

COSMOLOGICAL AESTHETICS AS CHANGE INDICATORS IN SELECTED PLAYS OF ESIABA IROBI

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Abstract

*Change, as a constant factor, appears to be the only regular event taking place in Nigeria in recent times. When on May 29, 1999, the military regime formally handed over power to civilians, Nigerians welcomed democracy with enthusiasm and loads of expectations. How far have their expectations been met or dashed? Hence, dramatists respond to dominant socio-political, economic and cultural issues in their environments with varying verves of revolutionary stunts. They burlesque with the people's cosmological leanings and socio-political system to point ways forward touching the sensibilities of their audience. Esiaba Irobi is one of such dramatists whose **The Fronded Circle** and **The Colour of Rusting Gold** point towards directions of change through indigenous and cosmological forms. Since the society is in a mobile state of continuous flux, and critical theories have argued from the standpoint of the Formalist and Anti-formalist; of content and form, this paper adopts the concept of glocalization for conceptual backings to analyse Irobi's metaphors of change using content analysis. The research findings reveal that Irobi's implication of indigenous forms in the selected plays serve as resourceful paradigms from which to meditate on Nigeria's socio-political issues. This paper concludes that the juxtaposing of traditional techniques in a modern context and vice versa, will serve as potent idioms of change as it is not very possible to use foreign means alone to resolve indigenous problems.*

Introduction

Cosmological aesthetics is the abstract and material evidence of a people's origin, worldview, culture, norms and values that influence them collectively. These are manifest in the religious culture, myths, legends, rituals, folktales, songs, dance and historical origins that are peculiar to a particular people in meaning and significance. This includes their socio-cultural, political and economic structures. In this context, the total worldview of the Igbo, their way of life and methods of implicating moral, judicial and social controls become their cosmological aesthetics. Esiaba Irobi is one such playwright who has implicated cosmological aesthetics in his works as revolutionary means. The appropriation of cultural

elements as indigenous forms in Nigerian drama does not only serve spectacular purposes but are paradigms and indicators of change for sustainable developments.

Cosmological aesthetics appropriated in writing is not merely to project culture but to enhance the ideological and functional role of playwriting by using familiar elements to interrogate contemporary issues. It strengthens the claim that playwrights are visionaries who guard and guide the socio-political, economic, religious and socio-cultural issues of their community. But how have recent playwrights been able to express their vision for change? Are they writing with requisite commitment to engender change in the realms of politics, economic and socio-cultural realities of contemporary Nigeria? Are their works overt, covert or radical? Are there strategies or dramatic weapons that are peculiar to the playwrights whose plays orchestrate the need for change in governance as a way to abate corruption, armed robbery, bombings and kidnapping? The requisite commitment of the playwright is re-affirmed as Akorede states that:

The dramatist is the watchman in his society. He is the people's secret police. It is his duty to sift out information and to bring the 'culprits' to the people's court. The court on this sense is the open theatre where the hidden, the concealed and the guarded are exposed not for the people's pleasure but for their information and if possible necessary action. (55)

Thus, drama and theatre serve as the people's court where sore wounds are revealed and people's hopes are salvaged. To restore the people's confidence in the sociological function of drama, the playwright must blend his dramatic techniques and style with traditional/ familiar elements. This will according to Ukala, facilitate "the cardinal aspect of the politics of aesthetics, that of restoring the confidence of the people in the worthiness of their artistic patrimony, which immensely encourages the continued propagation of that patrimony" (31). However, a look at the Nigerian playwright is therefore of essence because according to Bakary Traore in his *The Black African Theatre and its Social Functions*, he affirms that "insofar as the theatre is a permanent feature of society the study of its functions in society is the most important branch of theatre sociology" (2). Quite on point, because the sociological function of every drama text is imperative to the audience. Olaniyan corroborates Traore' viewpoint when he asserts that:

It was asserted or implied that blacks either had no traditions of drama indigenous to them, or had traditions that in comparison with Europe and Asia, were merely photo-dramatic, cretinous forms in a state of developmental arrest in terms of style, esthetic canons, formalizations of techniques, and mode historical transmissions. (354)

The question that will arise here is; what has the African writer done to decolonize Africa? How have they been able to glocalize African indigenous forms in their writings? Rather, ours have been a total consumption of Western commodities and lifestyle. In fact, Nigerians propagate Western cultures and religion more than theirs and even teach their children to do so. Have we not condemned our religion and culture as barbaric? Have we studied our culture to understand it properly and appreciate it? What are the criteria from which we cast aspersions on our religion and culture as backward and barbaric? Since they say that religion is the opium of the people, does it not imply that it is the identity of the people? It must be noted here that through the people's belief and religious practices, their system of social, judicial, economic and cultural controls is marked out. Thus, Allison acknowledges that "every religion comprises the beliefs of a given community or a number of communities." (214). Hence, the people's religious alignments form their common conscience and their social and moral controls rests squarely on this.

Conceptual Clarifications

The concept, glocalization, which basically gives prominence to local life captured within global processes, is the simultaneous integration of particularization within universalism. Glocalization is a process whereby the local form is customized within the global trend, an intersection of the global for the advancement of humanity. The word glocalization is according to Duru from the term glocal "which is a combination of global and local; indicate how this concept represents an attempt to find optimal and sustainable solutions to local and/or international problems in the era of globalization" (1). The English popularisers of this concept credit its first usage to Roland Roberts (1938), a sociologist and theorist of globalization whose definition of globalization is simply "the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole" (Glocalization 1). It is also alluded to Robertson to have in 1992 "coined the term 'Glocalization' (Glocalization, 1). But in defining the concept of glocalization, Andrew Horn describes glocalization as the "body of octopus, it

'touched down' on to the local surfaces by its forces, which functions as the legs (2). But Philip Hong says that "glocalization corresponds to the integration of local markets into world capitalism" (2). However, it is noted that the term glocalization independently developed in Japan from the word dochakuka, meaning "global localization...dochakuka evolved into marketing strategy when Japanese business men adopted it in the 1980's" (Glocalization 3).

However, in the academia, there is a proposition that "meaningful integration of local and global forces" should converge in order to achieve functional progress. Duru, records that Boyer and Drache (1996) have observed that the process of Globalization have created "problems for many cultures around the world, because there is incompatibility between human relationships and extreme exploitation of resources." (5). In agreement, one observes that in the area of drama and theatre, Nigerian plays are still clothed with Western aesthetics. This is a trap which Nwosu insists that:

It is still the African creative writer's inability to break the shackles of modernism that made him a bondsman of Western Aesthetics. Hence the goal of Afro-Postmodernism is to make the African creative writer "go back to his past" like Ukala says and dress his 'remembering' of his "early rural life" this time in multicultural aesthetics to contain the global politics of aesthetics creation and presentation. (31)

The Nigerian creative writer is therefore challenged to glocalize the Nigerian culture through the medium of drama and theatre by inculcating in his or her work those positive aspects of Nigerian culture that defines the people. This is because art and culture form the common collective emotion of the people emboldened in their myths and imageries, folktales, songs and dances, through which they express their pain, grieve and agitate for peace and identity. It is this collective memory that strengthened communal goals in China. Thus, the consciousness within the Middle East, especially the Chinese, at the beginning of the 20th century took a step to define themselves; who they are, and in relation to the West. They understood their peculiarities and how their culture is an essentially aesthetic one. However, the transactional encounter with Western thought undeniably, offered the Chinese a wealth of fascinatingly new ideas; it allowed them, to look for familiar concepts which could be aligned with their own tradition. It is the alignment of the indigenous forms with global concepts that enriches the aesthetics of African theatre, considering that Nigerians, especially

the conservatives are beginning to question the uniformity and globalization of social, economic, and cultural life as well as politics. Their consciousness is borne out of the realization that their traditional norms, values, and historicity are the sound base upon which they can build developmental goals. This analogy is strengthened by Robertson's slogan "think globally, act locally" (qtd. in Min. et al 1).

The need therefore arises to re-assess globalization in the context of the theatre and the local dynamics of revolutionary forms. To glocalize indigenous forms mean to blend the local forms with contemporary aesthetics that will enhance Africa's development. It therefore involves the appropriation of local elements such as concepts, costumes, beliefs and values into drama texts and theatrical performances

The Fronded Circle

The Fronded Circle presents from the Igbo experience, an account of an indigenous African tragedy. The tale is about Onwutuebe's ritualistic indulgence in a protective charm, *Ike-isi*, a mystical means directed towards the extension of earthly life. With the charm Onwutuebe buried in an earthen-pot in his yam barn, he is enabled to defy death seven times by swapping his life with that of his sons or male kith and this he has achieved by swapping the lives of his five male children. His indulgence in earthly pleasures which is the motive behind his mystic action becomes his dilemma as death resurfaces again. Since he is responsible for the death of his five sons, through swapping of their lives, Onwutuebe's life hangs between the living and the dead; a situation that is worse than death. To remedy the situation, his family would have to discover the charm, exhume and destroy it or use mediumship to help him confess his crime. But Onwutuebe's daughter Kelechi, would only be delivered of her child if a male relative from his immediate bloodline steps into the *Ese*-drum to confess and redeem him. But because of the inheritance philosophy of the Igbo, Onwudinulo connives with Diegwu, manipulates Nwannediya, to lure Gilbert, Onwutuebe's brother to play the substitute and confess on his brother's behalf, unknowing to Gilbert and Nwannediya, Gilbert becomes the sacrificial lamb that will redeem Onwutuebe while Onwudinulo inherits their property. To achieve this, Onwudinulo convincingly explains to Nwannediya that if Gilbert dances to the *Ese*-drum that the hidden charm will be discovered and Kelechi will be delivered of her child but the intent to kill Gilbert is hidden from her. However, Gilbert, a musicologist has returned from Europe with Gwendolyn his wife, a medical doctor. Onwudinulo promises to teach Gilbert the intricacies of African drums;

that he will train him to master the art of understanding the *Ese*-drum. Elatedly, Gilbert steps onto the potent *Ese*-drum, possessed, he confesses Onwutuebe's crimes; Onwutuebe and Gilbert dies. Onwudinulo's joy is caught short as both deaths liberate Kelechi from an over-due and agonizing pregnancy as she is delivered of a son who will continue the bloodline of Onwutuebe. Gwendolyn, Gilbert's widow avenges her husband's death as she aims her pistol at Onwudinulo.

Irobi's recourse to the mythological parable of a protective charm which in Ngwa cosmology is called *Ike-isi* is the playwright's medium to confront contemporary reality. The charm's efficacy defies death seven times with the swapping of the head of the male children or a male bloodline relation. In Phase One titled: *What a Beautiful Coffin*, the setting displays a signboard which reads: *ONWUSOAMAONYE EXPERT IN COFFINS AND COTS YOU CAN BOOK IN ADVANCE*. The signboard points to the direction of the play. The playwright's stage direction states that:

The carpenter is smoothening a piece of wood laboriously with his plane. On his right is a baby cot painted green. Beside the cot is a toddler's three-wheel cart. On his right, a finished coffin, painted red, gaudily decorated with a gold-coloured wreath inscribed "REST IN PEACE" is covered with a transparent polytene...(*FronDED, I*)

Death is much more contemplated here than life, the cot, the three-wheel cart, are symbolic of life in its green and fresh state, and red as the colour of the coffin signifies ebbing of life, the danger and fear that surrounds death. This fear is highlighted in the discussion between Okwu and Uka, the apprentices of the witch doctor Ikenga, in the following lines:

Okwu: I wish I had a choice...

Uka: But we have no choice...

Okwu: Except to run this errand of death?

Uka: Who says it is an errand of death?

Okwu: Don't you know what it is to unearth a charm buried years and years before you were born?

Uka: But our master said that it is an ordinary pot of medicine.

Okwu: Ordinary? Ordinary indeed what is in it?

Uka: I don't know.

Okwu: A man's head. An old man's head. The man buried his head in an earthen pot in his yam barn.

Uka: Why?

Okwu: You can go and ask the man himself. (*FronDED*, 1-2)

Okwu's revelation of how Onwutuebe insulated himself against death shows that the parable which Irobi appropriates here is a myth deeply rooted in the Igbo cosmological worldview. The playwright uses this familiar element for metaphorical treatment of Sit-tightism in Nigeria.

The Colour of Rusting Gold

The Colour of Rusting Gold is an evocative drama that re-visits the Igbo pantheon of gods, the meta-realm as well as the sociological function of the diviner-herbalist. Otagburuagu a principled Dibia, is the protagonist and can be likened to Ezeulu in Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, he bears the burden of the community and mortifies himself for their propitiation. Otagburuagu is a revered native doctor. His mystic disposition as half-man half-spirit in the play is juxtaposed with the ailing society. Thus, the protagonist's ideals are in conflict with the moral decadence and depravity of humans in the likes of Ogidi- the apprentice who accepts bribe thereby perpetrate injustice, Nanimgaebi- a corrupt politician, Nnenna- an expectant mother, Orikanjonuchichi- the mad patient. So when Otagburuagu refuses to grant Nanimgaebi's request to eliminate his political opponent; Ezenwoke, Nanimgaebi attacks Otagburuagu's moral stance; reminding him that four years ago, he had removed Nketa's seven months formed fetus to save her life. This puts a question mark on Otagburuagu's moral philosophy and values. Even when Otagburuagu argues that his actions were based on people's plea to save the woman's life, Nanimgaebi insists that Otagburuagu had crossed that line and therefore cannot deny him his request, and so he is guilty. Angered by this, Otagburuagu accepts his guilt thereby allowing Nanimgaebi to take the suicidal oath that leads to his death and consequently Otagburuagu's madness as he finds himself in a dangerous corner and the Dibia's guild strips him off all sacred rights of a Dibia.

Esiaba Irobi's *The Colour of Rusting Gold* is a drama that situates between the secular and the meta-realm. Here, Irobi objectively treats the meta-realm with a dramatic technique of distancing and alienation. Powerful and evocative, the play is enshrouded in the African Traditional Religion, especially of the Igbo. Otagburuagu, a *Dibia*, a custodian of the people's religion and culture with strong philosophical and moral value system, is typified by the playwright inter alia:

Otagburuagu: (to Nanimgaebi) yes, my son, I have a name that resounds, Otagburuagu! (to audience) first and foremost I am a medicine-man: A man called to the service

of the gods. A man who lives in the spirit world; a man who bridges the gap between the shrine of spirits and the mud-walled world of men. A man whom the spirits he serves have decreed that he must not marry (pause). There are many men who have children but will never have names...with bare fingers I bring out the yolk of the moon before it hardens in the throat of men...Go and ask questions...How many barren wombs have I given children?...How many impotent genitals have I resurrected how many harvests that would have been ruined have I saved by making rain...(Colour 49)

The cosmological worldview of the Ngwa people is that the *Dibia* is the conscience of the people, the custodian of their religious tradition. But in the world of the play, Otagburuagu is human, besieged by the needs and desires of his client; his is in a tempting situation. Nanimgaebi's visit to Otagburuagu's shrine has favoured him in the past but Nnenna's account of him shows that:

Nnenna: Nanimgaebi started as a motor mechanic. Then people gossiped that he was an armed robber, that he bought stolen vehicles. Myself I never saw him, I only know he sold pistols. He sold one to my husband at nine-hundred naira. A revolver, twelve rounds...Then he gave us money to vote for him...He thinks he can brush me aside and go to see the *dibia* before me. (Colour 43).

Nanimgaebi's desire to run for another term is greeted with indifference. This, as reflected in *Nwokedi*, and *The Fronded Circle*, is an attempt at self-perpetuity. This theme is seemingly present in Irobi's dramaturgy. Even though the people are poor, they know the difference; hence the dialogues between the following characters reveal that the people know who cheats them:

Nnenna: We voted him in. if he gives us money again this voting season we will also vote him in. what do I do with a piece of paper that is not a receipt, that is not a land agreement, that is not a common certificate...I throw it into that coffin they call a ballot box. That is what I do.

Oriakanjonuchichi: Okay, this voting season you will use the bullet and not the ballot...I think you un'stand!...Now let us go over to this historical monstrosity, this

anthropological specimen, this political groundnut, sorry juggernaut called Nanimgaebi...Honourable Nanimgaebi (Nanimgaebi walks in sodden from crown to toe, dripping with water) Talk of the devil...(Colours, 44)

Irobi's grouse here ranges from the sick society, the parasitic leadership, the value system and the integrity of the healer (Otagburuagu). He revalidates the traditional ideals through language, indigenous elements and proverbs laced with traditional wisdom and aphorisms as evident in these lines:

Nanimgaebi: If a fight will make you more sensible.

Otagburuagu: (keeps the bowl) it is like a dog barking at a tiger. Yes, like a chick defying a kite. It is like a goat bleating threats at a lion. Tell me Nanimgaebi...how many hunters celebrate their first yams with the meat of a tiger...Tell me (stands charged)

Nanimgaebi: (cowed) Is that why the aged trap should blind its eyes to the hooves of antelopes and yawn for the legs of men.

Otagburuagu: (poking a finger) Mind your words before venom flows into my fangs. (*Colour*, 46)

The committed playwright is one who displays the socio-political wares of his society unabashed. Thus, Esiaba Irobi here comments on the greed, insatiability and evil mindedness of those we elect into political offices, and how they twist the hands of traditional institutions as well as the figureheads. As for Nanimgaebi, his selfish desire outweighs any moral value that Otagburuagu stands for; hence he attacks Otagburuagu's moral integrity, blackmails him in order to force him go against his ethics by engaging Otagburuagu in an argument:

Otagburuagu: You have tried your best but it is not good enough... What you are trying to make me do is taboo to medicine-men. It weakens the potency of herbs. It drives away the spirits, then saps the strength...

Nanimgaebi: Okay, do it for me as a father. This is only a gift.

Otagburuagu:...The stream can never flow backwards...have you ever seen gold rust?

Nanimgaebi: Yes.

Otagburuagu: What is the colour of rusting gold?

Nanimgaebi: It is red. Bloody.

Otagburuagu: Where did you see gold rust?

Nanimgaebi: Here.

Otagburuagu: When?

Nanimgaebi: Four years ago when I brought Nketa here. She was pregnant. Those stupid medical doctors had complicated her case. It was her seventh month of pregnancy. You, Otagburuagu, removed the fully formed foetus

Otagburuagu: Remember, I did not do it out of my own will. People persuaded me.

Nanimgaebi: But what matters is that you did it. You killed him.

Otagburuagu: (stands) No. What matters is that I did not put a deaf ear to the voices of so many. Only an insane man would do that.

Nanimgaebi: But gold rusted, you killed him (*Colour*, 51)

Esiaba Irobi points out here that Otagburuagu's relationship with Nanimgaebi is in the first place faulty because "a man who meddles with spirits must not mess up with men. For men are a neat mess on the surface of this earth where the spirits sit when they visit us" (*Colour* 27), it becomes a personal moral failure since he considers the people's weal against the injunction of the god. Otagburuagu is an example of those in revered positions and their flirtations with politicians. This is why Nanimgaebi appraises the Dibia's moral stance. This 'foetus' is symbolic of the General Ibrahim Babangida's Structural Adjustment Programme, which became futile and aggravated the sufferings of Nigerians. The removal of the foetus symbolizes its futility, and on the other hand symbolic and futuristic.

Cosmological Aesthetics- An Inward Look

Esiaba Irobi volitionally mirrors in his dramaturgy the background from which he is writing. This he does through characterization, images, cultural depiction or by mentioning the exact locale. This demonstrates his mastery of the culture as he emphasizes aspects of it. Perhaps his intentions are not far from satirizing or promoting some aspects of that culture for its improvement, glocalization and or preservation. His deep knowledge of Igbo culture enriches the playwright with ideas of how to appropriate local elements, events or art-forms into dramatic

parables. *The Fronded Circle* demonstrates the playwright's ability to transform the Igbo life-swapping ritual from the point of the sacred to the secular.

The cosmological aesthetics used as dramatic metaphor and techniques in *The Fronded Circle* are the concepts of death and *Ese*-drum. These are encoded in the two deaths; Onwutuebe and Gilbert, and the theatrical elements and techniques employed by the playwright to achieve optimism. In the Igbo cosmology male children are mostly desired because it assures the continuity of the lineage, Irobi achieves a revolutionary measure against man's greed, man's inhumanity to his family and by extension the society. The play typifies the danger of a system that ruins the lives of those under it. It demonstrates how man strangles the future as exemplified in the poignant pregnancy of Kelechi and in the *Ike-isi* which Onwutuebe has indulged in. This unholy desire of Onwutuebe to live forever is analogous to the desire of those in authority to rule for ever. And by so doing, they strangle the destinies of many. Those around Onwutuebe suffer this injustice of *Ike-isi*, just like the masses are the ones that bear the burden of bad governance. The absent protagonist of this play is Death and the playwright uses it as permanence, a natural order that wants to take its course. Thus in defying death, Onwutuebe destroys a natural order. It illustrates that *Sit-tightism* is a destruction of an order in a nation's polity. This attempt at revolutionizing the status quo becomes the springboard for multi-dimensional experimentations in the play as an approach to destroy Onwutuebe's protective charm, by extension; the playwright destroys the system that strangles the citizens. Irobi borrows from the Ngwa philosophy of *Ike-isi* as illustrative of the parable of a despot and suggests an alternative using the aesthetics of the *Ese*-drum. Hence he presents a local problem and resolves it locally. By implication, he demonstrates that to achieve peace in a war situation, there must be casualties.

Ritual is one of the cosmological aesthetics employed in *The Fronded Circle*. Through the implication of Songs, dance, prayers, chants, incantations, repetition, gin, corpse, white cock, coffin, cot, and articles of ritual such as eggs and effigy, *Ese*-drum becomes the theatrical aesthetics and vehicle of instruction. The *Ese* dance in Ngwa cosmology, is not for the youths. It is called *Itu aka Ese*. According to Ngwa cosmology, *Ese* is used to celebrate the death of an old man who has also died well, and anyone who steps onto the potent *Ese* drum must have performed his father's second burial or is not lacking in any of the rituals associated with the *Ese*. From the ritual, we see the effects of the *Ese* drum on Gilbert whose discordant steps reveal that the dance is a strange one, and that he too is a stranger in this line of music. The secret of the ritual is hidden from him, yet its potency is assured. Because Gilbert has not performed his father's second-

burial, he is not qualified to dance to the *Ese* drum, and knowing this well, Onwudinulo “raised his right foot as he whispers” (*FronDED* 62) so that the efficacy of the ritual will not bounce back on him. The playwright here provides reasons why the masses suffer under a tyrannical government. First, it is because of their ignorance as exemplified in Gilbert. Again the playwright is insightful through the character of Onwudinulo whose motive though not right, can be harnessed to oust bad governance; it notes that though Gilbert has acquired western knowledge, yet it did not provide him with requisite know-how of how to handle African problems.

Also, in *The Colour of Rusting Gold*, the aesthetics focus on the suicidal oath-taking of Nanimgaebi. In Igbo cosmology, specifically in Ngwa cosmology, oaths are taken seriously. Originally, it was a means of detecting if one is telling the truth, because the moment an oath is taken with *Ofo l’ Ogu*, or the Ihi-njoku, the person is watched within specified number of days, months or even a year. It is believed that if after the stipulated period of time and nothing happens to that person, then the person is not guilty. Nanimgaebi pressures Otagburuagu to eliminate his political opponent; Ezenwoke, and the Dibia’s refusal is because he is aware of the consequences that will occur. Otagburuagu says to Nanimgaebi “what you are trying to make me do is taboo to medicine-men. It weakens the potency of herbs. It drives away the spirits, then saps the strength...” (*Colour* 51). But, blinded by greed and fury Nanimgaebi accuses Otagburuagu of shedding blood. In defense of his action, Otagburuagu replies to this blackmail saying:

Otagburuagu: Nanimgaebi, why? You have ruled for four years. Why not allow him rule...?

Nanimgaebi: After all what he has done to me? He has desecrated my name. You must eliminate Ezenwoke tonight...before he ruins me totally.

Otagburuagu: Then, you must swear.

Nanimgaebi: I am ready to swear

Otagburuagu: that in one way or the other Ezenwoke has tried to kill you; otherwise the whole thing will not work.

Nanimgaebi: Yes, I will. (*Colours* 52)



Figure 3: Ofo Dibia in Ngwa Cosmology

As it is customary with Ngwa tradition, a good Dibia will always base his judgments on *Ofo l' Ogu*- the symbol of justice, or with any of the gods among the pantheon in Ngwa cosmology.

The unfamiliar treatment of oath-taking is adapted here by Irobi manipulatively to achieve both aesthetics and ideological effect. Nanimgaebi's death in exchange for Ezenwoke's life is a revolutionary twist because Ezenwoke is a promising future and will restore what Nanimgaebi has destroyed. Also the ritual of the removal of a poignant pregnancy is another of Irobi's dramatic scheme symbolically to reveal the state of Nigeria. An insight will suffice here:

Otagburuagu: ...that girl would have died. She was panting to death, and bleeding too. You all besieged me and pelted me with all the please... one of the women you invited to beg said I should remove the child and save the life of the mother instead of watching two souls die. What could I do. I placed the root, she crossed it and in that cluster of plantain trees she ejected it. You were the midwife Nanimgaebi, why do you now turn to accuse me?
(*Colour 2*)

The symbolic essence of a dying mother and child and the fact that only one will survive is analogous of saving Nigeria from itself. In Igbo cosmology, a situation of this nature always favour the mother who is believed will conceive again. Whereby the child survives at the expense of the mother, it becomes a tragedy. This cosmological viewpoint appropriated by Irobi is prophetic, being that the

threatened pregnancy is Nanimgaebi and all that he stands for while the mother that survived is Ezenwoke; the future and hope of the nation. The ritual of oath-taking validates the Igbo belief in Ahiajoku (Ihi-njoku) as a just god. Its appropriation in this play is used to direct attention on the moral implications and the conduct required of a Dibia or a cultural/religious custodian; the chief priest, and by extension the Christian Priests and Pastors, to make a distinction from politicians and corruption because they are contagions that destroy the society.

Conclusion

Through the cosmological aesthetics appropriated in both plays, the playwright is able to achieve social change. His argument therefore is that local problems are solved with local paradigms. The *FronDED Circle* demonstrates the playwright's ability to transform the Igbo life-swapping ritual from the point of the sacred to the secular. This Igbo life-swapping ritual is the playwright's window into the rot, greed, and corruption that bedevils Nigeria. One of the irrationalities of life as shown in *Onwutuebe* is the attempt at self-perpetuity on earth. This negates the Ngwa cosmological world view on the essence of life, which Nwannediya explains "That a man should let his seeds sprout after him. To live after him so that the world can go on" (43). *Onwutuebe's* greed, love of life and earthly pleasure blinds him not to recognize the Igbo philosophy of family and the need for the children to project into the future and achieve greater feats than their parents. Also, in *The Colour of Rusting Gold*, the playwright's character Cues reveal that Nanimgaebi is translated to mean 'I will live alone'. He is a politician whose background informs us that he was involved in armed robbery, selling of guns and stolen vehicles. Irobi appropriates Oath-taking as a device for validation and elimination thereby resolving the problem in the play using local means. The playwright typifies this character as a metaphor for Nigeria politicians. Again, the playwright re-emphasizes that local problems are solved with local means through Nwannediya's action (*The FronDED*) as she tries approaching it through the modern way by begging Gilbert to "tell her to go and give *Onwutuebe* an injection that will make him talk" (*Colours*, 22), and this did not work because it is not possible to use alien means to resolve indigenous problems. Esiaba Irobi's recourse to our folk ways or what the Germans call *folkgeist* as paradigm, remains a viable means of glocalization.

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