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CALL FOR PAPERS

AMA ... is a journal of Theatre, Film, Humanities, and Cultural Studies. It is a peer-reviewed journal published by the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. The journal affords Academics opportunity to publish scholarly articles in the areas of Theatre, Film, Culture, other media and Humanities. Articles on Performance, Critical- theories, Literature, Culture, Film and Cinematic Art, Music, Religion Fine and Applied Arts, Book Reviews, Interviews and other areas are accepted for review and publication by the Editorial Board of *Ama ...* Manuscripts not more than twenty-five (25) pages, typed double line spacing in twelve points Times New Roman should be submitted electronically to: amajournalunizik@gmail.com or amajournalnau@gmail.com. No dead line for submission, articles are considered in order of submission

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EDITORIAL COMMENTS

With emerging trends in theatre research and scholarship, *AMA: Journal of Theatre and Cultural Studies* has maintained its stand as a dependable and reliable resource material in inter-disciplinary scholarship.

This Volume: Vol.15, No. 1, of 2021 is an eloquent testimonial to the resilience of the editorial team in ensuring a continued history of astute research and scholarship in order to guarantee adequate learning and pedagogy.

Although the articles in this volume have individual trusts, they are inadvertently related in a collective call for the revitalization of the dramatic, performing and media arts. It is actually what can be termed an "awareness" volume as the essays bother on advocacy.

Awaritoma Agoma's discourse on Solo performance titled "Solo Performances and the Restructuring of the Theatre Curriculum: A Study of Tunji Sotimiri's Performance in Solo Africa" makes a case encouraging teachers and students of Theatre Arts to pay special attention to Solo acts. He traces that evolution of Solo performance and outlines the benefits to the individual actor, the institution and the society. Similarly, Emmanuel Iroh advocates for the use of dramatic techniques in the pedagogy of prose in secondary schools. His work, "Adaptation of Novel to Dramatic Drama for Classroom Teaching: The Efficient Secondary Commercial School, Uyo Experiment" explores the use of drama as an alternative way of teaching prose and as a means of ensuring better understanding.

Martina Omorodion in her essay "Good Governance in Nigeria: The Place of Women" equally calls on women to rise up to their responsibilities as co-equals with their male counterparts in the society. She advocates for the active participation of women in politics. As Martina recognizes the fact that women are beginning to make little impact in politics, Kelechi Ogbonna and Chisimdi Ihentuge call for the utilization of the ethnic identity as a unifying factor for the political and economic growth of the nation. In their essay, "Exploring Positivity in Ethnic Identity for National Re-Integration in Nigeria: A Multimedia

Perspective" is a call for policy makers to cash in on our seeming 'unity in diversity to galvanize a united nation.

Canice Nwosu takes the role of teachers of drama further in his "The Teacher of Teachers as Developer of Human Resources: A Re-appraisal of Dan Uwandu's 'Child Development through Drama'". Here he extols the virtues of a teacher and submits that teachers are nation builders because they are character molders as well as nation builders through the formation of persons they instruct. Likewise, Felix Gbenoba, shows how the medium of drama is an effective way for the interpretation of poetry in "Drama as Style for Enhanced Patronage of Modern Nigerian Poetry: A Reading of Selected Poems in Hope Eghagha's *The Governor's Lodge*". He draws semblances of drama in the poetry of Hope Eghagha and explores how these dramatic elements have helped in a better comprehension of the poems. Equally, in "Nigeria's Female Dramatic Creativity: An Analysis of Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* and Salami's *Sweet Revenge*", Rosemary Asen calls for an end to negative cultural practices against women. These practices, the author contends, hinder the growth and development of the womenfolk. It calls for the assertion of female rights and better collaboration amongst themselves. And Chibuike Abunike calls for a reduction in violent movies in his work "Examining Domestic Violence through the Film Medium in Nigeria: An Analysis of Selected Films". This lessening of violence in movies he believes can be achieved through proper censorship.

In another wake-up call, Josephine Odunze proffers solutions towards the revitalization of the Abuja carnival. Her essay, "The Defunct Abuja National Carnival: Towards a Rekindling of the Dying Embers" seeks avenues towards the renaissance of the Abuja Carnival. She contends that the carnival is a veritable source of revenue and great tourism potential. As Josephine is calling on cultural administrators to bring forth resources towards the rebirth of the Abuja carnival, Onyeka Ebekue and Somtoo Arinze-Umobi in "Between the Nollywood Classroom and Nollywood Practice: Absence of Synergy or Synergy of Absence" are advocating that there should be a synergy between the Nollywood film practitioners and the Nollywood academia for quality assurance in Nollywood video films.

The use of signs and symbols in dances as expressed in some war dances is explored in Tochukwu Okeke and Judith Ume's

discourse in “The Significance of Cultural Symbols in *Ogbo* traditional War Dance”. The authors use this work to underscore the importance of symbols in traditional dances and explain how such signs aid the audience’s understanding of the performance. Charles Nwadiuwe and Ebuka Ilukwe make a call for an overhaul of the Nigerian Creative Industry in order to create a level playing ground for performers through a review of the Copyright law. The article "Copyright Law and the Challenge of Piracy in Nollywood Business" advocates for stricter penalties for defaulters in the creative business. And, Ver-Or Kachii sums up these calls for a better society in his article "Theatre and Revolution in Esiaba Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die*". Here the author calls for continued use of the theatre as means of sensitization and mass orientation. It is believed that through revolutionary plays like *Hangmen Also Die* that the cries of the masses will be heard and a better society will emerge from the ashes of the old.

We look forward to receiving more articles on this advocacy for the revitalization of the performing arts and similar discourses especially works that encourage interdisciplinary research.

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**DRAMA AS STYLE FOR ENHANCED PATRONAGE OF
MODERN NIGERIAN POETRY: A READING OF SELECTED
POEMS IN HOPE EGHAGHA'S *THE GOVERNOR'S LODGE AND
OTHER POEMS***

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Abstract

By modern Nigerian poetry, we are referring to an activity in English, French, Portuguese and other inherited colonial languages to which we often trace its beginnings. The modern poetry that emerged after Nigeria's post-colonial reverse has been assessed by critics mainly for the eclectic styles they adopt in their craft of the genre. The vanguard of the modernist Nigerian poets including Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo and John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo, are reputable as **maverick highbrow poets** (Ojaide, 1994) who are difficult and obscure in style thereby attracting limited audience. Their complex reverse form obviously led to the postmodern revolution in modern Nigerian poetry pioneered by Niyi Osundare in the 1980s popularized **new verse** writing known for the generous use of **cultural materials** from the pool of oral tradition to legitimize a poetic revolution which however, only inched modern Nigerian poetry towards having the desired large audience comparable to that seen in modern Nigerian theatre. Appropriating drama and its theory as style in poetry is postulated here as tool to further enhance audience-friendliness. Our aim in this paper is to examine the use of elements of drama as style and theory in selected poems from Hope Eghagha's *The Governor's Lodge and Other Poems*. One of the findings of this paper is that the poet advances the postmodern revolution of the verse form with the pedagogic use of elements of drama as a novel style in his poetry. We conclude that Eghagha's effort portends an enlargement of the audience of poetry and is an improvement on the postmodern revolution of the modern Nigerian verse.

Keywords: Drama, style and theory, enhanced patronage, Hope Eghagha, *The Governor's Lodge and Other Poems*

Introduction

Pioneers of modern Nigerian poetry are those trained to read and write in the tongues of the colonialists. Scholars also examined the early writings of the pioneers according to their styles. For instance, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo and John Pepper Clark-Bekederemo who are leaders of the modernist craft of poetry are known for their obscure complex images, Greco-Roman and Latinate borrowings. These alienated so many who rather than being audience of their arts, only picked aspects of their poetry to discuss their obscurantism. The poets, as a result of their unique creativity were found objectionable as readers are required to navigate the **gobbledygook** of the postmodern verse writing style. Obviously, the pioneer's mythopoeic expressions as well as admixture of indigenous and foreign images led to the postmodern revolt of the 1980s. Osundare with his disciples including Funsho Aiyejina, Remi Raji, Olu Obafemi, Tayo Olafioye, Ezenwa Ohaeto, Anthony Marinho, Steve Shaba, Tanure Ojaide, Emevwho Biakolo, Onokome Okome, Odia Ofeimun as well as Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo are revolutionists of the new reverse tradition. They challenge a **political poetry** associated with earlier generation of contemporary Nigerian poets, the leading members of which are Soyinka, Okigbo and Clark-Bekederemo:

The merciless obscurity of Soyinka's early prose and poetry, the deliberately exclusive poeticism of Okigbo surely alienate rather than rallied the readers and many there were who were permanently put off by these two writers, coming as they did, at the beginning of Nigeria's modern literary experience, the damage done by them all will surely take many years and great deal of ink to justify (Oriola, 2008:145).

The situation dramatizes the dilemma and frustration which an average reader faces when reading the poems of the members of Soyinka's school. In other words, the verse styles of the modernists probably do not help in the wider attempt to redress the marginalization of poetry as a genre in the discourse of modern Nigerian literature. It is notable that this marginalization is buoyed by its attendant sparse audience.

Style and postmodernism

We begin with a paraphrase of Rainey (2008) by defining style as essentially a formal one, with one innovation paving way or clearing the path for another. Also, style as expressed by the structuralist critic is

simple and directional. Jonathan Culler, (as cited in Akporobaro, 2008) says “style is the poetics of fiction.” Also in the words of Leech and Michael (1981) “...style is a way in which language is used...” Similarly, style may be said to be “idiosyncratic” (Oha, 2006: 343). In all these, one issue that is revealing is that style is infinite in nature. The use of language to create unique aesthetics depends on the creativity of a writer.

Nigeria’s postmodern versification is an improvement on the verse style of Soyinka and the members of his grouping in terms of theme, subject matter and style. The new poets also create significant ideas and are making significant contributions to poetry in contemporary Nigeria.

Therefore, the distinction between older poets and the new generation of Osundare reflect in their new form of cultural poetic aesthetics through the introduction of new forms of content, form and style that appeal to the Nigerian audience. One other important thing is that members of the “natural literature” as a result, earn the attention of our reading audience because of the accessibility of their form and style, as well as unique message and soothing language appearance. These are also part of the reasons publishers and the reading public of Nigeria origin find their works publishable and enjoy reading their “creative reversal of the ‘old order’ of the verse of Soyinka and the members of his school of thought. We are indeed intrigued by the **dramatic verse** form adopted by a member of Osundare’s group, Hope Eghagha, in the pursuit of the novelistic agenda of the postmodern group expressed in the 2004 collection of poetry *The Governor Lodge and Other Poems*.

Poetry

We may briefly revisit the concept of poetry in this important discussion of style and theory in modern Nigerian poetry so as to strengthen our background discussion in the study and demonstrate a full command of our subject up to the boundaries of current knowledge, and also be able to extend them. Akporobaro, (2008) referring to Webster's Dictionary defines a poem as an arrangement of words in verse, especially a rhythmical composition sometimes rhymed, expressing fact, ideas, emotion in a style more concentrated, imaginative and powerful than ordinary speech.

- a. A composition whether in prose or verse having beauty of thought and language.

b. The art of writing poetry.

Similarly, Rundell (2002) defines poetry as a piece of writing using beautiful or unusual language arranged in fixed lines that have a particular beat and often rhymes. From the definitions given, poetry as a composition is a product of the imagination, though correlates with the society in the practice of this enterprise. Our assessment of the relationship between poetry and the society inform a brief recall of the description of the literary discipline including poetry by Ibitokun (2003:5) as *oro, or Aye, scriptic, whimsical, kinesthetic bolt, diachronic, synchronic, parole, speech, mystery, genius, enigma*. Poetry as a damnably approximative phenomenon is heavily complex in style in its many significations. The poet is thus a social critic who uses literature (poetry) as a tool for pointing out truths by repeatedly revisiting human situations in rhythmical patterns. So what is often described as poetry is some particular way of saying something in particular forms, shapes and qualities of sentiments. In this case, some poems may be prosaic, dramatic or anything in language and words of unique peculiarism. In his description of poetry, to paraphrase Aristotle (as cited in Akporobaro, (2008) is the poetry of prose and drama. This means that classical theorists including Aristotle believe there is a relationship between poetry and drama.

Poetry as Drama: A Re-theorisation

From our sustained investigations on modern Nigerian poetry, specifically the new verse form of Hope Eghagha, we discovered the creative representation of the verse as 'drama' with the poet's incorporation of comedy in the expression of 'poetic truth with various thematic issues of societal relevance in the new 'verse drama'. Drama is a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character to tell a story usually involving dialogue theatrically designed for performance. The introduction of dramatic elements into Eghagha's 2004 verse confirms Aristotle's description of the earliest dramatists as 'tragic poets' because they were basically poets who recaptured myths and legends in a dramatic form, (Eghagha, 2005: 468). This again emphasizes correlation of drama with poetry. We agree with the critic that drama is a way of averting reality. To paraphrase Ogunba (as cited in Bala, 2009) drama is a social act reflecting communal sensibilities whose meaning is intuitively conceived by these familiar arts or within the same specific cultural milieu. As much as a play may be for the

stage, Eghagha's poetic drama employs dark humour as a weapon to satirise the follies of contemporary Nigerian political leaders. Our critical perspective of Eghagha's *The Governor's Lodge and Other Poems* reveal the poet's introduction of dramatic elements into his poetry. Some of these are plot, setting, character and language.

Plot

Eghagha's simple plot in his verse provides a logical connection with verses of selected parts of the work and another. The 'Lodge' is the centre of action from which events progress and or more upward the creative 'pyramid' of the writer. In his *poetics*, Aristotle listed plot as the first and most important element of drama, social act reflecting community.

Setting

The verse is set in the governor's lodge which is also the political nerve centre of Eghagha's nameless state or country, probably Nigeria's corrupt political landscape. Rather than seeing himself as a 'tenant' in the lodge, the governor uses the state house as his private property for all activities, from the irrelevant to the very personal even as brothel and or night club as well as beer parlour where his family members and guests are entertained with the state fund. The naïve heroic character reveals his breakfast experience at the lodge.

Lodge:

*The table looked dressed
Like a beautiful masquerade with different colours
the plates were made of gold
the contents breathed smoke in the cool air
there were fourteen seats at the table
all of us twelve poor children
from poor homes
sat staring at the wonders
on the golden table
and I did not know where to begin
mummy said the prayers and showed us
the way into paradise
red bread brown bread green bread
boiled chickens fired chickens roasted chickens...
imported fruit drink*

*assorted meat and fish
drove away my appetite
the aroma from the table
made me sick
and I remembered my family
what are they going to have for breakfast?
boiled rice with no meat
and I put some meat away
in my pocket for my brothers... (p. 34)*

The passage illustrates a colourful setting of the lodge where everything good including the most sumptuous meal takes place. Our experience of reading the collection of poetry reflects a gradual shift in verse form of post-modernism to **dramatic poetry**. This is a directional to success in the poet's continuous search for theories and technique in modern Nigerian poetry. This impressive development confirms the prediction of the Nigerian poet and critic, Babalola (2004) who predicted a further revolt in modern Nigerian poetry. He says: "we should not expect the current medium of literary revolt, postmodernism, to be discontinued towards the middle of the 21st Century (our emphasis added)".

In less than two decades after the 2004 prediction of Babalola, is the stylistic intervention of Eghagha's dramatic poetry, this confirms the theoretical perspective of the new verse writers.

Characterisation

The poet introduces characters to carry out the dialogue in the verse. Just like the dramatic and prosaic genre, the characters play their parts responsibly in the verse. We are introduced to how the naïve young lad in the story began his journey into the Governor's lodge in Uncle Joe's **Beetle car**. Other characters in the poem include the Governor, the Governor's wife's younger sister, the priest, the young boys from poor homes, the Governor's contractor, family members of the Governor, young girls, and mummy Governor to mention a few.

The poem reads:

*Okon never stops forcing
Events and stories on me
Late one night he pounded my back
And pulled me out of bed
He said I should come see*

*What he had told me about
Boyz night in the lodge... (p. 35)*

The naïve young lad who doubles as the hero and participating observer of activities in and around the governor's lodge reports how Okon forced him out of bed to witness where the nation's wealth is spent. With a use of dark humour and appropriate characterisation as revealed in the dialogue of the verse, we are intrigued by the poet's characterisation style.

Language

The poetry conforms to the language revolution of contemporary Nigerian poets, postmodern revolution of certain proportion is chronicled in the poetic genre using a **compromised instrument of language**, the prime object of modern critical speculation and discourse in deconstructive criticism.

Eghagha's poetry is thus rendered inaccessible verse unlike the maverick- highbrow poet, Ojaide (1994). An aspect of **the road in front of the lodge** reads:

*The paved road in front of the lodge
Was like the beauty of a woman
It pulled one to lie on it
And spend the rest of his days on it
The surface shone as it was polished
With the powder of a beauty queen
The flowers gave a smell like Europe
The ambience was intoxicating ... (p. 23)*

In conclusion, it is in response to our research experience in modern Nigerian poetry as well as the contributions of critics that we chose to validate our critique of Eghagha's style in poetry. Also, classical theorists of literature including Homer, Hesiod, Dante, Vigil, Sidney, Aristotle and Shakespeare believe in the theory of poetry and the fraternisation of poetry and drama to engage the society productively.

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