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Drama, Ideology and Social Praxis: Re-Evaluating the Socio-Political Function of Playwrights in Selected Plays

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Abstract

This study examines the connection of drama, ideology, and social praxis by evaluating the socio-political roles playwrights undertake in selected African plays. Sampling by Tewfik Al-Hakim's *Fate of a Cockroach*, Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Micere Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, and Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*, the paper studies how plays function as ideological vehicles that reflect, assess, and restructure lived social realities. In the thematic concerns, characterization, and dramaturgical techniques, the paper explores how the playwrights capture the social realities of the African space. In the plays, oppression, corruption, class struggle, collective resistance, and the quest for liberation are given attention. Al-Hakim employs allegory to expose the incongruities of leadership in the society; Osofisan challenges authoritarianism and mobilize communal agency by employing satire; Ngũgĩ and Mugo in their dramaturgy awaken the people's revolutionary consciousness and anti-colonial awareness; Rotimi in his artistry emphasizes resilience and empowerment as collective goals for the marginalized people. New Historicism theory propounded by Stephen Greenblatt will be applied to buttress the texts within the

cultural, social, and political contexts in which they were written and read. New Historicism argues that literature cannot be isolated from its historical period and this forms the ideological leaning of this study. The methodology shall be qualitative literary analysis using the tools of New Historicism. One of the key findings of this study is that African dramatists operate not merely as artists but as cultural, historical and ideological teachers. Also, literary texts can only bring out their comprehensive meaning if they are studied within their historical, cultural and social frameworks. The study recommends that dramatists continue to engage drama as a platform for social transformation. Academics are encouraged to see literary works as tools for developments rather than mere works of art.
Keywords: Historicism, praxis, ideology, playwrights, cultural, transformation

Introduction

Drama as a genre of literature is an effective medium of representing life. Playwrights write drama to capture priceless moments: the vagaries of life. These are literary artists whose major preoccupation is the reflection and representation of life either on stage to be watched or in a text to be read. Most times, the playwrights do this through the medium of satire. Theresa Njoku and Ngozi Okezie define satire as a "literary technique, which blends a critical attitude with humour and wit so that human institution and humanity may be improved". As a major dramatic technique, playwrights explore and employ it to examine human conditions. They do this by summoning man to laugh at himself, the playwrights ridicule the follies and failings in human society. Thus, by laughing at himself, man comes to terms with the demands of his existence and possibly adjusts to a new and better life.

The relevance of satire as a major dramatic technique at the disposal of playwrights in using dramatic pieces as veritable

weapon of mass revolt and change agent cannot be over stressed. Ngugi validates this when he states that;

> Satire takes for its province, a whole society and for its purpose, criticism. The satirist sets himself certain standards and criticizes society when and where it departs from these norms. He invites us to assume his standard and share the moral failings. He corrects, pours derision and ridicule on society's failing… [11]

Satire has been effectively used throughout ages in major dramatic pieces to make critical commentaries on various aspects of human society. Beyond this, it has been used as a weapon of mass mobilization against oppressive systems, anti-people laws, inhuman conditions etc. George Orwell made effective use of this in *Animal Farm*, to depict the hypocrisy of the Russian Socialist revolution. *Soyinka in A Dance of the Forest* takes a critical look at the new Nigerian nation and prophesies the doom awaiting the nation. In *Hope of the Living Dead*, Ola Rotimi makes a dramatic historical reconstruction of the lepers' rebellion in Nigeria in the years 1928-1932. In all these, drama was used as a powerful means of engaging the people towards the search for a new social order.
For the purpose of this study, we will use Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen,* Ngugi and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and Tewfik Al-Hakim's *Fate of a Cockroach* and Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead.*

The use of drama to make critical commentaries capable of arousing social consciousness in the people falls in line with the admonition of Achebe to African writers in whatever genre to put their writing to the service of their society. He warns that:

> The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front. For he is after all as Ezekiel Mphalele

> says in his African Image - the sensitive point in his community...(105).

Over the years, the function African drama plays in the society has long been challenged and as a result it has been caught between the desire for mere entertainment and the imperatives of socio-political praxis. African dramatists often struggle to strike a balance between artistic creativity and sociological commitment, particularly in contexts where censorship and authoritarian structures suppress radical voices.

The tension experienced by writers is further complicated by the huge gap between authorial intention and audience reception, which raises questions about the actual impact of literary texts. Some plays, while rich in societal and cultural expressions, remain ideologically ambivalent, thereby restraining their potential as vehicles of social change. Another problem writers face which necessitated this study is the dilemma of choosing between inactive reflection of societal realities and active radical engagement.

New Historicism Theory

This study seeks to re-evaluate the socio-political function of selected African plays through the lens of New Historicism, interrogating how ideology and dramatic form intersect within specific historical and cultural contexts. The central problem lies in determining whether these texts genuinely operate as agents of liberation or merely serve as reactionary commentaries. By situating drama within its historical moment and ideological framework, the research aims to revitalize understanding of drama as a practical tool of social praxis and political transformation.

While commenting on the playwright and his creative energy within the context of New Historicism, Stephen Greenblatt submits thus: “The agents of exchange may appear to be individuals (most often, an isolated artist is imagined in relation to a faceless, amorphous entity designated society or culture), but individuals are

themselves the products of collective exchange" (12). To further buttress this is to add that just as individuals are products of collective exchange, the produced plays find their meaning most prominently within the context of their historical, cultural, social and political spaces. The meaning of texts cannot be extracted in isolation. This is the thrust of New Historicism theory.

New Historicism points to the fact that acts are usually projected from cultural and historical roots. Lending his voice to the ongoing debate, Aram H. Veeser's edited piece of work captures it more succinctly: "Every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices" (xi). Isolating a drama text from its environmental influences is like separating the writer from his writing. Plays and their messages generally inter-depend on the dynamics of the socio-political space within which the playwright operates from. This is further evident in all the plays selected for this study. Clearly speaking, the playwrights have been seen to be responsive to their material society through their writings. What they churn out seems to be a part of their experience, worldview or daily reality.

The playwright, like other literary writers and artists, are special members of their societies who are interested in engaging the socio-political actors in their societies for the progress of the society. The writer envisions a good society of his dream then uses his creativity as a tool for its actualization. This is why Chinua Achebe in his seminal work titled "The Novelist as a Teacher" presented the writer as not just an entertainer but an educator or transmitter of knowledge. Anaza Ohida in his 2018 master's dissertation entitled: "New Historicism and Contemporary Nigerian Drama: A Study of Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* and Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*" used New Historicism theory to show that there is a reciprocal relationship between literature and history.

Femi Osofisan's *Aringindin and the Night Watchmen*

This is the dramatization of the political culture in the African continent in general and Nigeria in particular. In this play, Osofisan depicts the disillusionment of Africans on the inability of the political leadership to provide effective leadership. The play aptly illustrates how dictatorship is often imposed on the people. The playwright demonstrates that the institution of terror is put in place in Africa because a good number of politicians will rather prefer the military to take over than losing power to their political opponents. This is why New Historicism comes in handy in the interpretation of this text. Maladministration and other corrupt tendencies are institutionalized thereby allowing perfidy to fester unabated.

The playwright through apt characterization succeeds in presenting a mental picture of how the civilian populace working in active collaborations with the political class institutes a regime of terror in their search for an imaginary messiah. Here, Osofisan exposes the manipulation of the masses by the elite political class. He makes his mission statement in the preface to the play thus;

> The intention, let me say, is merely to expose what I consider to be the usual process by which fascism is allowed to breed in our countries particularly in the so-called third world. Whenever the people faced with a crisis choose to leave the solution to a messiah (or a group of messiahs) in whom they then expediently entrust all kinds of extra ordinary power-including first and foremost, that of detention... Democracy becomes the first casualty (3).

The above assertion underscores the fact that the playwright like town criers, are saddled with the duty to alert their societies on any threat to their survival. In doing this, they make effective use of humour, sometimes caustic ones to awaken the societies and mobilize them to rise against such threats.

Osofisan's choice of characters in this play is as effective as it is instructive. Such characters like Boala, Kansilor, Aringindin, Ayinde and Yobi play representative roles in the play. They represent various aspects of human society. Osofisan's voice of vision is given expression through Baale when he states;

> Freedom, Abadegesin and you others! Freedom is a precarious thing. Think of this town as body with arms and feet, a marrow of inherited customs, the law, her flesh orchestrated, she runs like a song, harmoniously and our lives are oil in her wheel of motion... but this freedom is a most fragile thing! Once you agree to ration it, once it tears, even a little, a whole generation or perhaps more, may need to spill blood to sew it together again…(15).

What the playwright points out here is that freedom under a democratic government is sacred and as a result, should not be violated by the "crazy" search for a messiah who always turns up to be a mirage. He warns on the dangers inherent in the trading off of freedom, which he says could be destructive. While using Aringindin's intrigues and manipulation to portray the end result of these much-sought messiahs, he, Osofisan, addresses the issue of corruption under the military. He identifies corruption of power as the greatest bane of military rulership. Aringindin again, is used to present the face of the military messiah the self-acclaimed corrective leader who in the quest to perpetuate him in power creates his own codes of morality (decrees) without recourse to constitutional order of the society. These messiahs are those who see themselves as the state and hence, every pronouncement from them must carry the force of law.

To the playwright, these messiahs can go to any level to hoodwink the people in order to justify their stay in power. The playwright illustrates this through Aringindin's organization of the fake robbery, which he used to deceive the gullible masses, justify his intrusion into power and do away with perceived opponents. This

was the case in Nigeria in 1966, 1985 and 1993 when phantom reasons were given to justify military overthrow of democratic governments. Osofisan condemns the attitude of the masses as the cheerleaders of the military. He points out that this only gives rise to the unleashing of series of state sponsored terrorism on the critical press, civil rights leaders, labour leaders etc. Osofisan expresses the strong view that in spite of any laudable achievement the military claims, the masses are always worse off. He uses the character Ayide to stress this;

> Aringindin is our hero; he has made our nights safe, chased away the robbers who would steal even our dreams! But what is the price we pay for the safety? Answer me! We sleep safely, but everywhere Aringindin's decrees surround us like iron fences (16).

Not only are the people denied of their freedom, they are also exploited. The military always have their strategies of dealing with the people as the playwright states through another character, Oluode; 'It's all laid out! There will be roadblocks on the major highways and around the markets! And detention centres! (18).

In spite of this ugly trend, Osofisan as a reformist playwright preaches hope. He uses his art to sensitize the people on the evils of military dictatorship. He sees the promise of a better world by the military as a poisoned chalice. He uses the play to galvanize the people to action against the oppressive system, the unjust laws, the economic exploitations, social degradation and dehumanization of their values. This is a clarion call, a sermon on the mount for the masses to rise with unity of purpose to chase away the vampires and wolves in sheep clothes who have devoured the collective dreams of the purpose for a better and greater society. He makes this call through Yobi;

> …Our people will be awake. They will stop calling so helplessly for messiah. They will be ready, everyone, to assume responsibility for their lives. And then, true democracy will come (20).

Ngugi and Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*

The play is a dramatic historical reconstruction of the Mau Mau struggle against the oppressive and exploitative white colonial rule in Kenya. The choice of Dedan Kimathi by the playwrights, we should note, is both symbolic and functional. For the most part, Kimathi represents the fighting spirit, nationalism and heroism of the Kenyan people. Kimathi is the face of the Mau mau freedom fighters that identified with the plight of the suffering, exploited, deprived and despise downtrodden Kenyans. Again, the choice of Kimathi is instructive. It captures the mood of pride, optimism and resolve of Kenyan Africans to take their destiny into their own hands. Also, the play is a bold attempt by the playwrights to tell the story of Kimathi as a noble, proud and visionary African nationalist against his portrayal as a bloodthirsty beast by the white colonialists.

The Trial of Dedan Kimathi celebrates the African nationalism, unity of purpose and struggle against the oppressors. It validates the African communal spirit, drive and vision. As a historical reconstruction, it serves as a serious means of mobilization of Africans against the agents of suppression, the butchers and the beasts that continue to stagnate the African peoples' march to greatness. The success of the play lies in the trial of the quintessential African hero in the open court of the oppressors and his heroic defence of his people's struggle and the morality of their actions.

Again, it offers Kimathi the opportunity to interrogate the colonial oppressors and their African collaborators. Furthermore, it is a play in which the playwrights succeeded in summoning the past to the attention of the present and future by reminding Africans of the need to interrogate the sense of duty and humanity of those in authority. The high tempo of the play that leads to a violent end, points to its dynamic force of events. The stylistic use of native songs of protest that rally and inspire unity among the African

people becomes an indictment of the colonial powers and their African agents on one hand and on the other, the playwrights' means of calling for unity among the oppressed Africans, the courage to reject injustice and fight (even with great violence) to overthrow an oppressive and exploitative system. This is a call for a fight to ensure a social rebirth.

As we have earlier stated in this paper, in the play, we see the symbolic trial of Kimathi, which indicatively, is a conflict between the Kenyan peasantry and colonial lords backed by few native bourgeois. The intensity of anger, rejection of subjugation and violence by Kimathi and his Mau Mau group again, underscores the resolve of the common people not to sit back in resignation to fate but to challenge, confront and dismantle the institutionalized structure and cycle of oppression and exploitation.

The playwrights, by placing their art at the service of their society and by consciously celebrating the heroism of Kimathi in the struggle for Kenyan liberation from the grips of colonialism, no doubt, perform a great social function. It demonstrates commitment to the socio-cultural, political and economic needs of the people.

This demonstration of social commitment by writers in whatever genres of literature is an essential issue in the discussion of African literature. Uka sees commitment as not new because according to him:

> For the African it must mean, and go on meaning, political awareness. So acutely vital is the central place of politics that no self-respecting thinkers can ignore it. It must be an ever-present consciousness. Politics means the achievement of sovereignty for a people. A sovereign people are masters of their own destiny. Decisions that affect the very mode of their everyday living are not over their heads, or imported from foreign lands. The political system

> must be organically evolved from the people's culture rather than be derivatively bound to the apron strings of a foreign mentor (21).

From the above statement, one can appreciate the efforts of Ngugi and Mugo in using *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* means of galvanizing the people to continue to fight against repressive systems, anti-people laws and policies made to denigrate their humanity. This is noticeable in the language style assigned to Kimathi that is defiant. The African songs used by the playwrights carry the message of solidarity that is an important weapon of mass mobilization.

Equally is the playwrights' concern with the issue of unity between all the oppressed people in order to successfully overthrow the oppressive systems. This call was made through the characters of the woman, the boy and the girl. The stylistic device of not assigning names to these people is quite instructive. They are used in a generic sense to represent all the oppressed in the society. It is important to note that the initial quarrel between the boy and the girl represents the division among the oppressed that aids the oppressors. However, their eventual unity that leads to the handing of the breaded gun to Kimathi demonstrates the possibility of victory by the oppressed against the oppressor-provided that there is a unity of purpose.

The playwrights no doubt, conform to the idea of engagement in African literature. That is, using literature as instrument for the advancement of human values. Kane states;

> Engagement in the traditional literature is total, with the whole community taking part, and treating it as part of life in all its aspects. An initiation, this constitutes a mine of information, a repertory of precepts and crystal-clear evidence of what is permanent in African values and to insert him into his milieu. It is the expression of the wisdom and

> sense of beauty shown by the group and remains, with art, the best means of handing on its experience of life Its main objective is to help man find his real place in the world…(69).

In all respect therefore, the playwrights succeed in highlighting that Kimathi and his group are determined to see to the total fall and collapse of the oppressive system. In this struggle, everyone is ready to do the needful. This no doubt is a practical recommendation to all oppressed people to rise against all unjust system.

Tewfik Al-Hakim's *Fate of a Cockroach*

The play dramatizes man's natural quest for freedom, self-assertion and striving. The playwright makes symbolic and functional use of the cockroach to make powerful comments on the human condition. To him, freedom is not given by the oppressors but is attained through the relentlessness of the oppressed. This is symbolically and functionally portrayed through the cockroach's striving to climb out of the bathtub. The cockroach's constant climbing and falling represents the essence of the daily struggles of the oppressed and the exploited against the system that has held them hostage.

The play has three act divisions; Act one is sub-headed; 'The Cockroach King''. Here we see non-human characters; King Cockroach, Queen Cockroach, Minister, Savant, Priest and a Subject Cockroach that play roles depicting human conditions. This act dramatizes the constant quarrel between the king and Queen Cockroaches. The Queen Cockroach quarrels with the king cockroach over his sense of vanity and self-glorification. Beyond this, she questions the legitimacy and morality of King Cockroach's authority since he cannot use same to solve the problem of the ants that has continued to terrorize and kill the cockroach community. In his defence, King Cockroach reminds her that the problem of the ant is as old as time and as a result, he,

the King cannot be expected to do anything about it. The other officers of the state, the Minister, Savant and Priest are presented in rather comic ways. The Minister who is supposed to be the chief political adviser is portrayed as the harbinger of bad news, the Savant, as a bogus and pretentious intellectual while the Priest is presented as dubious and exploitative who feasts on people's gullibility and over reliance in religious ritual sacrifices.

The playwright by making use of these characters succeeded in exposing the realities of the human societies. The king cockroach can be likened to African political leaders who value the majesty of their office to service delivery to the people. Al-Hakim uses these funny characters to ridicule those in authority in the African continent for their lack of sense of vision, mission and values. Those who see their positions as means of self-enrichment hence they disconnect with the masses on whose auspices they climb to power. He condemns the perfidy of our political leaders, their deficiency in honour and service, but surplus in the betrayal of the common aspirations of the people.

The playwright's voice of vision and revolution is the Queen cockroach who consistently challenges the king cockroach to rise to the demands of his high office. To her, it is most unacceptable for those in political and other positions of authority to enjoy the benefits of their positions without correspondent service to the people. At all times therefore, the leaders must be held accountable for their stewardship. Al-Hakim condemns the connivance of the intelligentsia in the continued rape of the society. Thus, by offering nebulous advice to those in authority, the educated elites contribute in no small measure in the destruction of the society. Also, the clergies are not left out in this negation of the march to greatness.

The priest as a supposed man of God abandons his ecclesiastical callings in search for mundane materialism. He intentionally misinterprets and misinforms the people on God's messages and

injunctions. He constantly hoodwinks the people, asking and collecting material items on behalf of his god even when the people are traumatized, terrorized and bereft of hope.

The question therefore is, does God ordain the people's apparent resignation to fate, accepting their inhuman conditions? Al Hakim does not agree. As a playwright with humanistic philosophy, he decries the people's lack of unity of purpose and unity that destroyed their ability to fight back against their oppressors. This is portrayed through the nature of the cockroaches who cannot gather together like the ants to fight, even when they gathered, it is always around food and each goes his way thereafter.

To the playwright therefore, the people will continue to be oppressed and exploited unless they come together to fight with one mind and spirit. His is therefore a call for action for the people to wake up and rise against the oppressive system.

In act two and three, we see : "The Cockroach struggle and The Fate of The Cockroach". Here the playwright makes use of the cockroach character and Samia, a housewife, Adil, her husband, Cock and Doctor all human characters to further comment on man's quest for freedom. In these acts, we see like in act one, the quarrel between Samia and her husband Adil. The quarrel looks like a contest over who amongst the two is superior.

We see the subjugation of Adil by the wife. This in no small measure affected his state of psychology as he becomes withdrawn, blank and incoherent. The struggle of the cockroach in the bathtub creates a new awakening in him. As he watches the cockroach, he comes to terms with the essence of human life that he sees as a struggle against forces bent on holding one down. He is excited with the cockroach's struggle, his climbing up and falling down, up and down again. He sees the cockroach's struggle as his own struggle. His wife's hatred and attempt to kill the

cockroach arouses him a defiant stand. For once, he stands up to his wife insisting on the protection of the cockroach. He locks himself in the bathroom and refuses to open the door until the company's doctor comes. The doctors' understanding of the psychological effect the cockroach has on Adil calms things temporarily. As he makes the wife to show some measure of love and respect for Adil. This seems to restore his sanity. At the end, the doctor takes his leave, the cook wipes out the cockroach and the wife goes back to her own habit of terrorizing and traumatizing him. In total dejection, he exclaims; "Umm Attiya, bring the bucket and rag and wipe me out of existence!" (79).

The play is reflective of the human social condition. It mirrors the intensity of the conflict and struggle that characterized human existence. To the playwright, man must constantly strive and struggle to free himself from forces of evil that oppress and deny him of the opportunity to achieve his full potentials.

Ola Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*

The play enacts the heroic struggle of the lepers and their rebellion against an unjust system that threatens to deny them of a living space. In this play, the playwright dramatically reconstructs the collective struggles of those lepers who are considered as the social rejects that should neither be seen nor heard.

When in 1928-32 the colonial authority in Nigeria, acting on its whimsical ideas, came up with the forceful relocation of the lepers from their colony to another place. This is considered unacceptable by the lepers and as a result, hell was let loose. This fired and inspired Spartan resistance in the lepers. They did not sit down bemoaning their fate rather, they rose to the challenge questioning the morality, justifiability and humanity of the oppressive move.

The playwright demonstrates the values of collective bargaining aimed at shocking the oppressors and bringing them to their

kneels. The play celebrates the indomitable spirit of the lepers, their belief and confidence in self and their singularity of purpose. In spite of their physical disability the lepers showed great ability of mind, character, courage and willingness to fight and revolt against a system that denies them of their right to life.

The play revalidates the artistic mandate of the playwright as the conscience of his society, a town crier and social crusader. The play both in content, style and technique is a powerful trumpet of social mobilization of the down trodden to rise beyond their resignation to fate, reliance for help from any member of the oppressive class etc. The lepers' exemplary courage and determination serve as powerful lesson to all oppressed and exploited people to unite and revolt against all obnoxious systems.
The major dramatic style employed by the playwright in this play is songs. Through the use of native songs, which appealed to the sensibilities of the inmates, the lepers became aware of their collective sorrows, pride and humanity. These songs that are heroic narratives inspired Spartan will power in them as they faced their tormentors eyeball to eyeball. There are also in-fusions of Christian songs which act as supplication to the divine authority.

Another significant device used by the playwright is the local colour. In terms of names and language of the characters, one comes across a people who have endured years of suffering, suppression and neglect. Beyond this, the language of the characters is both defiant and revolutionary. Theirs is a language of vision, courage and victory. It is also a language of vigilance in spite of the seemingly victory. This is convoyed through one of the lead characters. Harcourt Whyte;

> Now we have won our freedom. But this is only the beginning of a new struggle. My people, from this day on, things will happen to us. Perhaps, rough things without gladness. But… together. To tackle them, we must stand together, children of our

> fathers. Not apart. The day children of the porcupine made bond to drift apart: one, going this way, a mouse, the other going that way, a bush rat, is the day both mouse and bush rat became food for cats. Together, then we move. If not for our own gains, then for the gains of our saplings to come. (111)

The above declaration sums it all. For freedom to be assured, the oppressed must never rest in their temporary victory. The struggle to keep the oppressors in check is therefore eternal. The playwright therefore calls on the masses to always remain alert to the course of freedom, as a minute of loss will embolden the oppressors.

The characterization in the play is apt. The playwright makes use of characters that represent all aspects of the society. The characters are drawn from all cultural background in the Nigerian society. Their language (sometimes in the native tongue) represents the language of the oppressed as well as the language of struggle. The characters represent the flotsam and jetsam of the society who are however, determined to re-define their lives for the better.

It is important to point out here that there exists a conspiracy between some people in the society and the oppressive class. The playwright demonstrates this through the protest of some people against the medical research of Dr Ferguson to find a cure for leprosy in the government hospital. This protest led to the attempt by the authorities to forcefully relocate the lepers. What the playwright seems to say here is that it takes the active collaboration of some people in the society for oppression and exploitation to strive in any human society. However, the society needs strong humanistic characters like Harcourt Whyte, Hannah, and Nweke etc. to dismantle the walls of unjust systems.

The playwright therefore uses the play to once more remind all oppressed people of the need to come together irrespective of

social differences to revolt and over throw all forms of degradations, unjust laws, policies and programmes that degrade humanity.

Conclusion

We have so far in this paper demonstrated the role of the playwright in the mobilization of the people against all forms of oppressive and exploitative systems. The playwrights have shown that to be relevant in their societies, they must address social issues which are important to the survival of the societies in which the found themselves. African playwrights are socially responsible artists who reflect their society in their works. The playwright is an agent of change who motivates citizens to act in response to anomalies in the society. Again, they have shown the capacity of the playwrights to mobilize and interrogate any and every unjust system. While decrying the decadence in the society, they offer hope through using representative characters to inspire the people to revolt and defeat all forms of oppressive systems, inhuman conditions, political intimidations, social degradations and economic exploitations. This is a major achievement and triumph in the spirit and tradition in which such plays are written. No play can be isolated entirely from the cultural, social, political and historical walls around it. To do so is to do a big disservice to the playwright and his effort, and by extension limit the impact of the play.

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