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***AMA: JOURNAL OF THEATRE AND CULTURAL STUDIES***

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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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## THEATRE AND REVOLUTION IN ESIABA IROBI'S *HANGMEN ALSO DIE*

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### Abstract

Theatre and revolution are established as agents of change as portrayed in Esiaba Irobi works. This work which is focused on *Hangmen Also Die*, is a qualitative study hinged on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which emphasizes that education should allow the oppressed to gain their sense of humanity, and in turn enable them improve on their conditions. Irobi's ideology was to open the eyes of the oppressed in his country so that they become aware of the high level of corruption among the ruling class; oppressive nature of the rulers who have made themselves lords over the common masses as well the injustices perpetrated on them through perversion of justice. The playwright effectively communicated his message through the use of songs, proverbs and pidgin English which are easily understood by his people. The study concludes that change is inevitable and that Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die* provides a catalyst for making such sacrifices for change necessary.

**Key words:** Theatre, Revolution, Oppressed, Corruption

### Introduction

The potential of the theatre can never be overemphasized. Ayo Akinwale uses Sherstova's remarks to summarize the potentials of theatre thus, "it picks up tremors below the social surface alerting the audience to dangers which may remain latent or actually erupts...the efficacy of theatre in informing the populace about the social political issues is revolutionary" (56). Revolution is all about power, understood "as ability and control" (121). It is all about the acquisition of power from the people who hold and exercise it as a personal property, to the people who have been denied access to this power for a very long time. It is also clear that struggle is involved and there are two groups contesting for this power. Commenting, Fanon Fredrick cited by Nguni said:

If there is no struggle, there will be no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet depreciate agitation; are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle (131).

When the struggle continues for a long time, the dominant or the stronger group in order to establish a firm grip and control of the social structures turn to tyrannize the people. This tyranny persists until people are able to revolt against such ideology. The revolt is a conscious attempt by the people at rejecting the repressive tendencies. It is this kind of struggle which Kettle A. called revolutionary aesthetics. According to him, “revolutionary aesthetics engages revolutionary consciousness and social-vision steeped in revolutionizing or changing people’s social relationship about their outlook and philosophy of existentialism” (28). Revolutionary aesthetics impacts on intellectual awareness as well as consciousness of one’s history in order to possibly change it.

The study explores theatre and revolution as tools for informing and raising awareness of the people to the level of consciousness. The critical analysis of issues by the populace can be engendered by these tools. Esiaba Irobi outlines clearly in his works how these can be achieved. Carefully selected is the language and music which holds the audience spellbound and sets them thinking.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This work is based on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a theory propounded by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher. His contribution to educational philosophy originated from the works of Plato, modern Marxists and anti-colonialist thinkers. In the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire differentiates between the oppressors and the oppressed in an unjust society. He emphasizes that education should allow the oppressed to regain their sense of humanity, which will in turn enable them to improve their condition. A look at the above suggests change oriented theatre (theory), and the theatre is kept afloat by constantly engaging in creating awareness to the community. Writing on the role of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Iyanda, Samuel. and Atule, Emmanuel. note:

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is a literacy program aimed at teaching the people to reject a fatalistic view of life, teaching them to jettison the culture of silence which they have imbibed through the banking system of education (77).

The intention of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is to get people talking about issues that are affecting them. When these discussions are going on, people become more aware of the impediments to their social development thus willing to venture out, more determined to take their destinies in their hands. This is because their critical consciences are awakened and want to express their discontent with the system. Freire further observes that:

As the contradiction typical of a society in transition emerges more clearly, these groups multiply and are able to distinguish precisely what makes up their society. They tend more and more to join with the popular masses in a variety of ways through the popular literature. The plastic arts, theatre, music, education, sports and talk arts. What is important is the communion with the people which some of these groups are able to achieve (8).

Pedagogy of the oppressed uses theatre as a mirror, thus when people see themselves and are able to identify with it, they become conscious of what they are to do to change the situation around them which they feel is not what they want.

When people are aroused consciously, they are moved to change their world since drama in a sense does not only entertain but also sharpens cognitive ability in individuals who engage in it tenaciously. "This cognitive ability dwells in the psycho-sensory parts of the human body and enables individuals to perceive, reflect and adapt to changing situations as presented in drama" (Nwanaju 7).

Revolution has been with man for centuries. Revolution is a desire by a people to change situations to their advantage, especially the masses who feel they have been marginalized, manipulated and humiliated of their rights. From the records, a revolution is ignited or sparked by the oppressive tactics adopted by the ruling class to stifle the masses and force them out of existence.

Theatre of revolt is inextricably fused with strands of force and violence. This form of theatre is dynamic and didactic in approaches and operations. Practitioners of this form of theatre employ their artistry as a

means of fighting for the yearnings and aspirations of the masses. As part of its ideological commitment to protest, challenging the status quo is pronounced in its activities. It is pertinent to state here that ideological theatre is geared towards making a change be it socially, economically or politically. This can only be possible when people imbibe the proposed ideology. Commenting on ideology, Mabel Tobrise said:

any ideology is expected to work out specific unity between thought and action; thereby guiding the ideology as, a system of ideas concerned with structuring historical realities, of rationalizing action of directing economic and political struggle of guiding the destiny of a people (110).

This ideology has governed the theatre from time immemorial. The idea of revolt is not alien to theatre; it has been there for centuries. It is part of the radical aspects of the theatre, made manifest in drama events highlighting Marxist and other socio-political ideologies. The ideology of revolt according to Tobrise is a stance in “social drama which fights and rebels against the social ills the people would want eradicated from the society” (110). A lot of work has emerged from East and South-Africa projecting this ideology of rebellion. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, the leading voice in East-African literature, favours this kind of theatre, that campaigns for change through rebellion. He states that...without making mistakes, it gives people courage and urges them to higher resolutions in their struggle for total liberation (preface to *Trial of Dedan Kimanthi*). It is no surprise that his play, *I Will Marry When I Want*, provoked a lot of negative reaction which forced him into exile. Such is his commitment to the theatre of revolt because it uplifts people to other spheres of life.

Saint Gbilekaa, in an attempt to unravel the ideological war that has taken over the field of literature today, submits that, “Literature today is appreciated under two schools of thought. The formalist and the radical or Marxist schools of thought. The formalist school is guided essentially by the literal cannons of Aristotle and Hegel while the radicals are guided by the precepts of Marx and Engels” (59).

Nigeria as a nation embraces the neo-capitalist economy. Therefore, Marxist ideology is an elite ideology that is preached only in an academic environment. Revolution is never a subject for discussion and overturning of the capitalist economy. The formalists are closely linked with the works (plays) of Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola and Yemi Ogunyemi. These playwrights situate god in the centre of man’s

activities. They consider man as pawns in the hands of gods. They determine the future of man and man could not do anything to change his fate. Plays like *'The Strong Breed, Wedlock of the Gods and Ijaye War'* clearly portray this issue of the invisible hand determining the fate of human beings. In these plays, the protagonist fights forces that are greater than them and are meant to exterminate man. In the *Wedlock of the Gods*, the formalist or fatalistic link is observed in Ogwoma and Uloko's story. This tragic love story as conceived to doom, the two love birds never lived together as husband and revolved around what could be seen as cultural renaissance. In His play *Kongi's Harvest*, Soyinka outlines fully the involvement of the military in politics. The play explores the opposition of the life-giving forces against death-giving forces with no clear winner emerging.

It is under this rubric of change that Esiaba's revolutionary aesthetics are enshrined. An individual's courage is traceable to first; his natural like for something and his nurture. Irobi has made statements that portray him as totally against orthodoxies. In an interview that he granted in 2007, he said 'if for example, the power holding company of Nigeria formerly National Electricity Power Authority (NEPA), subjects the people to days and weeks of unmitigated power outage without any reasonable explanation, and it is not regarded as violence against the people. If the people on the other hand, mobilize and take the Power Holding Company's personnel hostage until electric power is restored, it is no violence" either. Rather it is some form of revolution (32).

Esiaba further concretizes his belief in peasant Marxist ideology in his play, *Hangmen Also Die* where Ogbansiegbe is killed, when people discover he was using his wealth and intellect for his own personal interest. In the play, *The Other Side of the Mask*, Animalu is equally killed when Jamike noticed that Animalu was an obstacle to his progress. In the above plays, one thing is clear, intellectuals that suddenly start to block the progress of the peasant are disposed of, yet the peasant still succeeds. Irobi therefore is not very faithful to intellectuals initiating revolutions. He makes it clear in *Hangmen Also Die* that revolution does not start in the head but from the stomach". It is when the people are pushed to the extremes that they achieve the hitherto unthinkable dreams.

In Esiaba's works, there is a trait that runs through; what Fanon called African proletariat,

The deliberate action of not lifting anybody to the point of hero to be worshipped, when all were part of the struggle to free themselves from the oppressors. They show themselves to be jealous of the result of their actions and take good care not to place their future, their destiny... in the hands of a living god" (Fanon 74). Characteristic features of the new plays emerging from Africa is the consistent assault on the status quo, which the playwrights in their political orientation see as decadent, exploitative, oppressive and a continuation of the socio-political systems of the colonial masters. Their ultimate goal is the replacement of capitalism with a socialist perspective (Asagba Austin 83).

Revolution has long been recognized as a paradigm for extracting freedom, either economic or political. At various times, children gain independence from their parents through revolt. Revolution has become a major feature in all writings that are emerging from the African continent; a constant brawl with the status- quo and supporting the masses has become a trend. These writers often see as a clot in development the activities of the bourgeoisie. The imputation of revolution by African playwrights is done without secrecy to their commitment and is seen as an attempt to create a responsive theatre, which in practice is a populist theatre and has a link with national development, Kabwe Kasoma as cited by Asagba says:

... Theatre which engages in art for art's sake is a luxury in Africa. Our theatre must therefore be totally committed to national development. I have always seen it as a vehicle for critical appraisal of government plans that are faulty (with all the dangers this entails for the social security of the dramatist (87).

We extrapolate from the foregoing that African playwrights have a reason for writing. This has come because of the particular trend of behaviour set in motion by colonial masters, who destroyed the social structures and replaced it with their own which run against the wishes of the colonized. Today, those who have come to take over from them are not faring any better. To correct his abnormality these playwrights, adopt polemics in their treatment of historical vision.

### **Social Commitment, Ideo-Aesthetics and Drama of Esiaba Irobi.**

Nature and nurture influence an individual's life greatly. The influences of these on Esiaba's life are enormous. Born in the family where many of his uncles fought in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> world wars, they greatly influenced his

life right from his formative years. The uncles will tell him, 'Da- aka! Anya! Da- aka anya! onye o obu onye? Ihe ga-eme-echi, ya ma taa'. That is Ngwa, Igbo dialect for 'stand your ground and express yourself! Do not let anyone psyche you down. The thing that may happen tomorrow let it happen today instead' (Irobi 29). From the above quotation of Esiaba Irobi's early childhood life, events and people that had influence on him were all violent and revolutionary. Consequently, and because of his inborn revolting nature, he developed and sharpened the characteristics.

Another factor that aids his revolutionary rhetoric is the 'ekpe masquerade cult' which he participated in. This cult is enhanced by the folk community with, among other functions, the role of performing the 'Ala' propitiation rites when the earth goddess is perceived to have been wronged. This propitiation rite in the earlier years involved sacrificing human beings and were (rites) violent in nature. According to Esiaba as quoted by Osu, "the masquerade performance enactment is not a matter of entertainment only, and although you do the dancing and all... they are not ordinary, they become part of your psyche" (Osu 151).

His anger with Nigeria is further flamed by the fact that he witnessed the Nigeria civil war. The economic policies of the government are not favourable to Nigerians. All these culminated in producing works that direct violence at the government. In an interview, he had this to say about the Nigerian government. "All the government had been preoccupied with, was employing some diversionary economic policies and inventing some bogus and unrealistic social programmes to stupefy the gullible public" (Esiaba 12).

These cultural and economic experiences propel him to challenge the society with such writings. Irobi's prolonged disenchantment with the government made him confront the society with a violent smile by constantly bringing out uncompromising bitter truth in his plays. Irobi is known for his macabre and violent campaign for change in the society through his plays. The plays engage the audience. The pattern and manner of inviting the audience to mass struggle is unequalled. This is crafted from the perspective of the oppressed refusing oppression. This refusal is attained by consciously enlightening the masses, to understand the situation. The graphic presentation of the social realities before an audience leaves them with no option but to join the call, either physically or mentally.

As a writer, Irobi does not only observe but also actively participate in exposing and proffering solutions to societal problems. Accepting the role of writers in the society, Achebe says that: "literature can and should be used as a force for social change and a writer has a responsibility to do so" (51). The allegiance of writers to society points to the reason why Irobi exposes the ills or plight of the masses as well as showing them way out of such situations.

His desire to rid the society free of corruption explains why his plays are full of violence. This is based on the situation in Nigeria over the years. The plays deal with current issues, which the society is grappling with, that is corruption, political ineptitude and the nonchalant attitude of the government to address these problems. His collection of poems is full of lamentation about the deprivation and the moral decadence imposed on the society artificially by the elite. His plays *Nwokedi*, *Cemetery Road*, *Hangmen Also Die*, *The Other Side of the Mask*, *Colour of Rusting Gold*, among others have clearly shown his desire to change the society through revolution, and he believes this revolution can be achieved through mass mobilization. This is what he constantly preaches in his plays.

Irobi introduces the masses' Marxist revolution in his plays. In *Hangmen Also Die*. To back this philosophy up, he said, "revolutions don't start from the head but stomach" (12). Irobi seems to be saying that not only those who are educated can change things in the society, even the peasants can. When they are hungry and pushed beyond perseverance at such times their reactions are unpredictable.

As a social realist writer, Irobi, projects the unjust socio-political situation of Nigerian society. His works thrive on the Marxist dialectics, where he criticizes and satirizes the status quo by using thesis, antithesis and synthesis. He has a way with words. His use of puns is magical. His plays contain a lot of dramatic techniques and devices to stir anger, and create mental pictures, clear ignorance and carefree attitudes.

Irobi manifests in different ways. His propagandist side is best seen in his ability to write plays that capture the fate of the entire nation and urging people to reject such a system that is unfavorable to them through violence. He achieves this by projecting, the corruption, the moral decadence and the struggle of the ordinary man to survive despite the obstacles. His works prescribe what should be, as the plays suggest.

## Synopsis of *Hangmen Also Die*

The play *Hangmen Also Die* is about the fate of seven young and well educated men who are about to be hung for the murder of a prominent chief in the oil rich Izon State. The play opens with a group of young men who are to be hanged. The hangman refused to execute the young men. This singular act of rebellion by the hangman opens up the series of activities which leads to them to be hanged. The reason for refusing to hang the young men was because the Hangman, Yekini, shares their revolutionary beliefs and plights.

Chief Erekosima has siphoned the federal government's oil spill compensation money meant for the community. Tamara, a priestess of the land's goddess, in search of her son comes in contact with these young men (suicide squad) and challenges them to direct their anger at the appropriate quarters such as Chief Erekosima who has siphoned their money. She urges them to disrupt the coronation ceremony of Chief Erekosima and recover from him whatever remains of the stolen money. In the process of trying to recover that money, Erekosima is killed and these young men are arrested by the police. Tamara played an important role in helping them achieve their revolutionary motives.

## Structure of the Play

*Hangmen Also Die* opens with a gory scene where life is to be sniffed out of seven young well educated men, by Hanging. Their crime is the murder of Chief Erekosima in cold blood. The revolutionary disobedience of Yekini, the prison hangman to hang the condemned young men reveals the preceding events that lead to their action and their subsequent sentence to death by hanging. The refusal leads to the narration of the origin of the suicide squad, a revolutionary gang of disenchanting and dislocated youths, who are well educated but cannot get anything meaningful to do. Hence because of this bias of society against them, they are determined to inflict injuries on the society that has denied them the right to live well though there are resources which can facilitate their dreams. This narrative is done through flash back. The suicide squad led by Tarila Igamina alias R.I.P cannot be anything but violent because they do not have anything to loose in the society hence their popular saying "we are the rejects of the world" (46).

Change in such a society has to be through violence; a society where people steal and avoid the wrath of the law. To the suicide squad

therefore it is time for the destruction of the people and things that they perceive have stood on their way of progress. This is similar to the Marxist theory's belief that the old capitalist class has to be destroyed to create a new socialist and more equitable society. The suicide squad attest to their violent destruction of the society thus "We are the suicide squad, ... we have been terrorizing Izon State for the past two months... we can demolish any institution... we can murder anybody and get away with it... we are out laws. We live dangerously" (*Hangman Also Die* 64).

This rampaging and chaotic movement is given a focused direction once Tamara, the priestess of a goddess of the same name, gets in contact with them. She helped direct their revolutionary actions to a popular cause. The thwarting of the coronation ceremony of Chief Erekosima, as the Amatemeso I of Izon State is because he siphoned the oil spillage compensation money from the Federal Government to the people. Tamara wanted the suicide squad to disrupt the ceremony and if they were able to recover the money, whatever is left will be in the interest of the people, who will align with their struggle. Therefore, by the time these young men (suicide squad) are arrested and sentenced to death by hanging, people like the hangman himself could identify with their cause since he is also a peasant. The revolutionary conviction shown in their defiant and unrepentant attitude was irresistible to Yekini because it is unique and enduring. In *Hangmen Also Die*, the suicide squad use the collective 'we' in this manner:

We maim, we murder, we massacre... we are the suicide squad we are the Kamikazee... we sway, we prowl and pounce like apes. We leave on your skin, in the language of your blood the anthem of our fury... we do what we do because we have the future, because we know that no matter what we do, no matter how hard we try, no matter high we aspire, here is something waiting in the atmosphere to destroy us (*Hangmen Also Die* 65-66).

Yekini's conversation with the Doctor further consolidates Irobi's alliance with the peasants. The peasants are the vibrant labour force of the traditional society. In the industrialized capitalist societies, they are the most exploited. This ugly fact usually fires their revolutionary zeal when they are sufficiently aware and mobilized. (Osu 9) It is an aspect of August Boal's and Paulo Freire's theories of theatre of the oppressed and pedagogy of the oppressed are all about. They tend to sanitize and

mobilize the people towards self-awareness. Yekini recounts the past years of his life before coming to work in prison thus:

I was once a fisherman, a fisherman living by the power of my paddle and the weight of my net. Sometimes I paddled to the horizon where the sky merges with the sea and everything is blue. There I saw the navel of the rainbow. There I saw the ceiling of heaven! There ... I saw the face of God! And doctor, I was happy a contented man (*Hangmen Also Die* 17).

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### **Themes in the Play**

The play is first of all informed by corruption in the society which has become endemic. Whatever happens in this play is because of corruption? The corruption case that has let hell loose is the one committed by Chief Erekosima who siphoned money meant for the people of Izon State and shares with his cronies. And he is getting ready to be crowned as the king over the people again. About three million naira was given to him; no single kobo went to the poorest of the affected persons in the state. It is corruption in the high places which forced the young boys to form a terrorist group called Suicide Squad to fight the people or at least torment them. When Dimeari is told that the government gave twenty-five thousand naira to a young lady as part of his scheme for unemployed graduates, Dimeari said, "then she must have somebody in the government. Her father or mother or brother or sister or

sugar daddy must be a top government official in this country (*Hangmen Also Die* 72)''.

This attitude of knowing somebody frustrates and the only language and tool they can use for the people to understand is violence. As the suicide squad said "and we do what we do because we know we have no future because we know no matter what we do, no matter how much we try, no matter how high we aspire, there is something waiting in the atmosphere to destroy us. (*Hangmen Also Die* 55).

The above forced them to launch a revenge on the whole society. The revenge is the antidote to the corrupt activities of the society against the young men. The revenge is, however, narrowed down to a particular person against a blanket thrown over the whole society when they were instructed by Tamara, she told them to arrest him and force him to account for the whole money he siphoned.

### **Use of Songs/Proverbs**

Songs are the coordinating force in most African performances. They are used to garnish performance (Obafemi 14) "No traditional performance can be conceived outside poetry (songs) and folktales, on the one hand... it could be added that of all verbal acts (folktales, proverbs, riddles, incarnation etc), song is the commonest. It features frequently in and outside performances because it is easily accessible''.

In *Hangmen Also Die*, the Suicide Squad singing the song "Alagba fie fie" distract Chief Ogbunabali as the song tells him that something sinister is about happening. Because of this, anytime he hears the song from a distance he asks the masters of ceremony to tell him what is happening because the ceremony is a joyous one but the songs coming outside are war songs. The people are anxious to know who is not happy with the coronation. This has exposed the power of songs and the strength they carry in communicating messages.

The use of proverbs is very common in all the plays of Esiaba Irobi. He uses proverbs to explain or express himself better and to add the beauty of the African language to his work. In *Hangmen Also Die*, the proverb, "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown" (93) by Ibiaye explains the troubles that Chiefs or kings face in their daily responsibility of administering the people. The proverb, "when a blind man cries, there are no tears seen" (98), as used by Tamara explains the plight of the poor

as nobody looks at their condition as Ibiaye is forgotten even though his condition is very bad. Nobody is willing to help him.

In *Hangmen Also Die*, we see a bunch of educated wild young men tormenting a society, for the injustice done to them by the society. Tamara acting as that mobilizer or educator coordinates these youths. When it was clear to them that Erekosima was part of their problem, they took action to better their living conditions by attacking Chief Erekosima and subsequently killing him. These are part of the functions of the Theatre of the Oppressed and Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

The Marxist theory in summary is about the destruction of old and oppressive order to create a new order. This is reflected in Irobi's works. The killing of Chief Erekosima and Ogbunabali, who represent the old order in *Hangmen Also Die*, is an attempt of Marxism. Destruction of super structures to create those that are on the same level is what Marxism is all about.

### **Summary**

Esiaba Irobi combines the theory of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed as effective means of bringing socio-political change. The use of angry educated youths in bringing about changes is important and successful in *Hangmen Also die*. It is right to point out that he is enlightening the majority of Nigerians about their rights. He wants them to know that until they fight for their rights, nobody can do it for them, bearing in mind that the tyranny of the tyrants can last as long as the masses endure. The peasants are eager to take their rightful place in the society, once they know their place as shown in the plays.

Esiabi Irobi used drama to canvas for change in the Nigerian political arena. He used confrontation and disregard to societal rules to call for change. This is realizable through the language of the plays; the songs which give vivid explanations of atmosphere and proverbs which give in-depth insight into the succeeding action.

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