakare's *Rogbodiyan* reveals that corruption, bad leadership, greed, indiscipline, moral decadence, and poverty are unhealthy for Nigeria's nascent democracy. This paper is a clarion call on our leaders to embrace discipline, selflessness and purposeful leadership in order to sustain this hard-earned democracy our nation is experiencing today. Consequently, this paper calls on all Nigerians to be alive to their responsibilities as stakeholders in the Nigerian project. We also encourage Nigerian dramatists to continually write more plays on the subject in order to conscientize the people (young and old) on the eminent dangers of anti-democratic practices in our country. The need for the electorate to critically examine those they elect into public offices is highly recommended as well as the introduction of discipline and leadership in our secondary school curriculum in order to create a better image in the heart of the youths. Thus, the conviction of this study is that until the stakeholders in Nigerian politics find a consensual mode of diffusing societal tensions that may crop up in our democratic environment as a result of corruption, civilian oppression, and the uneven distribution of wealth, stability will continue to elude the Nigerian state.

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**OLA ROTIMI, CREATIVITY AND THE NIGERIA DEMOCRATISATION
PROCESS: AN ARTISTIC APPRAISAL OF *HOPES OF THE LIVING
DEAD***

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Abstract

This paper examines Ola Rotimi's commitment to Nigeria's democratization process vis-à-vis his creative ingenuity, with reference to Hopes of the Living Dead. The concept of creativity is oftentimes undermined in dramaturgy especially since creativity is synonymous with the arts. Subsequently, a nation's democratization process is so complex that the government, authority and the ruled alike often misconstrue their rights and responsibilities, thereby making the playwright serve as a watchdog and mouthpiece of his society. Thus, the place of the playwright cum the literary artiste in reshaping society cannot be overemphasised in contemporary society. The paper therefore x-rays creativity as normative perception requisite for artistic creation. It further dwells on the arty profundity of the play under study with a view to heightening Rotimi's creative ingenuity and his commitment to educating the authority and the populace on their rights and responsibilities in the nations' democratization process. The paper adopts qualitative data gathering and analysis as well as textual analysis of the play-text under study to arrive at its logical conclusion. The paper thus recommends that drama is a veritable tool for enlightenment, emancipation and empowerment if imaginatively knitted and that artistes should be creatively inclined in their pursuit.

Introduction

The themes of democratization, democracy, development and nation-building have been the most current in contemporary Nigeria discussions. Democratization simply connotes the process of installing a democratic system of administration. This, of course, involves an enhancement of the

social condition necessary for the facilitation of a democratization process, characterized by a robust political atmosphere which ultimately engenders socio-economic and socio-cultural development of society. A democratic system of government is that political system in which everybody has equal opportunity to participate in the political process in whatever capacity that is deemed fit. A government, in this regard, derives its authority from the people who, in essence, choose those in government: “an important feature of this system is the supremacy of the national or common interest which must supersede personal interest” (Ibagere and Omoera 67). Thus, democratization is a process which leads to a more open, more participatory, less authoritarian society. Democracy is a system of government which embodies, in a variety of institutions and mechanisms, the ideal of political power based on the will of the people.

Yahaya sees “democratization as both a procedural and institutional aspect of liberalizing a previously authoritarian political environment” (quoted in Majekodunmi 64). It would consist of opening up a previously closed authoritarian political system and deepening and expanding of values thought to be necessary for the entrenchment and sustenance of democracy. In essence, it is about the construction of a system that allows for the bulk of the populace to participate in the decision making process that has direct bearings upon their lives. While Potter conceptualized democratization thus: “a political movement from less accountable to more accountable government, from less competitive (or non-existent) elections to fuller and fairer predicted civil and political rights, from weak (or non-existent) autonomous associations to more numerous associations in civil society” (quoted in Majekodunmi 64).

However, this study opines that democratization could be more appropriately viewed as the institutionalization of democratic principles as part of everyday culture in a society: which finds expression in the channelling of behavioural patterns towards democratic ideals. It permeates all facets of community life from religion through the economy, marriage, family to politics. These institutions legitimize the activities of those who exercise authority. This makes the phenomenon an appropriate subject matter in dramaturgy; since the relevance is determined by the degree which it

articulates the audiences prevailing actualities and with a high level of creativity required of the artist.

The term creativity may have become too popular or familiar to us that its meaning becomes less important or underplayed. The definition of creativity depends upon who is doing the definition. Oftentimes, researchers are rather narrow in their definition, stating that creativity mean flexibility of thinking or fluency of ideas or it may be the ability to come up with new and novel ideas or to see things in new relationships or to think in a way that are different from other people:

Creativity is a modern word. There is no counterpart in ancient languages, such as Greek and Latin; *even in any other language* nor is there any evidence of the concept among artists or theorists during the Renaissance, Baroque or Enlightenment” (my emphasis Osho 92).

Perhaps, neither the creators of the Parthenon and its lofty sculptures nor the earliest Egyptians Pyramid builders had any need for this concept. However, in our terms, the artists of the red-figured vases, like the authors of the tragedies, were creative, in the sense of imaginative, inventive and visually intelligent. The Greeks must have recognized and energetically nurtured musical, literary, visual or plastic brilliance; and the unknown sculptor of the Egypt Pyramids would have enjoyed a cultural context that rewarded artistic ambition. You often wonder about the education that such a sculptor received. It was presumably an apprenticeship, as in most cultures prior to the industrial period; but on philological grounds I can reasonably conjecture that whatever form the aesthetic education took, it lacked a discussion of creativity.

In one sense, creativity clearly existed among the ancient Greeks and succeeding artists; but a word to describe it would have been an unhelpful redundancy. Giorgio Vasari, whose compendious biographies promoted the artistic genius of Florence, also had no need for the concept. His subject matter includes the quantum steps taken in the imagination during the Renaissance (like the invention of linear perspective); and these, all celebrating the individualism of early modernity, have been hailed as historically

exemplary ever since. But somehow they were not predicated on creativity: “The word creativity arose during the industrial period and it goes with the status of the individual as one who resists, rather than bears, the radical respect for traditions—and the consequent inspirational tuition—inherent in pre-industrial cultures” (Osho 90). In our own culture and understanding, we just accept that creativity is a core value throughout all endeavour: it is necessary to art, science and even business; and because it is so germane to industry and commerce, it is highly capitalized, a worthy investment if you could identify the mechanism to attract it and stimulate it, as in the enterprising hi-tech corporations of our 21st Century society. However Lowenfield and Brittain observe that “creativity is thought of as being constructive, productive behaviour that can be seen or accomplishment. It does not have to be a phenomenon unique in the world, but it does have to be a contribution from the individual” (74).

It important to note that this study does not in any way argue against the existence or the need for creativity, because a word to define the concept is absent in older cultures. But if we know anything about culture, experiential phenomenon it is the extreme relativity of everything thought to be essential or of absolute value; and my intervention in this discussion is first and foremost to underline aspects, features or characteristics of creativity that may be related to dramaturgy and artistic production: originality; persistence; sublimity of language, thought and idea and how it manifest in Rotimi’s plays understudy vis-à-vis his exploration of the Nigeria democratization process. Creativity is thus a normative specific concept and we recognize it in our discipline, the arts as a prime factor in artistic creation; because it is somehow difficult to create a divide between creativity and arts, since every art thrive on creativity.

The Problem

Deplorably, the practice of the professed democracy in Nigeria since independence in 1960 has inadvertently been characterized by political instability, social inequality, and economic quandary, resulting in unemployment of all forms, leading to abject hunger and indescribable poverty. Nwanolue and Ojukwu observe that “the attendant implication of

this misnomer are practical existence of all manner of crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, prostitution, sexual slavery, pen-robbery, and electioneering bickering and hooliganism” (quoted in Majekodunmi 63); militancy and insurgency. These prevailing social imbalances have being an issue of concern to all and sundry in the society, the theatre artiste inclusive. It is against the backdrop of the foregoing that this paper evaluates the state of democratization; development in Nigeria vis-à-vis the artists cum playwright’s contributions to the democratization process in Nigeria: with particular emphasis on Rotimi’s’ oeuvre. This paper therefore explores the concept of creativity in artistic creation in relation to the subject matter that the artist intends to discuss: which in the context of this paper centres on Rotimis’ artistic ingenuity on the Nigeria democratization process, using *Hopes of the Living Dead*.

Theatre, the Artiste and the Nigeria Polity

Thus, a cursory look at the Nigerian political terrain vis-à-vis the dramas and theatre that have evolved relating to Nigeria’s political development would doubtlessly call for a critical appreciation of the artistic ingenuity of Nigerian creative artistes. Interestingly, history is replete with situations where drama has been used as vital instrument for entertainment, education, information as a tool for conscientisation and mass mobilization. Subsequently, theatrical experiences have also shown that drama in whatever form it is performed has remained a unifying factor and a tool for creating awareness which the artist deploys as a mirror in examining the society for positive action. It has been observed that the dramatist from the written plays and through theatre performances incite the masses to work towards the upliftment of their society and through satire discourages those who go against the aspirations of the people. Thus, the theatre artist from the classical Greek to Roman period through our contemporary age has been catalyst for positive change in the society. The dramatist is an all-time activist who never sleeps nor silence while the society is engulfed in crisis but rather participates and gingers the people for mass action in order to bring into focus an enabling environment which creates the opportunity for the people to thrive.

This struggle has continued to be the preoccupation of the theatre artiste throughout history especially in Africa- Nigeria where the theatre has been used as an instrument for mass empowerment and for citizenry emancipation. It is this essential role of the artiste that prompted Utoh to assert that:

Nigerian playwrights have remained committed to the cause of social reforms. They use their plays as avenues to give expositions to the experiences, values and worldview of the Nigerian people. Through these expositions, the playwrights strive to achieve the social, political and moral purification which has consistently eluded the nation. (133)

The role of drama and theatre in our society aside entertainment and education is to conscientize the people, so as to be aware of the events taking place in their society especially the political issues which involve what should be and not. Thus Gbilekaa in his exposition of the vital essence of the theatre posits that: "Theatre aims at influencing people's consciousness and attitudes, Nigerian playwrights aware of predominant social issues of contemporary concern, continue to tackle sensitive issues of national interest" (2). This form of conscientisation aimed at educating the people to enable them know their rights and what is expected of them in order to sustain their existence and become more relevant in the society particularly in their relationship within the political establishment to influence the decisions that affect them. These aspect of the theatre, being a potent instrument of societal reawakening has been explored by many African artistes generally and Nigeria artiste particularly. These artistes have used their oeuvre to make political statements; to teach, enlighten, reprimand and to recommend: for the emancipation and empowerment of the oppressed.

Ibagere and Omoera observe that, "the theatre and the artiste are an integral part of society: therefore cannot be detached from the political dynamics of the Nigerian society. Thus, the theatre artiste has not been apolitical; neither has he/she been apathetic to the democracy struggle of their society" (2010). Elo Ibagere and Osakue S. Omoera are both painstaking in

their research that they give a detail exposition of playwrights and plays that has contributed to Nigeria democratization experiences:

...the blazing of the trail of productions which have political undertones could be traced to the father of Nigerian theatre, late Chief Hubert Ogunde. His earliest documented effort was in 1945 with his play *Worse than Crime* which presented colonialism as a system that is worse than crime... Soyinka's most notable effort in 1960 and thereafter were *Kongi's Harvest* and *A Dance of the Forest* ... Ola Rotimi is another dramatist whose contribution to the democratization process in Nigerian cannot be neglected. His comedy, *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* portrays the political terrain of the country in its actual light during civilian administrations. However, his best plays in this direction remain *If...* and *Hopes of the Living Dead*, where he throws his lot with the masses and the exploited class by condemning the ideology of the ruling elite. .. Radical playwrights have emerged since the advent of these dramatists. Most notable among these is Femi Osofisan.

The list is endless; plays by Sam Ukala, Ahmed Yerima, Utoh Tracie Chima, Emeka Nwanbueze, Bode Sowande, Ojo Rasaki Bakare and a host of other Nigerian playwrights whose works serve as a social commentary on the Nigerian democratization process since independence. In fact there are hardly any Nigerian playwrights and performing artistes alike whose work has not contributed to the democratization process. The above assertion underscores the fact that Nigerian artists are neither apolitical nor insensitive to the Nigeria's' democratization struggle and process as acclaimed by Utoh in our earliest quotation. Thus, this paper tows Anigala's line of thoughts on the role of the theatre artiste in the democratization of a society. Anigala posits that:

The role of the artist, therefore, lies in *his ability to use his theatrical resources to effect the necessary political change*. This role expectation demands that he must first liberate himself from disillusionment. He also needs to re-assert his *integrity on the political scene by being*

incorrigible. He will then be able to *function as the prick of the conscience of nation* (my emphasis 172-173).

The questions of the artistes' ability, his integrity serving as a catalyst underscore the concept of dramatists cum playwright's creative ingenuity which is the basis of adjudging the artefacts' relevance to the society and conformity to the prevailing experiences. Basically, for an artwork to be significant to the society it must be experiential; in other words, the artefact must be pertinent to the people or audience's reality. This position is amplified by Meki Nzewi:

Drama should have relevance to reality. It then follows that identification of a presentation of a presentation with social and cultural *even political* experiences is the beginning qualification of that performance to be classified as drama. Drama that has no relevance to its audience's experiences, beliefs, world purview and life styles generally would be ineffective even if it's method of presentation challenges or shocks the sensibility or the ethics of such an audience... (my emphasis, quoted in Idogho 68).

The above quotation seems to be recommended guidelines for a good drama, be it in playwriting of play performance in the theatre. The audiences being the end receivers of the artistic product are the arbiter and their sense of judgments is often determined by how much the artefact identified with their socio-political, economic, cultural and religion realities. On the other hand, creativity as a rule in playwriting is also emphasized in the above quotation the rule of creativity here implies the ability of the playwright to capture the people or audiences prevailing reality in the artifact and as well using relevant signs, symbols and characters that convey meaning messages to the audiences sensibility.

Thus, creativity is an essential element of playwriting or playmaking; dramaturgy precisely. Without creativity an artistic piece would be worthless before the audiences which it is meant for. Cicero the Ancient Greeks Philosopher argues that "the best orator, "dramatist" is he or she who is able to

please; teach; and subject his audience to critical thinking” (quoted in Idogho 47). The task of pleasing, entertaining; teaching, educating and enlightening and subjecting the audience to critical thinking, evaluating their prevailing situation vis-à-vis the artistic product presented to them by the dramatist no doubt requires a great deal of creativity from the dramatist. It is against this backdrop that creativity as an endeavour and phenomenon become an essential feature of playwriting and play making.

Creativity and Dramaturgy

The arts appear to offer such fertile ground for fostering creativity. Indeed the connection between the arts and creativity is so close that Moga et al comment: “The view that studying the arts makes people more creative and imaginative is part of our folklore” (91). Subsequently, the fact that the word or concept creativity has no specific definition or meaning, as stated earlier does not counteract its existence. The introductory remark below in Osho’s book will no doubt invoke in us the meaning of, or enhanced our understanding of creativity especially as it relates to dramaturgy: “Osho’s words are like Brush stroke of poetry. Each stroke is a beautiful expression unto itself and the overall work is that of a master. Osho is a painter of words that touch the heart, mind and soul – Peter Max, artist” (Osho ii).

Drama and theatre being an integral part of the arts, thrives on the use of beautiful expressions and spectacle. Aristotle in his *poetics* argues that drama is the act of imitation, because they are written to be “represented” – men acting, thus the presentation of the composition required men to act as the men represented in the texts. While the dramaturgy implies the art of the theatre, especially with regard to the techniques involved in writing plays. Drama is thus closely related to creativity from the above explication in that it takes creativity to compose and to re-present other person actions genuinely.

Thus creativity manifest in varied way in dramaturgy, the creative process can involve metaphorical thinking, flexibility and visualization. Metaphorical thinking allows the individual to find parallels between seemingly unlike ideas and to take ideas from one context and represent the idea effectively in a new context. Flexibility denotes the ability to look at a situation from many points of view or to generate many categories of

responses. Visualization assists some creative individuals to conceive of things they cannot see.

Creativity is said to have come to play in dramaturgy with the common use of abstraction, visual metaphor and analogy in arts because the conscious use of these expressive symbolic devices engages the artist in innovative or imaginative thinking. Efland argues that “constructions of imagination can and should become the principle object of focus when creativity is concern: ... it is necessary to understand that the visual image or verbal expressions are not literal facts but embodiments of meanings to be taken in some other light” (769).

Artists often use visual analogies, puns, metaphors, myths, paradoxes and anomalies in order to transform the commonplace. Radical transformations and de-contextualization of images / symbols can create a sense of tension or conflict in terms of the perceiver's interpretation of the image schemata being represented. Artists consciously use these devices to produce non-literal and unexpected visual forms in their art because they are aware that interpreting these images requires further intellectual effort. “When the eye sees something incompatible with one's hypothesis of the world this can create psychological dissonance. What we 'see' is to a large degree determined by our knowledge of what we 'should see’” (Solso 75). In this respect recognizing contextual elements plays a large part in the comprehension of signs, symbols and objects.

The practice of art affords opportunities for self-expression, creativity, whereby artists communicate an interpretation or vision of aspects of his or her world. “Art practice is expressive in nature because emotion, feeling, thought and knowledge are inexplicably entwined” (Eisner 2002). This serves to “connect individuals with the world in a myriad of ways because it places the expression of the 'self' and the formation of an artist's personal and social identity within the realities of society and culture” (Efland 2002; Eisner 2002). Self-expression in art making, dramaturgy is creativity: however, does not necessarily produce creative results, although assessment or judgments of an artistes' creativity in the arts often centres on the level of creative expressiveness shown in artistes' works of art.

Ola Rotimi's Artistic Ingenuity in *Hopes of the Living Dead* vis-à-vis Nigeria Democracy

If creativity in dramaturgy implies “the use of beautiful expressions that touch the heart, mind and soul (Osho i); creating metaphorical situation (Efland 769); visual analogies, puns, metaphors, myths, paradoxes, anomalies, images/symbols (Eisner 63)” and creating an artistic product that captured the audiences prevailing realities: it therefore implies that there is creativity in abundance in Ola Rotimi's oeuvre, especially in the play under study *Hopes of the Living Dead*.

Thus this section would dwell on the artistic appreciation of the play under study vis-à-vis its contributions to Nigeria's democratization process. This study therefore discusses Ola Rotimi's contributions to the Nigeria democratization process in *Hopes of the Living Dead* under a broad umbrella of Social Justice, which is the subject matter of the play under study.

Social Justice according to Onuorah as cited in Agbasiere Chijioke is defined thus:

Justice is a term that is very frequently used to the extent that its meaning and import are often taken for granted. Yet justice is a nebulous term, employed by various people and interests with different applications. It is often used to refer to what is morally right, fair and equitable. It is the belief that every individual and group is entitled to fair an equal rights and treatment. (211)

Agbasiere Chijioke highlights the condition on which justice could be achieved in our society, quoting Onuorah further that “Justice is achieved when an unjust act is appropriately redressed and the victim adequately compensated. This implies that the utmost respect for the fundamental human rights vested on the citizenry is a precondition for the attainment of justice in the society. “It then implies that anyone who is interested in having peace, progress and security should also be even more concerned in the enthronement of justice where the citizenry will be given an equal opportunity which guarantees their survival within the society” (Agbasiere 212).

According to Tapare, as cited in Agbasiere, “Social justice generally refers to the idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of

equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being” (213). Agbasiere continues: “Social justice is based on the concept of human rights and equality and involves a greater degree of economic egalitarianism through progressive taxation income redistribution, or even property redistribution” (213). It therefore follows that an equitable distribution of the nations’ resources to the enjoyment of every citizen is fundamental to the realization of social justice. Perhaps, if a segment of the populace, the ruling class is enjoying the wealth of the nation while the others, the lower class is suffering in abject poverty, there is the tendency that there will be friction and division among the citizenry as we have in our society today and as portrayed in Rotimi’s *Hopes of the Living Dead*. This unequal national wealth distribution, that is injustice invariably threaten national security which is based on the cooperation of the citizenry to operate within the law. This seems to have prompted John Rawls as quoted in Agbasiere to identify some basic liberties that guarantee social justice:

- a) Freedom of thought
- b) Liberty of conscience as it affects relationships on the grounds of religions, philosophy, and morality.
- c) Political liberties (e.g. Representative democratic institutions, freedom of speech and the press, and freedom of assembly.
- d) Freedom of association
- e) Freedoms necessary for the liberty and integrity of the person (vis: Freedom from slavery, freedom of movement and a reasonable degree of freedom to choose one’s occupation), and
- f) Rights and liberties covered by the rule of law. From the ongoing, it is clear that the attainment of social justice and national security is achievable when the rights of the citizenry are guaranteed by the constitution as well as implemented by the government to ensure that every member contributes to the development of the country and the maintenance of national security. (213)

Thus, Rotimi’s, *Hopes of the Living Dead*, is neither a mere satirical piece nor absurdist but an artistic demonstrations of the absurdities in the construction

of inter-group relationship in human society. Ola Rotimi uses metaphor to sturdily reveal how the various groups perceive each other in their social relation. It reveals how groups use the rhetoric of language to exclude/seclude and to include one another in social interactions. The 'heroes' of the text are the lepers who refuse to accept the social conditions allotted to them by the dominant ideology. Their resistance becomes a metaphor for resistance against oppression and domination.

Rotimi creatively uses the historical knowledge edge of the 1928 to 1932 "Lepers' Rebellion" in Nigeria as a background to reveal the struggle by one group to resist the ideological domination of the other. He uses metaphorical resources to clearly delineate social boundaries between groups. Thus, the General Hospital, the participants in the actions and the actions themselves represent the Nigerian nation. The struggle between the lepers and the hospital authorities represents the class struggle between groups in Rotimi's society. The play thus shows the asymmetry in the social relationship between groups. At the macro level, the underlying metaphor reveals that Rotimi conceptualizes the Nigerian society as being diseased like the lepers. He wants the reader to perceive Nigeria as a sick nation. Leprosy is a contagious or infectious disease and victims are quarantined so as to contain its spread.

Rotimi in *Hopes of the Living Dead* reveals that while the Nigerian nation and its citizens could be conceptualized as 'patients', the society also discriminates between 'regular patients' (*Hopes...*13) and leprosy patients, depending on their social status. While the rich belong to the first, the poor belong to the latter. Rotimi also shows that within the latter group is a further discrimination between the patients with "skin type...just the surface, the merciful kind" (*Hopes...*30) of leprosy and those without fingers and toes (the malignant variant of leprosy). The first group count themselves luckier than the latter. This is evident in the fight between Jimoh and Alibo over who should possess the bed of another inmate, Catechist. Having separated the combatants, Harcourt Whyte, the hero of the play, tells Alibo who is close to Catechist to occupy the bed while Jimoh occupies Alibo's mat. Jimoh refuses, claiming that Alibo's own kind of leprosy is worse: "the gods forbid it! Why? Mine is the skin type of leprosy, but this man's, the fingers and toes are gone" (*Hopes...*26). Harcourt Whyte repudiates that impression by reminding them

that “It’s all a lie my brother – we are all the same...The baboon laughs at the vulture for the baldness on the vulture’s head. But what’s on the buttock of the baboon? baldness brother, baldness; same thing” (*Hopes...*30).

The above scenario portrays the level of polarization between groups and within groups in Rotimi’s society. Rotimi uses metonymic configurations to enclose the groups in the Nigerian society. The poor and the despondent of the Nigerian society are conceptualized as the lepers of the text. The isolation theory shows that the poor and the despairing are perceived by the rich as being as dangerous and infectious as the disease of leprosy and therefore must be quarantined. The attempt to silence and brutalize the lepers depicts efforts by the elite and dominant ideologies to emasculate the poor.

The lepers, in their protest letter to the authorities, note: “...we have...been victims of utter neglect such as befits only a nation where the dignity of man has no place and the sanctity of his soul, no value” (*Hopes...*37). Hannah’s defiant interrogation of the authorities’ highhandedness reveals the feelings and emotions of the lepers to their inhuman condition. She asks the Matron: “Don’t we have a right to live in this land – just because we are like this...? ...You think we don’t feel? Think we can’t sense...Be human, my friend” (*Hopes...*9-10). All the poor of the land seem to be asking for, just like the lepers, is to be accorded the basic human dignity. Hence Hannah’s utterance is a discursive resistance of dominant forces by the dominated.

Rotimi creatively uses the different major characters of the play to metonymically frame the different ideologies and identities that constitute the nation. Harcourt Whyte is used to represent the image of a visionary and revolutionary leader. His emergence at a very critical stage in the history of his people gives the impression that hard situations throw up visionary leaders that chart the course of change for their people. His ability to overcome his physical challenges and stand up to the totalitarian tendencies of the authorities infers that individuals and groups must rise above the constraints of their social conditions to challenge oppressive forces and ideologies that dominate them. The admonition to his people: “The future, brothers. We won’t continue like this forever. A time when we too shall prove that we are people deserving of respect” (*Hopes...*19). “We fool ourselves if we believe that the big men of this

place will care for us (*Hopes...21*) marks the beginning of the social revolution in the society.

The above utterances indicate that Whyte has a clear picture of the social situation of his society; the lop-sidedness in the social relationship between the groups; the culture and ideology of domination by the “big men of this place” (*Hopes...21*); and the need for his group to fight for their right as human beings. He challenges his oppressors to: “give us a chance to live like human beings, or we shall remain bones in your selfish throats forever” (*Hopes...49*). This statement infers that the social problem in the society is as a result of the refusal by one group to see the humanity in the other. Whyte’s physical deformities correspond to the social and political impediments that visionary and selfless leaders must contend with. His arrest and curtailment of his personal liberties also correspond to the price and strains of leadership.

Rotimi creatively uses the image of the Senior Medical Officer (SMO) and the Superintendent of Police to represent the ideology that is responsible for the dehumanization of the dominated group. They rely on the use of naked power to define the social relationship between them and the other. Besides intimidating the lepers psychologically, they also send the police to forcefully evict them from their G and H Wards. They employ the language of power and coercion in dealing with the other. For instance, in a meeting with Whyte and Nweke (the lepers) the police officer declares “The position of the government in this matter is clear. Needless saying that, that position is irrevocable” (*Hopes...45*). When he and the SMO talk of evicting the lepers “in the interest of public health...in the exigencies of service to the people” (*Hopes...45*): they obviously do not include the lepers among the specie that go under the generic label of ‘people’. As far as the authorities are concerned the lepers are not human beings but social aberration that must be done away with hence no provision is made for their welfare. This ideology is interrogated by Whyte when he asks them: “When you say the “people” the “people”, my lords, who really do you have in mind?” (*Hopes...46*). Whyte also reminds his oppressors that there are different configurations of the “The people of Nigeria” (*Hopes...46*) whom they (the authorities) claim to be fighting for.

According to Whyte “the Nigerian people have many faces. Some faces are smooth, well-fed; some are wrinkled, hungry; others well-fleshed, no troubles ...” (*Hopes...46*). He therefore asserts that while the authorities are anti-people, “we are not fighting the people. We are fighting for the people” (*Hopes...58*). This clearly portrays the ideological differences between the two groups involved in the struggle. The text reveals the polarization of the society into “they versus us”; “we versus them” (*Hopes...54*); “the ruler versus the ruled” (*Hopes...48*); “colonial oppressors versus downtrodden Blackman” (*Hopes...51*); and “kites versus chicks” (*Hopes...64*) structure in which one group (the kites) tries to devour the other (the chicks). The predator image schema implies the dominant group as beasts without human feelings.

This explains why Court Clerk opines that the oppressed and dominated group must “demand” (*Hopes...37*) for their human rights. He disagrees with Editor that they should “beseech” (*Hopes...24*) the authorities, reason being that: “in the first letter, we begged. In the second letter we appealed” (*Hopes...24*) and got no positive response from the authorities. Similar to the predator image schema is the covert presentation of the authorities as the Biblical Pharaoh. The lepers addressing Harcourt Whyte as their ‘Moses’ (*Hopes...91*) evokes the Biblical knowledge frame which equates their suffering and desire for freedom with that of the Biblical Jews under the Pharaohs. Thus, Harcourt Whyte is expected to lead the lepers to Uzuakoli, the Promised Land.

The Biblical knowledge frame of reference is very strong in understanding the text. Harcourt Whyte, as the Moses-figure, tactfully re-enacts the military and leadership qualities of the Biblical Moses/Joshua in their struggle with the authorities. He sends out two of his men, Nweke and Nwodo, to proceed to Uzuakoli to find out the facts about the land just as the Biblical Joshua (Joshua 2) sent out two men from Shittim as spies to find out the facts about the Promised Land. The two spies Harcourt Whyte sent out return with good news. According to Nweke: “We arrived at Uzuakoli, and children of our fathers, our eyes saw paradise...I have seen the Promised Land, now let thy servant depart in peace!” (*Hopes...110*) The Moses/Joshua frames indicate that the oppressed people of Nigeria are in bondage and urgently need the arrival of their own Moses/Joshua to lead them to the Promised Land

just as Harcourt Whyte leads his people, the lepers, to their promised land at Uzuakoli. Thus, Rotimi uses the lepers' rebellion to creatively portrays group Resistance against oppression by the elite and the powerful: therefore calling for social justice within the Nigeria's political system.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates how creativity could manifest in dramaturgy; focusing on Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* as a case study. Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* artistically conceptualize issues of identity, inter-group relationship, social justice; which are key to democracy in an ideal social system. Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* artistically reveals the use of language by individuals and groups to segregate, alienate, or include and solidarize. The use of language in the texts shows the unequal power relations between individuals and groups and the kind of social relationship that is stimulated in the process. Ola Rotimi obviously chose the metaphorical mode of conceptualization as a way of providing his audiences and readers with a better and fuller understanding and interpretation of the socio-economic and political conditions of Nigeria.

Hopes of the Living Dead is therefore, Rotimi's miniature representation of Nigeria as a multi-ethnic/multi-lingual nation fraught with dehumanizing and frustrating tendencies. The assertions made by Harcourt Whyte to the leprosy-ridden individuals succinctly re-echo Rotimi's heart-felt desire:

HARCOURT WHYTE: Now, I want everybody to remember this. We all are part of this land. We are not fighting the people. We are fighting for the people. We are fighting for the simple things which everybody wants. The strong or the sick; Fulani or Ijo; man or woman; Yoruba or Ibibio: old and young, Hausa or Urhobo; rich or poor, Kanuri or Ibo: everybody wants one thing in life [...]. (*Hopes...* 58)

The above comment is a condemnation of the bulwarks built by political charlatans who always deprive the masses of life-giving measures only to perpetuate themselves as "saviours." Perhaps, the characters of Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead* are reflective of people in multilingual society whose

diversity is exploited by corrupt leaders to perpetuate their nefarious activities in power. Rotimi at other level attempts to bridge the linguistic divide in order to attain a utopian society by experimenting with multilingualism on stage. Similarly, Rotimi advocates a sense of physical and psychological display of togetherness among the invalids in *Hopes...*, in the face of abandonment by the government and discrimination from the elite class. Accordingly the creative effort made by Ola Rotimi in this text, to use drama as a tool for masses conscientisation towards ensuring true democracy and as well as an instrument of national cohesion, especially in pluralistic culture of linguistic environment, is commendable.

Rotimi therefore relives the consciousness that the literary artist uses his work as a veritable instrument for the conscientisation and liberation of the masses from all sorts of social prejudices prevalent in Nigeria society. Thus, by articulating the absurd situations in the plays, Ola Rotimi seems to be presenting Nigeria as a society in which things can still be put aright if social justice is forestall; all groups can perceive each other with some degree of mutual respect and a touch of humanity.

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THEATRE PRACTICE, HYPOTHESIS AND THEORIES OF PERFORMANCE IN AFRICA: ODODO'S FACEKUERADE THEATRE MODEL IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Ignoring the views of Eurocentric scholars, many African theatre scholars have come up with and given deserved attention to theatre hypotheses that are from Africa and by Africans. With committed scholarship these scholars of African origin apply the African originated theatre models to theatre practice through creative, critical writing and in theatre performances. This study examines how the application of African originated theatre models have transformed theatre practice in Africa with a focus on Nigeria's Ododo's Facekuerade theatre, which is about maskless masquerade prototypes. We shall adopt cultural theory to determine the application of African originated hypothesis to theatre practice and underscore the robustness of African culture and aesthetics in them especially in Nigeria. The study finds that though African theatre scholars and practitioners have contributed to African experimental theatre, hence transformation, much is still needed. It is observed that Ododo has continuously made efforts through total theatre practice, creativity, criticism and technical theatre practice to explore the Facekuerade theatre model in Nigeria. It is concluded that avenues and efforts should be put in place to give these hypotheses full recognition as theories that will stand the test of time. This will give confidence to the scholarly consciousness and application of Afrocentric theories and disregard for many Eurocentric theories.

Introduction

African theatre practice has continued to fashion remarkable innovations in the trends and development of African theatre in the continent by being frankly African. This is obvious in the creative and theoretical endeavours of African scholars, which reflect in the creativity and critical engagements. Despite the Eurocentric tendencies creeping in, African theatre scholarship

has been in continuous encounter with the society to chart and locate its Afrocentric direction. Issues that bring playwrights, theatre researchers, theatre directors, theatre designers, theatre managers, theatre critics, etc., face to face with the society come up. In these encounter, new ideas and inspiration arise. New thinking and the motivation to develop such inspiration and ideas lead to hypothesizing, and consequently scholars originate hypothesis, paradigms, models and theories based on their cultures. Among the numerous thoughts that have led to new ideas in Africa is Ododo's *Facekuerade* theatre model which is making impact in theatre practice in Nigeria. This is of the opinion that it is worth giving scholastic exploration.

Theatre Practice, Hypothesis, Theories and Performance Explained

Theatre Practice: Ugolo's explanation of total theatre practice, underscores what theatre practice is all about, because, according to him, in total theatre practice the musicians and singers may be dancers at the same time while dancers may also play the role of musicians/singers. The dancer in the traditional context is a total performer. In the traditional African festival performance, there is a very good conceptualization and realization of the totality of our art forms. This concept of the unity of the art forms, or allied arts, is historical product of social consciousness derived from common experiences of transferring the natural environment and forgoing relations of social co-operation. Thus, the typical African festival harnesses the best of individual creativity, talents and initiative through the communal creative process (42, 163).

Hypothesis: It is simply a proposition or supposition made as a basis for reasoning (Panna 6). As a result of this, it keeps the researcher on the main line of his study. It tends to serve as assured answers to his principal questions. This means that hypothesis provides a direction to research and prevents the review of irrelevant literature and collection of useless or excessive data. It also enables investigator to classify the information he has collected from the standpoint of both relevance and organisation (Osuala 56). It is on this note, Phillips and Pugh emphasized that there is no such

thing as unbiased observation. Every act of observation we make is a function of what we have seen or otherwise experienced in the past. All scientific works and researches from other fields that are experimental or exploratory in nature start with some expectation of an outcome. This expectation is hypothesis, which provides the initiative and incentive for the inquiry and it influences the method. It is in the light of an expectation that some observations are held to be relevant and some irrelevant, that one methodology is chosen and others discarded, that some experiments or researches are conducted and others are not (6).

Theory: As a term, theory derives from the Greek root *theoria* that privileges seeing, it has one function of helping individuals see and interpret phenomena and events. Thus, theories are seen as tools that help us see, operate, and get around specific social fields, pointing to salient phenomena, making connections, interpreting and criticizing, and perhaps explaining and predicting specific states of affairs. Theories provide resources to talk about common experiences, discourses, practices, institutions, and social relations. They also point to conflicts and problems and provide resources to discuss them and to search for solutions. Theories illuminate social realities and help individuals to make sense of their world. Theories use concepts, images, symbols, arguments, and narratives to do their work. Contemporary metatheory (i.e. theory about theory) frequently notes that theories have literary components; they tell stories, utilize rhetoric and symbols, and like literary texts help make sense of our life (Kellner 24)

Cultural Theory

Kerr asserts that the word theory and Africa when combined, especially in the domain of culture often raise suspicion, because one radical perspective on the Third World culture, which African countries belong, is that theory is a fundamentally Western preoccupation, and third world should simply get on with cultural praxis leaving theory for the Western commentators (3). Where such Eurocentric thinkers got it all wrong is that every society has its culture and attitude of doing things, particularly when culture is only an elusive term that connotes different things to different individuals and differs

from time to time and from place to place. There is a strong correlation between a peoples' culture and the perspective to life (Olasunkanmi 97). For this reason, African scholars seem to have ignored Western scholars, because from the explanation of what cultural theory is Tansey and O'riordan averred that essentially, cultural theory suggests that the views of any particular individual on matters are shaped by the nature of social groups of which they are a part, i.e., various organisations, peer group influences or other sources of authority, and by the degree to which individuals feel bonded to larger social groups (71).

The striking question from Tansey and O'riordan's view is: How did the social groups or peer group influences of African tally with that of the West when they are entirely different environment? What validates this question is when in cultural theory as Tansey and O'riordan further aver that the attitudes and judgements about the pattern of social justice and responsible government are set in cultural relationships, namely the expectations and value systems of people belonging to the distinctive groups. Cultural theory focuses on what is shared by people who form solidarities of outlook through their interactions in the social world. This statement reveals one of the first assumptions of cultural theory that members of groups with a common outlook are disposed to imposing order on reality in particular ways. This is a common theme throughout sociological theory in the works of Giddens on practical consciousness and 'ontological security', Bourdieu on habitus and Berger on socialisation. Mark Haugaard provides an accessible and pragmatic synthesis of these ideas (71-72. 73). Olasukanmi refers to Gramsci, Fanon and Amilcar to explain constructive approach to understanding the significance of culture and its theory:

Antonio Gramsci, Franz Fanon and Amilcar, writing from the perspective of revolutionary cultural theory promotes the transformative character of culture. Franz Fanon sees the role of culture as "the awakener of the people... to speak to the nation, to compose the sentence which expresses the heart of the people and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action" Antonio

Gramsci states that “every revolution has been preceded by an intense labour of social criticism, of cultural penetration and diffusion...”. Finally according to Amilcar Cabral, culture “enables us to know what dynamic syntheses have been formed and set by social awareness in order to resolve these conflicts at each stage of evolution of that society in search of survival and progress.” The essence of these reflections is to note that culture is a necessary tool for discovery, advancement and change (98).

Theatre Practice and African Originated Theatre Paradigms: An Overview

Irobi raises questions over some African concepts, notions, philosophies and theories of performance: What is wrong with articulating and canonizing a Gelede theory of African and African diasporic feminist performance, an Ijele theory, Kete theory, Alagba theory, Oriki theory, Sangoma theory, Ituika theory based respectively on the performance traditions, theories and languages of such pre-modern African nations such as the Ashanti, Igbo, Yoruba, Gikuyu, Zulu, Ewe, Akan, etc. Perhaps, it is in response to the question that the intensity in the scholarly work of Wole Soyinka, Biodun Jeyifo, Aime Cesaire, Franz Fanon, Trinh T. Minh-Ha, Rustom Barucha, Augusto Boal, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, Henry Louis Gates, Coco Fusco, Guillerma Gomez-Pena, among many others constitute infrastructure of African scholarship. Irobi avers that why he asks a lot of questions is that there is ample evidence that a good number of African theories of performance migrated from the African continent to North and South America and the Caribbean before colonialism which started only in 1885. According to him:

These theories did not get there as typographical literacy. They went there from 1441 to 1856 as kinaesthetic/phenomenological and iconographic literacies. They got there because the body is a site of discourse. And just as some cultures privilege the dissemination of information and knowledge through writing, oral cultures of the world privilege the encoding and decoding of precious information in the body and the expression of these

knowledges through performance. Another way of putting it is that the Africans who were translocated to the new world lost their names, their languages, their geographies and original communities but they still replicated syncretized versions of indigenous African performance forms such as Abakua, Candomble, Lucumi, Bembe and Carnival based on African theories of festivity and ritual performance (www.sentinelquarterly.com).

Making reference to Mudimbe as cited by Margaret Thompson Drewal, Idegu observes that until now, western interpreters as well as African analysts have been using categories, which depend on a Western epistemological order. Does this mean that African traditional systems of thought are unthinkable and cannot be made explicit within the framework of their own rationality? He further averred that Soyinka thinking along this assertion also submits that, We black Africans have been blindly invited to submit ourselves to a second epoch of colonization- this time by a universal – humanoid abstraction defined and conducted by individuals whose theories and prescriptions are derived from the apprehension of their world and their history, their social neuroses and their value systems. It is time, clearly, to respond to his new threat (100).

African scholars responded to this threat in various forms, which included Negritude, Pan Africanism and other literary and theoretical responses by Africans. Chinyowa averred that from Turner's liminal system, based mostly on his anthropological work among the Ndembu people of Zambia, it is also possible to see how other scholars and practitioners have come up with a more or less intercultural performance paradigm based on the notion of 'playing between and betwixt sameness and difference', that is, a kind of hybridity, synthesis or blending of different performance forms. For instance, from the Indian performance tradition of maya-lila, Richard Schechner was able to construct a performance theory that he could apply in his experimental theatre workshops and rehearsals. Both Schechner and Clifford Geertz have also formulated a play theory based on their respective studies of Sanskrit

(Indian) and Balinese performance cultures. Brian Sutton-Smith has built upon Victor Turner's system of 'anti-structure' in his classification of play activity as a paradoxical process for creating order out of disorder. As Sutton-Smith says, 'we have something to learn through being disorderly'. In their article aptly entitled, 'Playing in the Margins of Meaning: The Ritual Aesthetic in Community Performance', Jonathan Neelands and Tony Goode decry the modern preoccupation with positivistic notions and urge practitioners to consciously seek out and reclaim: the same traditional and Oriental aesthetic influences that have characterized the work of experimental and avant-garde theatre practitioners in the last fifty years. Brecht turned to Chinese theatre; Grotowski to Kathakali; Brook to classical Vedic and Vedantic theatre; and Artaud to Noh and Kabuki. Neelands and Goode's plea for an intercultural paradigm shift is further reinforced by Yvette Hutchison who describes how other Western artists like Pirandello, Genet, Ionesco and Picasso made use of the mask (derived from the West African masquerade in Picasso's case) as a means of mediating 'the paradox of opposing states of being: inner and outer, real and fictional' (<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content>).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o has called for a performance theory of the arts and the state in Africa. This has prompted Asigbo to note that most of the Eurocentric theories like Marxism among others are alien to human nature and that informed why most of them do not survive in Africa for a long time. For instance the emergence and apogee of Marxist cant saw academics of the 1970s and 1980s sporting Marxists beards and proudly claiming to be Marxists. Asigbo's emphasis on "claiming to be more radical" was because when all is said and done, there was really nothing exceptional that these sets of scholars did in their individual capacities as writers to privilege them as being more committed, rather in their attempt to be seen as radical, kill our gods, destroy our myths and generally attempt to portray any and everything, capitalist, as evil, hence it must be brought down by one form of populist revolt or the other (21).

In Walzer's view in a sense, Marxists are not properly called critics of bourgeois society, for the point of their politics is not to criticize but to overthrow the bourgeoisie. They are critics of the workers instead, insofar

as the workers are ideological prisoners and so prevented from fulfilling their historical role as the agents of overthrow. The theory acknowledges the commonality but treats it as a kind of collective mistake — and so misses a critical opportunity to describe socialism *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values* in socially validated and comprehensible terms. The only alternative is not to describe it at all (49-50). The point is that in the stead of this claiming of Western theoretical tradition Africans have made huge contributions to the world's corpus of performance aesthetics and theatre technology, both in practice and in theory. From Ogunian principle of Soyikna to the demystification tropes of Osofisan, from the womanist streaks of Zulu Sofola to liberation-feminist models of Tess Onwueme. These are all significant contribution towards a global understanding of aspects of African Theatre (63). Also, in Africa Iorapuu highlights the “Amalian Two Theories on Cultural Creativity and Change” and observes that to articulate his two theories, S.O.O. Amali carried out an extensive review of culture in particular, hence the Amalian Two Theories challenge humanity to respond quickly to certain fundamental questions such as who are we? How do we relate to each other and to human kind as a whole and what is our purpose? These questions are at the centre of what culture is all about. So, Amalian two theories provide us with the passwords to nurture our cultural creativity. (9, 16, 19, 20).

Sam Ukala, a literary scholar, theatre arts practitioner and dramatic theorist came up with folkist dramatic theory. In it, he holds that the oral traditional art forms should be desperately deployed to put aright everything written literature which its imperialist backgrounds and negative aftermaths have destroyed in Africa. The above opinion is founded on Ukala's conviction, that “Western literature was the tool by which the African mind was shackled by the colonialists.” With the example of Ika folktales, Kwagh-hir stories, the masquerade performances of the Efik, the Kwa, the Ibibio, the Egugu of Illah, the Ikaki masquerade of the Kalabari and the oral poetry of various traditional societies of Africa, Ukala is able to prove that oral literature could provide the escape route for Nigeria from its many socio-political and economic woes. In this essay too, he reminds us that this formula has worked for both the French and the

Russians. The theory suggests “the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk... and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale.” This theoretical framework has negotiated a high rating for Ukala among African scholars of the theatre to the job of carving a new authentic aesthetic identity for African literature (NOUN, Introduction To Nigerian Literature II, 202-203). Asigbo puts it thus:

There is marked difference in the ideo-aesthetics in the folk plays of Sam Ukala which style he theorizes as folkism. Folkism or folk play is an adept use of storytelling idioms to interrogate and tackle folk problems. Being a uniquely Ukala contribution to dramatic theory on the continent, he explicated this new approach in his plays *Akpakaland*, *Placenta Soup*, *Slave Wife* and *Break A Boil* among others. Ukala theatre is therefore markedly different from those of his contemporaries in his unique appropriation of the characteristics of our folk tales, something akin to the Anansegoro of the Akan people Ghana, popularized by Efuwa T Sutherland, to connect and drag home his points to his audience (24).

It is important to note that Ukala’s success with the seminal essay “Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy” in the context of African literature tallies with the accomplishments of fellow dramatic theorists: Soyinka (*Myth, Literature and the African World*), Jeyifo (*The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of African Drama*), poetry critic, Sunday Anozie, (“Christopher Okigbo: Creative Rhetoric”), occidentalist Chinweizu, Ihechukwu Madubuike and Onwuchekwa Jemie (*Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*) and prose critic Ernest Emenyonu (*The Rise of the Igbo Novel*) (NOUN: Introduction to Nigerian Literature II, 202-203).

Dapo Adelugba’s theatrical model is a well-deserved coinage, because it advocates a practice-based training with sound theoretical base for productions. It stretches the production capabilities of staff and students utilizing productions at national and international levels. In

interrogating the lessons from this model of theatre training, it is important to examine the current situation of training theatre artistes in the Nigerian university system. It has observed that a school of thought has been centred on the staging of only Nigerian and African plays while another has advocated a diffusion of local as well as foreign productions. Some have in fact recommended works by only established playwrights, while others have promoted works by new playwrights. The above, is very explicit of the characteristics of Adelugba's model at the incipient creativity of a distinct Nigerian and intellectual theatre. The model combines theory with practice and learners were fully engaged in the specific art. Productions were not delimited to Nigerian or African plays and theatre alone. Adelugba did not delimit his productions to only the old school of thought but also the new ones. His model was, therefore, pragmatic and a very good standard and representation of what theatre looked like during his time at the universities of Ibadan, in particular, and a few other universities in Nigeria and overseas (Oni 231 cited in Daramola 260).

Theatre Practice, Transformation and African Originated Theatre Paradigms: *Facekuerade* Theatre in Nigeria

The trio of Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubike posit that in examining of African writing it was discovered that a significant number of African critics are Eurocentric in their orientation, whereas they ought to be Afrocentric. Such critics habitually view African literature through European eyes. If at all they are aware that African culture is under foreign domination, they seem to think that it ought to remain so-with minor adjustments; or they may perceive a need for a restorative cultural enterprise but fail to see its implications for literary criticism. Most of them would be ashamed to admit it, but the fact of the matter is that these African critics view African literature as an oversea department of European literatures, as a literature with no tradition of its own to build upon, no models of its own (3). Femi Shaka, a Professor of Film and Media Studies, Theatre Arts Department, University of Port Harcourt, in the preamble of a lecture in Port Harcourt, declared that from evidences now available to scholars in the field of theatre, only the most

die-hard historian or theoretician of the old school of thought will fail to find evidence of drama in civilizations and cultures other than that of Europe. Thus, Shaka does not subscribe to the sort of essentialist Western theories of drama which tend to locate the origin of drama exclusively within Western society, especially that of the ancient civilization of Greece.

One of the African scholars from Nigeria who is projecting the ideals of African literature through the genre he belongs, drama, is Ododo, who adopts the line of thinking of Shaka to continuously demonstrate in the further proposition of the trio that African literature has its own traditions, models and norms as its historical and cultural imperatives impose upon it concerns and constraints quite different, sometimes altogether antithetical to the European. So, we must keep touch with the intellectual tradition of African cultural nationalism lest we forget or be led astray from the central purposes of African intellectual life (4-5). Omoera, Adeyemi and Binebai put Ododo's accomplishment this way:

The landmark glory and artistic contribution to theatre arts studies is his *facekuerade* theory; which has immensely contributed to the world's measure of performance aesthetics and theatre technology. The *facekuerade* theoretical paradigm and revolutionary contribution by an African theatre don that adds to world scholarship. *Facekuerade* has become a word and a formula in theatre parlance; it is a theory and a form of theatre, a four in one quintessence. This is theory extracted from the traditional Ebira-Ekuechi festival supported by *Oloolu* of Ibadan, *Jenju* of Abeokuta and other prototypes across Africa, which Ododo subjected to dialectical contemplation (Omoera, Adeyemi and Binebai xvi-xv)

The foregoing informed why the robustness of Ododo's scholarship does not only reflect in his deep-seated but humble and convivial nature, but also in the rich quantity and engaging nature of his research and publications. Apart from being a theatre scholar, screenwriter, actor, poet and technical theatre practitioner in his highly fecund career of about

three decades, he is reputed to be the exponent of the *Facekuerade* theory in African Theatre Arts studies (See Flier on Call for Papers on Ododo at 50). Omoera posits that Ododo has contributed like a living hero to the practice and theory of theatre arts studies in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular as encapsulated in his *Facekuerade* paradigm (63) Ododo averred that So, *Facekuerade* is conceptualized as a performance theory. This theory is advanced using the transformational process of 'Self' in Ebira 'masking'/faceking tradition, the Eku and Eku'rahu performance in the *Ekuechi* festival of the Ebira(297). The postulation is advanced by considering the festival within the context of modern performance idiom in Nigeria to position the *Facekuerade* theory. The mask essence in masquerading art that transcends the physical state of concealment with its general mysticism sufficiently prepared the ground for the consideration of Ekuechi as *facekuerade* performance. More so, it is a festival that assembles and coordinates all *facekuerade* characters in the Ebira masquerade repertory. The exploration and utilization of this theory in practice should give a definitive expression to masquerade aesthetic format in the contemporary Nigerian theatre (304).

It is likened to Luigi Pirandello's example as he conceived of his probe into these aspects mainly as a process of unmasking, he published his collected plays under the title *Maschere nude (Naked Masks)*. The works of this Italian playwright, novelist, and critic generally portray Italian middle-class society. With Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, Luigi Pirandello revolutionized modern drama in all its aspects, from staging to the form of the play. His own specific contribution to the modern theatre should be seen in the fact that he imposed upon the art form of theatre itself the principles of analytic decomposition which Ibsen was still content to apply to human psychology. Pirandello *Six Characters in Search of an Author* brought him national recognition and international fame. In 1934 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. Analytical in nature and for the most part lacking in action, Pirandello's plays are dialectical disquisitions on essence and appearance, illusion and reality, the problem of personal identity, the impossibility of objective truth and of communication. His dramatic production (some 43 plays in all) is thus an

illustration of his relativistic and pessimistic tenets and philosophical beliefs. The great bulk of Pirandello's production was concerned with the concept of the mask in its different aspects. For Pirandello, the fiction, the mask alone, either self-imposed or, as in most cases, forced on by society, makes life possible. If this mask is ever torn off, willingly or by force, man is no longer able to live, to function in a society based upon the law of common fictions: either he returns to wearing his mask, to "living" the life of the dead, or he becomes "crazy," "insane" as far as society is concerned (http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Luigi_Pirandello.aspx).

These different aspects are similar to different uses Ododo points out about mask in Africa in the *Facekuerade* notion. According to him, mask is the iconic essence of masquerade art. Disguise and impersonation are its key functions, so within the framework of *Ekuechi* 'masquerade' ensemble, the *facekuerade* essence is essentially projected by all the participating 'masquerade' characters without masks. The awe and mysticism that surrounds these unmasked beings as masquerades are the disguising elements of the piercing sound of *izeyin* (jingling bells) and *ireha* (waist gongs), guttural voices, tongue-twisted renditions, esoteric chants and weird sounds verbally produced by *Agadagidi* (maskless *Ekuechi*) and some participant-audience. All these elements help to heighten the masking reality of the *facekuerade* characters. *Ekuechi*, being the star actor of the *Ekuechi* event, forms the epicentre of the *facekuerade* concept. *Ekuechi* is a composite actor who wears ancestral face; speaks, sings, dances and acts in that spirit (284, 288). As Pirandello did in Italian culture, and Ododo in Nigeria, Ngugi wa Thiong'o posits that in the concept of art with creativity, all over the world art is constantly attempting to maintain the culture of the people. Any moment of exceptional literary achievement in a national tradition signals a writer's return of culture and language at the fullest to people in their daily life ("Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams": Interview Charles Cantalupo with Ngugi wa Thiong'o)

Irobi avers that even a vernacular redefinition of "theory" can change forever the linguistic and epistemic angles from which people of African descent participate in Western-derived theories. It addresses how

an African-diasporic notion of theory can produce an alternative epistemology for the analysis and better understanding of African/African Diasporic orature/literatures/performances. These theories of the people of African descent on the continent and the Diaspora create the performance texts, not literary texts, that allow them to perform selves, pass on their history, and participate in a democratic way in aesthetic structures created by their ancestors. Research and fieldwork, will enable us to find a theoretical continuum that circumvents the teleologies of the postcolonial construct and redefine theory from a diasporic, migratory, and phenomenological perspective, away from the book-centred concept of the Western academy. This redefinition is obvious in the works of Ododo and in the response of the essays written on by others scholars and researchers.

Ododo has published books, chapters in books, monographs and a number of pragmatic academic essays in various peer reviewed national and international journals. He has published essays on a broad variety of subjects, within the multi-disciplinary space of theatre arts, from technical theatre, theatre management, make-up and mask practice, light and lighting design, semiotics and communications in dance, ritual studies, poetry, scenographic semiotics to traditional African experimental performances (xiv). In addition to numerous well researched articles, he has also written three creative works; *Hard Choice* (a play), *To Return from the Void* and *Vanishing Vapour* (two Libretti) and *Broken Pitchers* (an anthology of poems). In a review of the festschrift in honour of Ododo in his 50th Birthday titled: *A Gazelle of the Savannah: Sunday Ododo and the Framing of Techno-Cultural Performance in Nigeria I & II* edited by Osakue S. Omoera, Sola Adeyemi and Benedict Binebai, most of the articles highlight his *facekuerade* paradigm. In her review of the book, Mabel Evwierhoma posits that:

The other critical exegeses evident in the articles which dwell specifically on Professor Ododo's creative output are from different standpoints. A case in point is the gender examination of the works which reveal Ododo is not patriarchal in his creativity.

However more commitment to gender issues is required from him. Critical lens zoom in on *Hard Choices* (2012) an existential play on (wo)man and the inevitability of choice; *To Return from the Void* (2012) is an opera with sung and acted dialogue on governance; *Vanishing Vapour* (2012) which reveals the author as a scriptwriter, and librettist. Its stage performance realizes the culture of the Ebira people in an aetiological form. His collection of poems *Broken Pitchers* (2012) prove his indebtedness to the flora and fauna of his physical and spiritual environments as well as the lore of his homeland (“Academic Enterprise, Fertile Friendships and Grown Goodwill: Ododo on the Threshold of Glory”).

Most of the articles in the festschrift bring to light his *facekuerade* model. The reviewer of the book, Ewrierhoma asserts that the two intimidating volumes edited by scholars within and outside Nigeria, have impressive structural presentation. The first volume is in three parts, with the first in twenty-one chapters, the next two, and the following twenty-eight chapters. Part four in the second volume consists of fifteen chapters and the last has nine chapters. The collection of essays therein spans different generations of theatre critics and theorists. This further proves the merit Ododo’s career. A greater merit on the populist and cultural side lies in the ambassadorial role Ododo plays for the Ebira people through the testimonies from his community. It is proof that Ebiraland can boast of positive icons. The possibilities for these texts in choreography, costume design, and varied directorial approaches for the stage and the screen for grassroots mobilization become obvious and make them the performing artists’ delight any day. The profile provided thereafter chronicles his academic and professional achievements. The introductory section which follows continues the trend established by the ‘profile’, but with emphasis on *facekuerade*, Ododo’s square theory on performance (3-4).

In “The Significance of *Facekuerade* Theory in Contemporary African Theatre,” Omoera posits that:

The *Facekuerade* concept as put forward by Sunday Enesi Ododo(SEO) is a total theatre experience whose performative essence derives from a vibrant ritual process, communal rejuvenation and reaffirmation, and cultural consciousness of the Ebira people which are aesthetically showcased in their Ekuechi festival (72).

In the first group, are scholars who interrogate Ododo's scholarly and creative enterprise in twenty-one engaging articles. This primary encounter in volume one, section one of the book shows Ododo as a leading light in stage design, theatre lighting, theorist and critic, dramatist, poet, director, culture administrator, among other theatrical and artistic endeavours. The presentations show a guru and role model who is rounded in praxical issues in the arts and humanities. It proves that technical theatre theory and practice as evident in the body of intellectual contributions is relevant to traditional performance styles. The constant infusion of improvised and purpose-built theatre equipment in productions as a hybrid form can pave the way for innovations in theatre design in Nigeria. Again, it provides impetus for a deep concern for luxurious African theatre aesthetics that does great justice to traditional performance ideology. The *facekuerade* and performance theories enunciated by Ododo undergo analysis by Iwu, Omoera, Eni, Fosudo, Ozigi, Anyebe, and Fanyam, all theatre scholars who provide an excursion into Ododo's intellectual and physical prowess in technical theatre. This proves that we have a product for export into the academic and professional theatre of other regions of the world, or better still for the global market and academy. The publication of this book in the UK extends its market value across the Atlantic on both sides.

Assessment and Confirmation of Hypothesis as Theory

This present researcher engaged the *Facekuerade* theatre proponent in a chat at the Postgraduate School of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria on June 12, 2014 when he came as an external examiner of a doctoral student. The centre of our discussion was the issue of formulation, assessment and confirmation of hypothesis as theory in Africa. Ododo

averred that theory could arise from practice, where constant practice in a profession could give rise to a theory and that theory could come up from a study carried out by a scholar, and constant test will confirm it. Though we cannot deny the fact that there are robust theatre practice traditions in Africa the fear of Abiola Irele as noted by Irobi agitates our mind in this research, when he posits that that the agenda for postcolonial theory and the possible space for manoeuvre by any postcolonial scholar is over-determined or, to use a fairer word, *circumscribed* by a Western ontology and a response to this ontology. The Western academy remains the unique source of validation for the African scholar (www.sentinelquarterly.com). Even at this, the festschrifts being published on African theatre and performance scholars is a positive step towards the growth of African theatre scholarship. This paper has mentioned that of Ododo in two volumes. Such publications highlight how paradigms, models and theories are postulated by the theatre scholars and put into practice in African theatre.

Basic as the above facts are, which the western scholars cannot discredit, and so long as hypothesis, arises by guesswork, or by inspiration, but having been formulated they can and must be tested rigorously, using the appropriate methodology (Phillips and Pugh 7). The issue is that hypothesis often follows a basic format of “if this happens then this will happen,” and “if these changes are made to a certain independent variable, then we will observe a change in a specific dependent variable.” The effectiveness of the test among peer group research community gives a confirmation to the hypothesis and this transforms it into theory to make it conform to formal scientific definition of theory as a comprehensive explanation of some aspect of nature that is supported by a vast body of evidence, hence it is a body of knowledge or idea meant to explain a certain topic as analytical tools for understanding, explaining, and making predictions about a given subject matter (Wikipedia). This informs why anywhere in the world including Africa theories of drama, theatre, performance, from ancient to contemporary times have been and are still concerned with central problems of aesthetics, production, the control or ownership of the work of art, genre, medium, narrative structure (plot

logic, or probability), verisimilitude, character, emotion, the epistemology of the senses, the distinction of the literary from the non-literary (and the "high" from the "low"), the interpretive work of reception, the ethical function of the aesthetic, the ritual function of art, the meaning, the politics of the aesthetic, the efficacy of language, the performance of everyday life, the anthropology of the body, the constitution of identity (gender, sexuality, race), the experience of the "society of the spectacle in which we live (<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/theatrephd/peters.html>).

Conclusion

We have attempted an exploration of how the application of African originated theatre paradigm should transform theatre practice in Africa with Ododo's *Facekuerade* theatre as a model. Application of this model and other African originated hypotheses and theories of theatre performance will help solve Africa's intractable predicaments and Nigeria with its hydra-headed problems of sectarian crises, violence, religious bigotry and fundamentalism, ethnic hate, tribalism, *boko haram*, election rigging, and the like.

Note

- Nwagbo Pat Obi has been publishing with his former surname "Nnenyelike"

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PERFORMING DEMOCRACY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Theatre has, from prehistoric periods, fostered societal peace and harmonious coexistence. The ancient man imitatively narrated his hunting adventure to his family, thus creating educative recreation. Aristophanes performatively showcased the need for peaceful coexistence in Athens. History becomes vivid when performed. We learn of various cultures, governments and traditions through performance. Nigeria since independence has tried various forms of Western democracy which unfortunately have left her stranded in the middle of nowhere. Sadly enough, modern Nigerian arts - music, dance and drama - have degenerated. Exploitation is the order of the day in Nigerian music and other arts. Performance, if creatively orchestrated can be utilized to put right the democratic aberrations in Nigerian polity. In view of the above, this paper juxtaposes the past and the present states of theatre in Nigeria vis-à-vis the Nigerian political terrain and proposes a blueprint on how theatre can be used not only to call attention to the sordid democratic atmosphere but also institute a do it right, home grown democracy. It concludes that the artist as the conscience of the society can deploy the performing arts towards entrenching true and workable democracy in Nigeria.

Introduction

Owens-Ibie opines that “Communication is a unique feature of every society. It predates most other human activities and it is easily identified as a veritable contributor to the harmonious and systematic growth of any society” (Olayiwola 2). Arts, perceived from whichever angle, function as media of

communication. Communication is such a fundamental weapon of development, and wherever it breaks down, there will certainly be anarchy, chaos and retrogression. The Babylonians were on their way to God via the tower of Babel; they were determined to construct and were constructing. The only means of frustrating their corporate resolution was to create chaos, and disunity within them via communication breakdown (Genesis 11: 1-9). According to Michael Burgoon and Michael Ruffner:

People do make subjective evaluations of the communication of others and respond to them on the basis of how they themselves are affected. We must also stress that people have affective or emotional responses to communication from others, and that, too, helps to determine the nature of future communication (Burgoon and Ruffner 10).

Communication is vital to human existence. Whatever the case may be, communication, when well-orchestrated and structured, will elicit a response from the receiver or receivers in the case of mass communication. Communication is a dynamic process "...that the communication process is a transaction that will affect both the sender and the receiver, and that communication is a personal, symbolic process requiring a shared code or codes of abstractions" (13).

The point being made here is that arts communicate; a people's art communicates their culture. Functional art is utilitarian, affecting both the artist and the art consumer. When we say arts communicate culture, we mean arts express the totality of a people's way of life. Culture, according to Kin Ann Zimmermann, refers to "the characteristics of a particular group of people, defined by everything, from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts" (<http://www.livescience.com/21478-what-is-culture-definition-of-culture.html>). Therefore, fundamentally art, be it visual, audio or audio-visual, can be efficaciously engaged to effect manpower, socio-political, economic and religious development of a nation. Our cardinal preoccupation in this paper is to establish the fact that theatre had been a primordial partner in the developmental processes of human societies and that if properly utilized will

go a long way towards the institutionalisation of democracy that can engender sustainable development in Nigeria.

The Concept of Utilitarianism in Arts

The aim of this paper is to advance a blueprint on performing democracy for sustainable development in Nigeria and it is predicated on the philosophy of utilitarianism; the principle that negates art for art's sake. Utilitarian art, in the words of Alan De Botton, "is the type of arts that has regard to usefulness rather than ornamentation or beauty. This type of art refers to conscious, intentional actions on the part of the creator. He further asserts that:

If art is to deserve its privileges (and it does) we have to learn how to state more clearly what it is meant for and why it matters in a busy world. I would argue that art matters for therapeutic reasons. It is a medium uniquely well suited to helping us with some of the troubles of inner life: our desire for material things, our fear for the unknown, our longing for love, our need for hope.ⁱ

We are of strong opinion that great works of arts can help us tackle life challenges. In spite of the dialectics in favour of art for art sake, our conviction is well articulated by G. V. Plekhanov:

Some say: man is not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man; society is not made for the artist, but the artist for society. The function of art is to assist the development of man's consciousness, to improve the social system.ⁱⁱ

Thus we base our proposal on performing democracy for sustainable development in Nigeria on the theoretical foundation of utilitarianism as against the philosophy of art for art sake. Citing the Russian revolutionary democrat, materialist philosopher, critic, and socialist Nikolay Gavriilovich Chernyshevsky (1928-1989), Plekhanov writes:

Chernyshevsky wrote in one of his earliest critical articles: “The idea of ‘art for art’s sake’ is as strange in our times as ‘wealth for wealth’s sake’, ‘science for science’s sake’, and so forth. All human activities must serve mankind if they are not to remain useless and idle occupations. Wealth exists in order that man may benefit by it; science exists in order to be man’s guide; art, too, must serve some useful purpose and not fruitless pleasure.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In this particular instance, our emphasis is on the arts of the theatre. By “performing democracy for sustainable development in Nigeria, we denote the production of plays whose primary preoccupation is the nascent democratisation process in Nigeria and which do not only reflect where we are coming from and where we are, but project into where we ideally expect to be. By extension, we refer to building and performing plays that will artistically groom Nigeria towards the attainment of a democratic system of government that will lead the country to the Promised Land. This is a realisable goal. Theatre has a history of conflict resolution, information dissemination, government propagandas and socio-political reorientation.

A nation’s arts essentially are the product of her cultural milieu. Functional arts correct social dysfunctionalities, champion the course of social stability and entrench developmental pathway. Theatre has, from prehistoric periods, fostered societal peace and harmonious coexistence. The ancient man imitatively narrated his hunting adventure to his family, thus creating educative recreation. The classical dramatists-Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, etc., - wrote and produced plays that reminded the people of their relationship with their gods, plays that brought back the glory of their gods thereby providing a dramatic audio-virtual documentation and preservation of history. Aristophanes in his *Lysistrata*^{iv} performatively showcased the need for peaceful coexistence in Athens. History becomes vivid when performed. We learn of various cultures, governments and traditions through performance. We learn of London of over 400 years ago via the dramatic arts of William Shakespeare. Theatre played a significant role in the process of achieving political emancipation during the apartheid regime in South Africa. These primordial potentials of theatre are still very much in place and can be annexed for the

institution of a democracy that will foster sustainable development in Nigeria. The question now is how do we perform democracy for sustainable development in Nigeria? We hope to proffer answer to this question in a short while, but meanwhile let us attempt a historical overview of theatre in Nigeria. This will enable us to situate the subject matter in the right perspective.

Historical Survey of Theatre in Nigeria

The earliest formal theatre tradition in Nigeria can be traced to the late nineteenth century in Lagos Nigeria. Ogunba chronicles this succinctly, his words:

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Lagos, a theatre tradition developed featuring well-known English and European musicals, concerts and operas. The actors, concert groups and clientele of the foreign tradition were the new, Westernised elite. The artists featured included Handel and Mozart. Similar concert groups were set up in Ibadan and Abeokuta. Soon, there was a clamour for works based on indigenous Nigerian subject matter, and one D. O. Oyedele is said to have written a play entitled 'King Elejigbo' (1904) in response to the call.^v

The theatre practice/tradition was short-lived as the protagonists of the movement like Herbert Macaulay opted for politics which was already gaining ground in Lagos and the hinterland and which of course was more powerful and lucrative than theatre practice.

Then came Hubert Ogunde onto the theatre scene in 1944 after about forty years of theatrical interregnum. His plays were written in Yoruba and English languages and he, by virtue of his prolificacy, launched the consciousness for modern theatre tradition in Nigeria. Ogunde's theatre was an itinerant operatic theatre. He performed variously in Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone for about two decades. Ogunde's plays were predicated on religious and socio-political themes and he sporadically was at loggerheads with the political authorities which as a result proscribed some of his plays. Consequent upon his fame and financial success, Ogunde was recreated in many followers and imitators, which resulted in a proliferation of popular

theatre. They were called popular theatre because they were popular with the people as they employed local language and operatic style which made them to be admired and loved by the people.

There was also a simultaneous literary theatre tradition side by side the popular tradition. This was, for the most part, English speaking and substantially domiciled in universities and targeted elitists' audience. James Ene Henshaw was one of the pioneers of the literary theatre. His plays include but not limited to *Children of the Goddess* (1964), *This is Our Chance* (1957), *Medicine for Love* (1964), *Dinner for Promotion* (1967) and *Enough is Enough!* (1975). Henshaw's plays articulated his observations and interpretations of the socio-political life in Nigeria of the time. Other first generation Nigerian playwrights include the Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka (who is undoubtedly the most dominant of them all), J. P. Clark, Ola Rotimi, Wale Ogunyemi and two women playwrights, Zulu Sofola and Tess Onwueme. The second generation playwrights include but not limited to Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Tunde Fatunde, Olu Obafemi and Kole Ornotoso. Those of this dispensation which we will refer to here as third generation playwrights include Hammed Yerima, Lekan Balogun, Bayo Afolabi, Wole Oguntokun, Solomon Iguare, Chukwuma Anyanwu, Soji Cole, Ben Binebai and a host of others.

Theatre and the Nigerian Socio-political Terrain

Nigeria since independence has tried various forms of Western democracy which unfortunately has left her stranded in the middle of nowhere. Sadly enough, modern Nigerian arts, music, dance and theatre, have degenerated. Sexploitation is the order of the day in Nigerian music and other arts. Theatre culture has dwindled to near zero, thanks in part to aesthetic poverty and mediocrity. All these diminish arts and theatre in particular. However, it is our view that performance, if creatively orchestrated, can and will put right the democratic aberrations in Nigerian polity. Forty-four years ago, John Hatch opines: "Whereas Nigeria is regarded as a single country, it has nonetheless, been in a state of near-perpetual crisis throughout its life, courtesy of contending ethnic communities"(11). Unfortunately, the situation has deteriorated. Fifty-four years after independence, Nigeria cannot boast of a democracy that can create an enabling environment for sustainable

development. There is no gainsaying the fact that there cannot be development when there is no peace and good governance. There are so much socio-political, religious and economic dysfunctionalities in the country. Ritual killings, incessant violence and Boko Haram insurgences that defile categorisation are the order of the day. The major factor responsible for these oddities and aberrations is a misfit political system. Phenomenally, other causes of these social topsy-turvies are the Nigerian civil war, constitutional factors, ethnic conflicts, and the politics of state creation. The inadequacies in the Nigerian constitutional development have occasioned a political imbalance which in turn perpetrates ethnic domination, electoral malpractices, ethnic suspicion, social unrest, religious intolerance, unprecedented state of insecurity and wanton destruction of lives and properties. According to John Hatch:

Since independence, Nigeria has not had a popular democratic political system. Instead Nigeria has had variants of liberal democratic system or military rule. The construction of a superstructure based on alienating system of a contrived liberal polity and a militarised political system has led to the institutionalisation of perverted social norms and nuances which civilian politicians prefer to our values and which the military associate with our “unique value” (33).

Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed an unparalleled state of political instability, right from the 1966 coup to the civil war that lasted five years and several military coups. Today, Nigeria is fifty- four and is yet to establish an enduring political system. Election manipulation and other malpractices are very rampant and have made election results unacceptable to people. This continues to result in claims and counter claim of electoral aberrations. Rather than the supposed winning parties to concentrate on moving the country forward, half of their tenure in office is spent on judicial matters in other to justify their election. In some cases midway into their tenure, a party is discovered not to have won the election in the first place and is made to step down. The party that replaces the administration will abandon

all the previous administration's developmental projects and start afresh. Even then, the party will be more interested in perpetuating itself in power while developmental issues become secondary.

Since the inception of the Goodluck Jonathan's administration for instance, it has had to battle with Boko Haram violent insurgencies, political assassination, and ethnic rivalry and so on. Right about now, with virtually nothing to show for it in terms of national development - electricity remains a mirage, telecommunication is ever erratic, mass unemployment and incessant industrial actions are all the features of this administration. All these are, to a large extent, offspring of an imported form of democracy. A political system that fails to take cognisance of the peculiarity of Nigerian situation, predicated on the fallacious assumption that if it worked elsewhere, it would work here.

Economically, the story is not any different. Nigeria ranks high in advance fee fraud and internet scam. Our leaders are being prosecuted for money laundering, politicians grab every opportunity to embezzle and visible development is at a standstill. Social and religious intolerances are at their peak in Nigeria. Religious crisis spring upon in various parts of the country unannounced, the Muslims are suspicious of the Christian and vice-versa. The traditionalists are of the opinion that government does not give them due recognition and attention as are given to their Muslim and Christian counterparts. Several lives and unquantifiable properties are lost and destroyed owing to avoidable religious crisis and social unrest. Nigerian educational institutions are spring boards for cultism and hooliganism. In a nutshell, the reality of the Nigerian situation is one of abject poverty, educational backwardness, political and social insecurity, economic sabotage, and future uncertainty.

This socio-political terrain has its tow on all arts and particularly theatre arts. Theatre culture has dwindled greatly. The state of insecurity prevents people from patronising the theatre, governmental policies are hostile to theatre funding and the manpower available are unable to realise their potentials. Other factors like the television, home video and internet have drastically reduced live theatre patronage. Nonetheless, adequately funded and aesthetically appealing theatre performances can overcome all the challenges posed by other medias of entertainment. Therefore the major bane on the

manifestation of the full potential of theatre arts is the unfavourable political terrain.

The point being made here is that, the type of democracy practised in Nigeria does not suite it; it is foreign and does not consider the peculiarity of the Nigerian situation hence, sustainable development in Nigeria becomes a pipe dream. Theatre has the potential of creating a pathway for a potent, efficacious, and enduring democracy which will in turn foster sustainable development in Nigeria. If the political system is right, the environment will be conducive for the institutionalisation of sustainable development. The theatre artist therefore, must be up to the task and use his or her art for the reorientation of the society towards the enthronement of the do-it-right developmental democratic institution in Nigeria.

Towards Performing Democracy for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The indisputable fact is that, for Nigeria to record appreciable development, it does not depend on the number of skyscrapers or multiplication of state and local governments, but on human development, job creation, peaceful co-existence, unity in diversity, political stability, security of lives and property, and most especially, respect for humanity and fear of God. There is a need for reorientation, a total overhauling of the body polity and mass education on what really is developmental and the role of a suitable political system in its achievement. This is where theatre comes in. there is no denying the fact that theatre is a very potent activity in human society. From its evolution from ritual and its attainment of full development, theatre has always played major roles in the life of man. Frank whiting is of the opinion that theatre, in ancient Greece, was of such importance that whenever it was in session, it brought businesses, politics, and even war, to a standstill. It was the cultural and intellectual foundation of the Olympic (34).

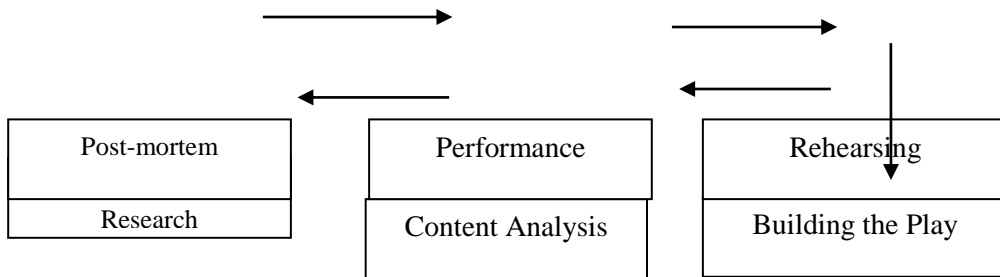
The Romans employed theatre as a major form of entertainment particularly for those on the upper social status. Though the early church initially viewed it as a deadly institution to be banished from the society, the same church later adopted (during the medieval period) the mystery, miracle and morality plays, and elevated same to high level of holy rites. Of note, is the fact that for the classical Greeks and Romans, theatre was a vital living

experience that probed into some of life's basic problems with utmost honesty. Greek tragedy aimed, among other things, at effecting catharsis; a purgation of the human soul through pity and fear. In essence, it aimed to ameliorate people's sorrow through the enactment of the greater sorrows of the tragic characters. Greek comedy had the direct function of attacking socio and political foibles - evils and errors - that could engender social dysfuntionalities and disintegration. It was thus a way of bringing society to a state of equilibrium and sanctity.

As a synthesis of the totality of art and life, theatre serves as a means of probing the meaning of life and the mystery of existence, theatre, to say the least, satisfies man's urge for the beautiful, and also engenders an intellectual and critical examination of ideas, values and situations that are prevalent in human society. As a matter of fact, responsible theatre has at different times sought and solved society's problems. Theatre can and has been used for entertainment, education, information dissemination, propaganda, religious re-utilization, cultural revival and psycho-therapy among others.

Giving the Nigerian situation, where politicians have failed to deliver, soldiers have plundered the land, the streets are unsafe, homes no longer secure, and anarchy rules the land, it is our candid opinion that performance (theatre) can go a long way if well-orchestrated to enhance the institution of a democracy that is capable of fostering sustainable development in Nigeria. Fortunately enough, things were not this bad in the past; the pre-colonial era. Apart from pockets of traditional religious practices which were offspring of ignorance, and would have given way with time, living was peaceful. There was a political system that allowed respect for human life and, except in war situations, people were generally hospitable. Political assassination was minimal while people kept their terms of agreement, and conflicts were amicably resolved.

Our proposal here is to employ performance, to reflect our reality, create a suitable model of democracy and popularise the prototype for the liberation and political emancipation of Nigeria. Our theatre should reveal an informed home-grown democratic model performed professionally and ensure wide patronage. The method shall be similar to the type employed in theatre for development (TFD).



The first step in the process shall be to identify the problem to be tackled, which in this case is a suitable Nigerian compliant home-grown democracy. Once the problem has been identified, participants/artistes will conduct relevant research on the Nigerian situation, tapping from all available avenues, including pre-colonial Nigerian political history, the Nigeria geopolitical structure, ethnic diversity, religious multiplicity, etc. For instance, artistes/dramaturges may research into oath-taking, how contract were sealed in the past, what made people loyal to the terms of agreement and the consequences of defaulting. In the past, for example, oaths were taken in the shrines before the gods of the land and defaulters, which of course were few, experienced catastrophic consequences. The import of this is that traditional legal system has zero tolerance for crime, injustice and corruption that majorly characterize modern judiciary in Nigeria.

Consequently, the problem identified and researched done, the content will be analysed for the selection of the aspect a particular play would be built round. This is because no single play can capture all the issues. Democracy being the fundamental ideal, several plays revolving round it and its many variables could be written or improvised as the case may be. Getting the play ready during the process of rehearsing the play, the players should be made to see themselves beyond mere entertainers but as committed artistes championing the course of political liberation for their people. They should be made to believe in the course and play it out with a great passion, conviction and enthusiasm in a manner reminiscent of Stanivslaki's method acting. The performance would carry the audience along; the performance would be more like a dialogue between the players and the audience brainstorming to fashion a way forward from where/what we are to what we should become. The

audience need to be constantly reminded that, though a play, it is indeed the play of our lives, for our liberation and growth. The performance should be followed by widely publicised evaluation in the mass media. Critics should discuss the production, from the perspectives of form, content and significance, on programmes designed for it, on radio, television and newspapers, until the impact is felt in appropriate quarters.

Performing Democracy, Transforming Society: Negotiating the Theatre

Sequel to the understanding of the past and the blending of same into a dramatic piece for the purpose of evolving a democracy that will be suitable for sustainable development in Nigeria, the ingredients of the performance shall consist of the proper use of theatre to achieve specific programmatic effects. The emphasis shall be on eschewing irrelevances, sentimentality and extraneous materials in the content of plays. It has to do with the involvement of the right theatre personnel in the production of the plays. In order that performance would help to institute the democracy that would create an enabling environment for sustainable development in Nigeria, the following need to be considered.

The plays

The thematic preoccupation of the plays to be performed must be relevant to the prevalent socio-political reality. Beyond mere entertainment, performance must critically and faithfully x-ray the causes of our failed democracy, aesthetically realise the finding in performance and proffer realistic home grown solutions. The plays should go beyond merely attracting attention to the problems but in conjunction with the audience suggest ways forward. We strongly suggest that in consonance with all this, the content of plays must borrow from the positive aspects of the past. Though, we do not abdicate a return to ritual drama, “drama of the gods” mythical drama, etc., rather a blending of the positive practices of our ancestors with the reality of our existence towards a better tomorrow. As a result, any recourse to the past that can engender a better understanding of the present towards an improved future is in order. It is important that plays do not take sides, or pitch tents with the enemies of the society because of financial gains. Notwithstanding

grants sometimes received from governmental agencies, theatre should not make itself subservient to governments or become the praise-singer of government that is obviously misbehaving.

Staging the Plays

The ideal theatre in a failed democracy such as ours is far from the western concepts / standard of play production. The luxury of Broadway theatre and elsewhere in the developed world cannot be afforded in a crisis-prone, conflict engulfed and politically unstable environment. What is expedient is Grotowski's concept of poor theatre; a building conforming to the most basic elementary needs of play production, a good enough play well rehearsed and stageable in multipurpose halls, open theatres, school halls, market squares, open fields, etc. For theatre to achieve the aim of performing democracy for sustainable development, it should endeavour to reach out to majority of people in the society. This type of theatre should reveal the sordid reality of the present, expose the attendant evil of selling votes and show the way to a glorious future. In the peculiar Nigerian situation, a theatre committed to the emancipation of the masses, conflict resolution, political stability, the establishment of social peace and the enthronement of an enduring democracy should not insist on actors who have gone through the university to be schooled in the Aristotelian, Elizabethan or Henrik Ibsen's acting styles. Even in the case of Hollywood stars, how many can boast of university degrees in theatre arts? What is desirable in this type of theatre is natural talent, commitment to the achievement of set goals and willingness to persevere. These are the essential qualities to look out for in the actors for this applied and theatre for development. The personnel at the helms of affairs (i.e. the artistic director) should be thoroughly skilled, undaunted and committed and of great importance is the employment of dramatic improvisation in acting and speech.

According to Bayo Afolabi:

A pragmatic theatre that is general towards solving social problems has to be practical and realistic, though not in the conception of Henrik Ibsen's "illusiveness of reality" on stage such

techniques now would be amorphous. Hinged on imagination, pretence and sentimentality, it engenders docility and mental laziness in the audience. Actors should not act as if they are oblivious of the audience, rather they should see themselves as part of the audience with roles complementing each other (23).

It is practically impossible to solve a problem one pretends not to notice. In the same vein, one cannot solve a people's problem when one pretends not to see them because it would be difficult if not outright impossible to directly discuss with them. Performance here should be based integrally on audience participation. It is clear therefore that the theatrical convention of Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre will be relevant. In order that the performance can be taken to various places, such as village square, market place, residential apartment, church, mosque, etc., aesthetic poverty is suggested but all efforts must be made to compensate aesthetic poverty with artistic excellence (25).

Conclusion

This essay is an attempt to justify the capability and viability of performance (theatre) in the enthronement of an enduring democracy that will create an enabling environment for a sustainable Nigeria. From the forgoing, it is our opinion that what is desirable is a theatre of discussion (rather than which basically entertains) that will facilitate reasoning and genuine search for credible democracy. In the Niger Delta, there is need for political and social conscientisation of the people. The Northerners must be educated that Boko Haram insurgencies are not the solution to the Nigerian problem. Nigeria must be able to discover the remote and immediate causes of her social and political crisis and proffer credible home grown solutions to them. The performance must be conscious of the positive aspects of the past, didactic and result-oriented. The performance should showcase the necessity of mass education, proper conduct of elections, religious tolerance, amicable settlement of conflicts, etc. Essentially, our historical plays, apart from showcasing the glorious past, should equally pinpoint those aspects of life of the people of the past that earned them peace, security and fulfilment and also

identify modern ways of achieving that glorious past if not today, then in the future.

Notes

ⁱAlan De Botton, "Arts for Life's Sake". in *The Wall Street Journal* , 2012.

Available at:

<http://online.ws.com/news/article/SB10001424052702303618904579168100106070232>

ⁱⁱ G. V. Plekhanov, "Art and Social Life". 1912. Available at:

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1912/art/ch01.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*

^{iv}Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*. in *Five Comedies of Aristophanes* translated by Benjamin Bickley Rogers. New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955.

^vOyin Ogunba, "Nigerian Drama". Available at

<http://www.onlinenigeria.com/link/LinkReadPrint.asp?blurb=146>. Retrieved 12 July 2014.

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BOOK REVIEW

Interrogating Fatalism in Contemporary Nigerian Society

A Review of:

Bashiru A. Lasisi, *The First Fight*, Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2014, 70 pp., ISBN 978-978-918-162-9

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Fatalism is a regular subject matter in postcolonial Nigerian drama; indeed, it dominated the works of early post-independence playwrights like Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark, Ola Rotimi and Zulu Sofola. However, playwrights of later generations have long taken a different path in the interpretation of this subject to modern audience. Bashiru Akande Lasisi falls into the latter category. A thorough reading of his recent play, *The First Fight*, would, if one is in doubt of the title of the review, shed light on the question of man's fatalism. The play challenges fatalistic precept displayed by man in the contemporary society. The story is based on the Yoruba myth of creation with a twist by the playwright from his creative perspective. Matthew Umukoro, in his forward to the play, sees it as "a bold and unique re-creation of the traditional Yoruba creation myth involving both man and the gods" (6).

The First Fight is an enquiry of the dramatist vis-à-vis the general perception of the people or believers of various indigenous and imported religions to channel their course to the right path. People, in recent times, place almost everything – both failure and success, at the door-step of the Creator, even when many things seem under their control and power and can be managed by them. One observes that it is this social attitude which affects, in no small measure, our progress in life that Lasisi attempts to bring to the fore in this thought-provoking play. Lasisi's words are enough justification as evident in the following:

The play calls our attention to our overreliance on the higher authority even for situations that

are directly under our control. In most developing countries particularly in Africa, every available space is at the moment occupied by churches and mosques. The religious doctrine of 'work and pray' has been changed to that of 'pray and wait'. People look up to God for manna, government for bonus and relatives for 'dash' (9).

This manner of belief makes such believers fatalists who hold ignorantly and erroneously that what will be, will be. The play is, admittedly, symbolic in its own right. It is symbolic in the sense that it brings the gods from their enigmatic Olympian domains to the same pedestrian level with man so as for the former to exert his supernatural power for the latter who presumes himself a helpless weakling to achieve his desired objective.

In his characterization, the playwright makes the gods (Ogun, Orunmila, Oya, Ori and Esu) terrestrial beings that wine and dine with man (Eniyan). This allows him to comfortably investigate the observed fatalism in man in the contemporary world. Lasisi's submission in the preface lends credence to our view that:

The First Fight looks at the Yoruba mythology on creation which places Ori (as symbolised by 'human head') as the sole determinant of who (sic) and what we become in life. The interpretation of this myth, for a very long time, has only articulated passively and fatalism. It objectifies man as a being who is powerless against fate, a pawn in the hands of the gods who have all the powers to bind and to loose. This is in antithesis to the spirit of survival, self-reliance and self-actualization (8).

In the play, the Creator creates Ogun, Orunmila, Oya, Eniyan and Ori to confront the challenge of existence. All the Beings-to-be attempt at every point in time to survive the tribulations that come their way save Eniyan. However, Eniyan is depicted as possessing the features of confusion, indecision and fear because of his failure to overcome his travail in life as seen in his encounter with Esu. Ori who wins the first contest (fight) is said to be the most powerful in the life of man. Ori (destiny) decides what becomes of human beings on earth. This fact is well presented in Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are not to Blame* where Ori (destiny) of Odewale is to commit patricide and matricide. And we can see obviously in *The First Fight* that he (Ori) defeats all the Beings-to-be which places him as the supreme Being-to-be and decides the fate of man who cannot use the potentials around him to actualise his dreams in life unlike other Beings-to-be who explore the potentials around them to become what they are after being defeated by Ori.

We must bring to the fore the germane qualities of the man-gods in the play to further articulate our position. Ogun boldly tells Esu that "I am nobody's slave" (43) when he is told by Esu to be his slave despite that he is not going to be tied to any chain. This is an instance of courage that is absent in the actions and inactions of Eniyan. So, when Ogun defeats Esu, he inherits his *egbera*, a part of the earth where Esu hitherto occupies.

Orunmila who understands his weakness as not having physical strength that can match Esu's, challenges him (Esu) to a battle of wits. Consequently, Esu has to leave the part of the earth for him to occupy. Esu accepts the defeat and says that "You won. I concede defeat. Enjoy your stay here while I proceed somewhere else" (46). Oya also makes do with what she possesses naturally. She seductively stands upon Esu and wins him. The stage direction in the play is enough clarification to demonstrate what grip feminine charm can have on even spirit-human as seen in these words: "Thinks for a while, then she seductively moves towards Esu and caresses his body" (48). Obviously, using different tactics, Ogun, Orunmila, and Oya find solutions to their predicament and succeed eventually.

Sad enough, one must add that, it is only Eniyan who fails to look for a way out for his travail as he accepts what comes his way despite its derogatory consequences. Surprisingly also, it is Esu that orientates Eniyan about his new

clime. And despite Esu's orientation of philosophy of existence, Eniyan still prefers to be a slave to him (Esu). Esu's long advice and orientation can be found in these words:

... You are now on earth where you fight for everything. You fight to live, fight to love, and fight to die ... this is a dwelling place for strugglers. You continue to struggle until you can struggle no more and another hustler then takes your place. There is another way for those who are afraid of fighting, those who are too docile to struggle. They take whatever is offered to them (50-51).

Therefore, the option left for Eniyan is to accept becoming Esu's slave because of his failure to take up the challenges of struggle. Eniyan is later on presented to Oya on the day she celebrates her 'head day' (destiny festival) as a gift. This is a symbolic relegation a man that refuses to struggle in life would definitely confront. For any man that is ready to struggle, he would go very high to the extent of becoming a god himself in the like manner of the gods in the play. He will become a hero of existence. This is what Lasisi calls our attention to.

The plot of the play is very swift and well knit together that the message inherent easily gets to readers or audience. The plot is linear in making and construction. It is still embedded with Yoruba songs and nuances to bring out the performance aesthetics of the background of the story. And to make the plot as this, a sort of interlude that is African is well built in the story. The characters are also created to project the motif behind the story. The man-god characters are built in such a way that the message can be gotten across to the audience.

In conclusion, *The First Fight* is worked out in sixteen scenes in which the voice of the playwright is adequately articulated. The play presents itself as a product of Yoruba myth, showing the Yoruba cosmology of creation that defines what man is expected to engage with in his life. And without the engagement of struggle in life, he (man) should know that he would accept an option of becoming a slave to take up whatever that comes his way.

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