

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

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Abstract

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notable Theories or Concepts of Change and Change Management

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

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

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

The Change Movement in Contemporary Nigeria

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Explication of Post-indiginist Realism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Responsibilities of Playwrights

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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