

FROM ETHNO-TEXT TO TECHNO-TEXT: THE LANGUAGE OF POST-INDIGINIST AFRICAN DRAMA

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Abstract

This paper provides a description of language usage in Post-Indiginist African drama by making a contrast with the Indiginist Hybrid variant. Post-Indiginist drama (identified in the study as techno-text) arises from the aesthetic ambiance of modern urban, global, technological culture. Its contrast is the well known indiginist hybrid composition in a colonial language based on traditional themes, local symbols, and native expressions (identified in the study as ethno-text). The paper foregrounds the necessity of a shift from Indiginist to Post-Indiginist aesthetics, arguing that the contemporary world is one of new realities against which Africa's literary language cannot remain unchanging as time-bound native expressions. Whereas the Indiginist Hybrid approach entails a strategy to indiginise a foreign language with local untranslated words, proverbs, metaphor, simile and other devices, the Post-Indiginist approach entails a scheme to infuse literary language with present-day expressions, in order to enable the dialogue communicate current themes, symbols and diction.

Introduction

Post-Indiginist drama (also identified in this study as techno-text or literature arising from the aesthetic ambiance of

modern urban, global, technological culture) are dramatic works by Africans using contemporary themes, multicultural symbols, current diction, and definitive imagery. Although the use of contemporary themes and current diction is common to all modern writers, the style, nonetheless, is exceptional to African writers. This is because, up to the present time, the norm is Indiginist Hybridity or composition in a colonial language based on traditional themes, local symbols, and native expressions (an ethno-centric style equally identified here as ethno-text). In this paper, I will foreground the necessity of a shift from Indiginist to Post-Indiginist aesthetics, and then proceed to provide a contrast and examples of the strategies of language usage in both approaches.

The Festival of Black and African Arts and Culture (FESTAC) held in 1977 in Lagos, Nigeria, articulated a definition of African literature that was widely accepted among the African literati. According to the colloquium, the objective of modern African literature in colonial languages is to express an African content in the medium of a European language such as English or French. The African content consists of five indiginist (native) elements, namely: The writer must: 1) be African, 2) use traditional themes from oral literature, 3) use African symbols, 4) use linguistic expression taken from African languages, and 5) use local imagery, that is, images from immediate environment (Amoda 201). The resources of traditional African oral literature, such as myths, legends, folk tales, poetry, and proverbs, therefore constitute the African brand in colonial-language literature. Hence, African literary and critical aesthetics, from Africanist to Post-colonial to Afrocentric viewpoints, recognize artistically applied content of indiginist substance in the adopted foreign languages as canon of modern African literature. The indiginist style has held sway as the

authentic African literary aesthetic. And post-colonial criticism, which emerged in the West as the most popular critical approach to African literature, has explained the style in terms of the colonized responding to their colonizers, writing back, and appropriating the colonizer's language. Postcolonial reading seeks, in texts from once colonized people, the depiction of the colonial presence, and how such presence is resisted or accommodated through the writing. But, as Anthony Chennells has noted, "the value of post-colonialism as a theoretical category has been heavily contested ever since the term was first formulated" (109). Post-colonialism privileges the colonial episode, making it the central issue of the world's history. In the words of Anne McClintock, too great an emphasis on colonialism marks a "recentering of global history around the single rubric of European time" (qtd. in Chennells 109). African writers prefer a classification of their works as "post-independence" instead of "post-colonial", because "post-independence" emphasizes the people's responsibility to themselves over the paternalistic, never-ending "post-colonial." The Nigerian writer and critic, Tanure Ojaide, has remarked that "writers in Africa have moved from putting blame for their fate on colonialists to taking their fate in their own hands" ("Teaching Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*" 210 - 11). Indeed, African literature might have been written in the past in response to colonialism, but today there are writers to whom colonialism does not hold as much significance as other urgent issues. Nevertheless, the privileging of ethnic culture in African creative writing, which arose from the circumstances of the nationalist struggle, has continued to the present day with the writers valorizing African myths, rituals and traditions in many of the works, even when handling contemporary themes.

In proposing a shift from an indiginist to a post-indiginist paradigm, I argued in a previous paper that the changing context of African literature demands corresponding alteration in the current critical and literary aesthetic practices. An alternative paradigm is desirable because it is unsuitable to continue to apply the literary standards of anti-colonial literature to writings of a different era. There has now arisen a new generation of African writers who cannot apply the same aesthetics as the older generation that had closer contact with the African linguistic and oral traditions and faced an obligation to tackle colonialism. I equally contended that the oral tradition of proverbs, riddles, ballads, and stories from which modern African literature draws is often spoken of as though such tradition is an exclusive patent of Africa. It seems easily forgotten that other societies had similar traditions in their pre-literate era, which came to feature in their written literature. The ancient Greek plays for instance drew from the myths, legends and stories of an oral tradition. Just as western societies have come through the pre-literate, pre-modern and modern phases, and each phase has had its characteristic artistic imprint, African society and literature are similarly evolving. It is natural therefore if in the phase of transiting from a pre-literate oral tradition, emergent African literature is marked by a content of oral tradition. But such content, which is now hailed as the unique identity of African literature, is only a passing phase, because the further a society moves from its pre-literate past and oral traditions, the less such background exacts an influence on its contemporary literature. As writers emerge from a growing number of Africans who no longer have an African language as a mother tongue, that influence will be further eroded. The paper also reasoned that Western universalism which African writers sought so passionately to counter by

deliberately projecting an Afro-centric worldview through creative writing is today a fading ideology and this should motivate a reassessment of a subsisting critical and aesthetic standard that is almost wholly based on cultural nationalism. In a postmodern multicultural context, culture is no longer defined as universal but as diverse: all peoples have their own cultures.

Language of Ethno-texts

The Indiginist approach entails a strategy to indiginise a foreign language (for example Standard English) with untranslated words, proverbs, metaphor, simile and other devices from an African language (for example Igbo). A study of this approach, like the example provided below, will involve examining how both languages were conjoined in a text. Ashcroft, et al explain this style of writing as “the appropriation and reconstitution of language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new usages” (37). Appropriation brings the colonial language under the control of the speech habits of the local language, conveying “in a language that is not one’s own a spirit that is one’s own.” (Raja Jao qtd in Ashcroft 38). The strategies of appropriation are given as glossing, syntactic fusion, untranslated words, inter language, code switching and mother-tongue transcription.

J. P. Clark says that the task for an African playwright using a language like English is “one of finding the verbal equivalent for his characters created in their original and native context” (89). So in plays like *Song of a Goat* and *Ozidi*, his strategy was to represent the culture and mannerisms of the Ijaw people in English. Similarly, Ola Rotimi’s Yoruba-English style entailed translating native expressions, phrases, images, and world view into English and having his language in plays like *Kurunmi* and *The Gods are*

not to Blame close to the structures of the local language. In contrast, the goal of Post-Indiginist drama is not to reflect native expression, but rather to address a contemporary subject matter directly in current vocabulary, since the intention is not to appeal culturally but to engage rationally. Instead of depending on native proverbs, metaphors, simile, folklore, mythology, religious allusions, and speech traditions like riddles and indirection, writers using the Post-Indiginist style bypass such cultural recall, to write directly in current registers. From the circumstances of their birth or upbringing and education, the writers are likely to have been estranged from their native culture and made incapable of effectively recreating it in writing without some personal exertions. Western-educated and culturally-dislocated Africans are therefore more naturally predisposed to writing practically in the colonial language. The pretentious ethno-text made its debut with the paternalistic role of Western scholars, critics and publishers as midwives of early African literature. For instance, Molly Mahood remarked in a lecture at the University of Ibadan in 1954 that the essential services the department of English at Ibadan could render to Nigeria was to develop for the country a crop of writers able to write good standard English and yet at the same time able to enrich English with idioms drawn from the local languages. At that time the country was yet to attain independence and no national literature had been produced. She said:

A country does not attain nationhood without a literature, and Nigeria has as yet no literature. And since nothing will come of nothing, it is vital for the future writer to enter the English literary tradition where he may learn his trade from master-craftsmen. Yet he does encounter a real danger here. If the writer-to-be learns his craft from writers whose subject-matter is purely

European, it is going to be very difficult indeed for him to dissociate that craft from European themes and associate it with the life around him. I hope it will soon be possible for us to help him to make such an association through the study of what can only be called, with a contradiction of terms, oral literature. . . . Something rich and unexpected might come out of the confluence in one mind of two traditions, the bookish and the popular; writing that could refresh English with idioms drawn from the vernacular languages, as Welsh and Irish writers have often done (2-3).

This approach to writing came to be labeled "transliteration," meaning "literal translation" - a procedure for introducing tropes and idioms from an African ethnic language into English through a commutation of equivalent words. Thus, the Igbo idiom "*Were ire gi guo eze gi*," which means the same as the English idiom "Read between the lines," can be introduced into an English text as "count your teeth with your tongue." The Igbo words are replaced by equivalent English words, but the idiom remains an Igbo cultural artifact (Onwuemene 1057). The characteristic literary artifacts produced by transliteration are of three principal types: 1. Target-language expressions cast in the formal mould of source-language counterparts; 2. Source-language loanwords introduced into the target-language text; 3. Source-language idioms and tropes (and sometimes source-language lexical collocational norms) introduced into the target-language text (Onwuemene 1059).

In his play, *The Old Masters*, Sonny Oti applied transliteration to influence Standard English with the resources of Igbo speech practices. The play is set in Oke-Igbo, a community in South Eastern Nigeria, at the time of British rule. It dramatizes the

changes and conflicts that resulted from the presence of the White colonial master. In the play, the tradition of slavery has been disrupted and there are tragic outcomes on both sides as the slaves attempt to assert their freedom under the protection of the White man, and the freeborn, on the other hand, forcefully insist on keeping the tradition, including burying their dead ruler with a number of slaves. The slaves are represented by Daniel and Chidi, who have superficially embraced Christianity in order to get the support of the new masters for their freedom, while the freeborn are represented by Ukwu and Okereke, who are diehards of tradition. The plot is woven around events leading up to the death and burial of Mazi Oji-Okoro, a patriarch of the community. The traditional milieu is equally evoked through drumming, dances, masquerades, and religious chants. The linguistic devices used in the play include untranslated words, proverbs, metaphors and similes. Here are some examples from a study of language usage in the play:

Untranslated word:

The playwright used some Igbo words and expressions directly in the text, and then provided a glossary to explain them for the comprehension of non-Igbos. Untranslated words draw attention to the source language of a transliterated work.

Ukwu: *Ikpo – oo, Laa – aa! Ikpo-oo Laa-aa* (Oti 1).

This is an announcement for men who are non-initiates to leave the road because the masquerade is going back to his shrine after the initiation ceremony. The word *Ikpo* as explained in the glossary means non-initiates. *Laa* means “go”.

Daniel: I expected that the rat does not beget a snake, he is as cunning as his father, his late father was known as *mbe* (Oti 3)

Since the word *mbe* would prove confusing to an outsider, the playwright translated the word in the next statement by Chidi.

Chidi: The Tortoise. How right! I hear Okereke has taken up a job at the White man's residence (Oti 3)

The tortoise is *mbe* in Igbo. By means of the untranslated words, a stranger to the language is taught with the help of the glossary:

Daniel: *Obasi – di – na elu*. Here is snuff (Oti 5)

The reader is taken back to the glossary to find the meaning and by so doing acquires a knowledge of the Igbo language. The context of an expression can equally indicate its meaning:

Ukwu: It is likely my father will die?

Okereke: No, no *Ibinukpabi* will not allow it. But no one is immortal...(Oti 23).

Ibinukpabi is a deity, and this may be understood from the context of use without the glossary. In another instance, a word may have double meaning, which the glossary clarifies:

Daniel: What are you talking about man? Has *Agwu* possessed you?

Medicine man: Don't utter one more word. I am *Agwu* (Oti 49).

In the first occurrence *Agwu* is the name for a spirit of mental derangement; in the second occurrence, it is a word for spirit of divination.

Proverbs

Igbo folk wisdom associated with the aged are used in the play to recreate the flavour of local speech with locally drawn imagery:

Okereke: You are a young fool carrying the carcass of an elephant on your head and still trying to kill the grasshopper for meat (Oti 10).

Daniel: You know that only the tree hears of his assassination by the axe man and still stands fixed (Oti 30).

Okereke: Head of cult, colleagues and friends. We must remove the monkey's hand from the soup-pot early enough to stop it changing into human hand (Oti 42).

This statement is a literal translation of an Igbo expression about the need to act promptly.

Daniel: It is said that a baby who keeps crying pointing to a particular direction is expecting either his mother or father to come from there (Oti 26).

The Igbo expression transliterated here indicates that when there is agitation, then it means that the issue at stake is important to the agitator. The Oke – Igbo slaves want to be accepted into the community as freeborn citizens, and this cry for freedom is important to them.

Head of cult: My son I agree with you, only a fool uses mirror to see the beads around his wrists (Oti 65)

This means that the discerning does not need any assistance to know the obvious. The death of Mazi Oji- Okoro is imminent.

Okereke: True the palm tree now bears and ripens its fruit at the thin side of the palm- frond (Oti 8).

Okereke is amazed that Daniel, a slave, has courage to come and challenge him to a quarrel in his house. Strange things are

now happening, since the palm tree does not ordinarily bear or ripen its fruit at the thin side of the palm frond.

Finally, in other examples of the proverbs, Nene, the aged mother of Mazi Oji-Okoro, while bemoaning the death of her son says, Even the hare climbs the tree on the day I go hunting.

Her son should be the one to bury her at her death, but she is very unlucky that things have turned the other way round. She also cries that she “washed her hands clean to break kernels for the chickens to feed on.” Igbos also use the expression to communicate a feeling of loss or unfair deal of fate.

Similes and Metaphors

The playwright used figures of speech like similes and metaphors to reflect the cultural context of the play with imagery from the local environment:

Chidi: Oke- Igbo is like the sea, full of strange dark things and I, like a dry leaf have been merely sailing on it (Oti 3).

Head of cult: The white man has spies spread like the spiders web around us (Oti 66).

Mazi Kanu: The sky is as dark and impenetrable as the evil forest (Oti 66).

Okereke: Oh! How weak. Women are a bunch of coco-yam leaves. The weakest drop of rain tears them into bits (Oti 18).

Finally, Nene while pouring encomiums on her departed son uses metaphoric expressions:

Nene: Oji Okoro my son/Great River that carries the stubborn to his fateful end/ You are the elephant/ You are the leopard (Oti 75 - 6).

There are, however, problems associated with transliteration. A writer is to first of all think in the mother tongue and then transliterate into English, and this means that writers who cannot use the mother tongue are handicapped in this regard. Secondly, there is evidence that transliteration poses comprehension problem to readers or audience members who are not familiar with the source culture.

Ability to reflect indigenous traditions most effectively in transliterated works, on the part African writers, depends on having a consciousness that is firmly rooted in Africa. But writers with such deep roots in the indigenous traditions are difficult to find. For instance, Zulu Sofola, late Nigeria's first female playwright, expressed doubts over the ability of African writers to effectively create the original native speech patterns of their African characters in the English works. Sofola believed that most African writers are not well-off in the knowledge of their African language, nor are they informed on the thought, social order, philosophy and consciousness which African languages reflect. She remarked that:

The average African writer is an alien to his natural environment. Though he is African, he knows next to nothing about the essence and meaning of life in that environment. By virtue of his education, he finds himself centered nowhere. He sees the African scene as an environment where he can take some materials for his artistic adventure but he is incapable of relating to those materials (Sofola 168-169).

Incidentally, Sofola's comment was directed at the early generation of writers which had better knowledge of Africa's native culture than the succeeding generation that is far more distant from the indigenous roots. The new generation of African writers include those raised in multicultural urban environments and products of

inter-ethnic and inter-racial marriages who do not possess even an African mother-tongue. Additionally, Tanure Ojaide says that today's generation of African writers "have become part of the worldwide phenomena of migration and globalization with the attendant physical, sociocultural, psychic, and other forms of dislocation" ("Migration, Globalization, and Recent African Literature" 43). Ojaide asserts that migration, globalization, and the related phenomena of exile, transnationality, and multilocality have their bearing on the cultural identity, aesthetics, content, and form of the literary production of Africans, also noting that Africans born in the 1940s and 1950s write differently from those born after the 1960s and those Africans born abroad. He compared the two generations of writers resident abroad, and explained that those born in the 1940s and 1950s grew up in Africa and went to school there. Their works are filled with nostalgia and set in concrete space and time. The vegetation, rivers, and other landscape features peculiar to those places are clearly delineated. The works are steeped in folkloric allusions and tend to eulogize ancient virtues. On the other hand, the post-1960-born Africans, sometimes children of emigrants, have vague memories of Africa, especially the traditional environment and society. What they write is very different from their older counterparts. Many in this group suffer from a psychic disconnection from the continent. These "children of post-colony," educated in the West, imagine Africa because they have not experienced the continent physically and culturally. By virtue of living outside their African homeland and in the West in an age of globalization, there are changes in subject matter, themes, language, style, and form in the various genres in which the writers engage themselves. Ojaide concludes that the phenomena of migration and globalization have an overwhelming impact on

African literature, generating diverse perspectives of the evolving nature of African literature and the depiction of the contemporary African condition.

The second problem associated with transliteration is what Abiola Irele has called "the problematic relation that obtains between an African work in a European language and the established conventions of Western literature" (xiii). Ojaide illustrated this problem with his experience in teaching the text of Wole Soyinka's play, *Death and the King's Horseman*, in two American universities. He says that "While Soyinka is able to blend Yoruba thoughts into English effortlessly, students have problems with the indigenous background of his voice" ("Teaching *Death and the King's Horseman*" 211). Soyinka's Yoruba-English poses problems to the American readers because of their lack of familiarity with the language systems of another culture:

A white student at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte asked: "Is it okay to commit wrong acts in the name of tradition?" This question, illustrative of students' initial ignorance of other cultures, shows the difficulty of teaching a "post-colonial" non-Western text to American students. Students ask: "What are praise-singers?" They do not know how to pronounce the names of characters. In both Whitman College and The University of North Carolina at Charlotte the students unanimously found Act 1 difficult. A black female student at Charlotte has expressed this difficulty succinctly: "I felt thrown into the midst of a cultural event, knowing absolutely nothing." The ritualistic language poses a difficulty to the students for the first time. The symbolism of the market, which is central to the play, is not discerned when it should be, nor is that

of the Egungun costume (Ojaide, "Teaching *Death and the King's Horseman*" 211-12).

The cultural signs in African literary works can then be said to have opposite values for two categories of readers: positive, for those who know the two languages involved (the contextually bilingual), and negative, for those who know English and not the writer's native language (the contextually monolingual). Ashcroft et al noted that cultural signs in cross-cultural texts create an "experiential gap" for the contextually monolingual (66). For such readers, the signs are merely metonyms for vaguely perceived cultural differences that cannot be truly appreciated and that irritatingly impede full comprehension. Contextually monolingual readers therefore prefer to encounter as few of such signs as possible (Onwuemene 209). Thus Africa's ethno-texts, which ostensibly targeted the West as cultural ambassadors for the continent, rather turn out to be cultural enigmas to the foreigners. For they need to first learn the language, conventions, allusions, and cultural assumptions of the source culture in order to meaningfully appreciate just one of the texts.

Language of Techno-texts

I have coined the term "techno-text" to refer to Post-Indiginist work or African literature arising from the aesthetic ambiance of modern urban, global, technological culture, in contrast to creative writing mirroring the animist, agrarian environment of Africa's past echoed in folk tales, myths, praise songs, epic poetry, riddles and chants. In the past, the West was entertained by anthropological spectacles from Africa. And even till date Africa would rather be represented in the image of a primitive

past than of modern industrial and technological progress. At the height of the frenzy, expert teachers and anthropologist (Africanist) scholars, critics and literary agents from the West goaded emergent African writers into providing ethnocentric texts as the unique signature of African literature. Later, Post-colonial criticism arose to hail such works as writing back in protest against colonialism by means of appropriation and reconstitution of the language of the colonizer. The notion that African culture is its folklore, including oral tradition, music, dance, rites and rituals, frozen in a static and idealized time and space, is entrenched in Africa's literary and critical benchmarks. As Walter Bgoya observes: "Little room is given to creativity that demands higher levels of education, higher levels of interpretation of contemporary realities... not limited to traditional props and traditional genres" (290). The world has moved on from the age of folk tales, to that of global media, technology and popular culture, which requires new mode of representation.

The Post-Indiginist (techno-text) approach entails a strategy to infuse literary language with present-day expressions, in order to enable the dialogue communicate current themes, symbols and diction. Every written language can be harnessed to do the bidding of a writer. For in literature, language has no limitations in terms of structures and varieties, since there is no limit to the subject matter and materials at the disposal of a writer. Also, language has both general and particular usage, particular historical and social background, occupational variety and genre. There is also individuality in language usage arising from variations of sex, personality, background, interests, and experience. This is true for writers as users of language, as well as for the characters they depict. Furthermore, dramatic dialogue reveals character,

relationship and goal; in comedy it is quick-paced and witty; in tragedy it is slow-paced and reflective. The ideas of a play are conveyed by means of speech, and the style should differ according to the type of character; and should be rich and metaphorical, logical and persuasive. In sum, the dialogue of contemporary dramatic representation should depict the socio-psychology of characters, and the socio-history and socio-geography of their society.

In my conceptualization of Post-Indiginist aesthetics, literary language is to be informed by the following five considerations:

1. Language bears the tint of a user's experience as a medium of subjective communication;
2. A writer can express self in any preferred language, and may address any chosen audience: local or international;
3. The purpose of literature is to express any subject matter in a contemporary mode;
4. In an environment of cultural diversity, a writer may use language on the basis of competence and communicative criteria;
5. African culture is not in assertion, in a multicultural context in which the reign of Western cultural universalism has receded.

These criteria may be summarized as follows in analyzing Post-Indiginist language usage in *Aishatu*, a play of Iyorwuese Hagher: i) Literary language both betrays and represents the experience or background of a writer; ii) Writers would normally use a language in which they are most competent; iii) Literary

language ought to reflect the contemporary environment and facilitate communal and cross-cultural communication.

Post-Indiginist analysis is interested in determining why and how a writer uses a language out of the option, for instance, between English and mother tongue; and both of these questions are answered simply by examining the background of the writer, as shown in the following example. Harry Hagher (1949 -) uses Standard English plainly, without infusion of his native Tiv language. An explanation for this style may be traced to an upbringing in a family that had taken to western education and the church. A native of Kasar, in Katsina- Ala Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria, his father was a primary school headmaster in the 1930s – 40s, and his mother learnt to read the English Bible because of her zeal for Christianity. As a child, Hagher attended the Christian Reformed Church with his family. He attended a mission secondary school in 1964 where he was introduced to Western drama through William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth* and other plays. Hagher's other early exposure included the American Cowboy films and the Onitsha Market Literature. He had his degrees at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, where he read English Language and Dramatic Arts up to a doctorate. As a playwright, Hagher uses the English language in which he is competent from his extensive education. Writing in his Tiv mother tongue or transliterating it in his English language works, was probably out of Hagher's reach from the circumstances of his upbringing. His experience perhaps aptly illustrates the observation of Phaniel Egejuru that:

Many of the writers cannot express their ideas adequately in their mother tongue, because by the time the writer reaches

the age of logical reasoning, his line of thinking is gradually being shaped by the foreign language, so that at the time he graduates from university all his academic thinking is done in the foreign language. Thus the African writer does not really think in his mother tongue to write in English as some suppose. He thinks and writes in English because of his colonial education (52).

Egejuru's observation may apply to Western-educated African writers generally, including even those that have produced ethno-texts. The normal inclination of African writers educated in English is to write in plain Standard English. But since writers can endlessly manipulate the structure and variety of language, as noted earlier, it is possible for African writers to create ethno-texts by applying their materials, research and effort to that end. Otherwise, what comes readily is perhaps plain English as evidenced in Wole Soyinka's unadorned usage in his unpublished first play, *the Invention* and his earliest plays, *The Trials of Brother Jero* and *the Lion and the Jewel*; and the ordinary usage in the plays of James Ene Henshaw, who was the first Nigerian with university education to write plays. The ethno-text is therefore an affected style by Western-educated African writers who otherwise create many of their works in the plain Standard English style that Hagher uses in all his plays.

Standard English is the variety used in the formal and informal speech and writing of the educated, whose spelling, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary, is substantially uniform globally, though not without some regional differences. A literary use of Standard English in a current form guarantees a representation of the modern environment and facilitates cross-cultural communication. In the following example from Hagher's

play, *Aishatu*, two educated characters, Apeh and Wadi, are engaged in a conversation:

Apeh: But this is not theory. It is real. Don't you realize when you bought your two houses in San Francisco and San Jose you were making a personal escape? Leaving everybody in Nigeria to perish while you took out our money and escaped?

Wadi: Don't forget I am not a politician. I abhor politics. I am a private hardworking citizen. We can't all be equal. Some of us work hard for our money. We should enjoy it. The danger in the country is these lazy politicians who want to be rich overnight for doing nothing.

Apeh: You are making a mistake. The danger in the country is the emergence of rich powerful individuals like you, who claim not to be politicians. You belong to all parties and all regimes – civilian and military. You push all governments by pretending to be friends with rulers and pretending to have the answers while you are concerned merely with how to make personal profit. Should the leadership prove progressive and refuse to dance to your tune – refusing to grant you special privileges – you cry for the leader's head.

Wadi: As for me I have no Godfathers in the system. I work for the money, and I must enjoy it the way I like. I am not preventing others from enjoying themselves.

Apeh: Why don't you enjoy yourself at Hill Station here, or Yankari or Obudu cattle ranch, Baguada Lake Hotel, to mention a few. The colossal sum of money you spend for three months each year at Churchill Hotel in London, and the Beverly Hilton comes from the nation's foreign reserves. Our prodigal lifestyles make us a beggar nation. (Hagher 17-18).

Though the dialogue is in Standard English, the situation or experience presented is typically Nigerian. Clearly, the socio-geography is that of Nigeria; the socio-history is the well-known trend of political corruption in Nigeria; and the socio-psychology is that of a corrupt Nigerian businessman (Wali) and his outspoken critic (Apeh). The language is able to convey a contemporary Nigerian experience to both local and foreign audience, which might identify with a representation of the lavish and wasteful lifestyles associated with corrupt Africans. The playwright equally evokes the contemporary environment with allusion to American cities and reference to multicultural symbols, such as popular five star hotels in Nigeria and the United Kingdom. However, Hagher's language usage is too plain, considering that in the Poetics, Aristotle explained dramatic language as "language adorned with different kinds of ornament, separately in its various parts." Literary language is normally garnished with figures of speech, including metaphors, proverbs, and idioms - devises which should be imbued with modern flavour in a modern play, in contrast to the traditional flavour off ethno-texts.

Hagher also used the Pidgin English in the speech of his uneducated characters, as shown in the dialogue between Mama Tola, an illiterate corn seller and Rekiya, an educated person:

Mama Tola: Applicant ke? Which kind applicant dey live for flat, dey ride Honda car? No be you all dis big men dey thief money with pen give una? When armed robber go thief them money they take gun shoot them.

Rekiya: All na war against indiscipline.

Mama Tola: Which kind war you dey fight? No be you dey spoil people picking in this town? You remember dat small girl wey

come holiday wey you dey carry give big men for money? Wey you teacham to smoke indian hem . I hear say she don begin craze for head.

Rekiya: Wetin dey vex you today? (Hagher 1)

Mama Tola does not change her usage of Pidgin throughout the play, unlike Aishatu and Rekiya, who only use it when they are with uneducated Mama Tola. In contrast, Sonny Oti's *the Old Masters* has no such language variety that typifies the city setting of *Aishatu*. In the traditional setting of Oti's play, everybody speaks the same language, except that the speech of elders is usually marked by their usage of proverbs.

Conclusion

It should be restated in conclusion that the post-colonial world, the world of today, is one of new realities characterised by globalization , technology, multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism, transnationality and multilocality. It is not expected that in the face of these new realities, Africa's literary aesthetics will remain unchanging, frozen as representation of fossil folklore and traditions in ethno-texts. The aesthetics, including language, content, and form of Africa's contemporary literary production are bound to reflect the new environment as Post-Indiginist writing or techno-texts.

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