

Dramatic Theories and Criticism: Impetus for Creative Intellection

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Introduction

The coalescence of overriding, dominant ideas often begets theories. Theories are recurrence of perspective shifts or adjustments of ideational, ideological or conventional developments. These, in turns, shape reverberative critical thoughts, treatises and discourses. The relationship between theories and criticism, in this regard, is analogical to that between the existential imperative of the chicken and the egg, as to which comes first. This timeless and placeless controversy appears to underline their irreducible interdependence. In this regard, a theory, according to the new *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language*, (1995: 1025), is 'an organized body of facts relating to it ... sometimes entirely a result of exercising the speculative imagination.' Thus a theory is a body of knowledge ascribable to scientific or artistic or other disciplines. It can be derivable from a study and speculation peculiar to such disciplines. In other words, it is a general body of assumptions and principles guiding perceptions of reality to which it may give appropriate forms, structures, codifications, as a reliable guide to consistent practices, or paradigm shift.

Criticism, on the other hand, according to the same source (229), is the art of judging merit, a spoken or written judgment concerning some matter resting on opinion susceptible to censorious or faultfinding criteria. Criticism is a judgmental discipline, assessing the merits and demerits of a work of arts or other bodies or organized knowledge. It can be further classified into "Form Criticism," "Higher Criticism" "Lower Criticism" "Practical Criticism" or "Textual Criticism." Each of these is quite self-explanatory. Criticism is therefore not unfavourable comments or faultfinding, as often erroneously perceived, albeit its opinionatedness. Criticism should be based on informed opinion, systematized into a pattern of reasoning, thoughts and operable actions that can sustain conceivable practice worthy of inculcating humanistic knowledge, wisdom and disparate emotions that could enrich human lives.

Based on sound, formulated, knowledgeable opinion, deductible reasoning, provable or operable, abstract theories have over time fathered criticisms, which in turn can nourish /theories/. Theories and cohesive criticisms, collectively can shapen, sharpen and systematize practices towards rich, enriching and meaningful Communication. This principle depends on human co-existential conditionings and for edifying ideological or non-ideological structure and superstructure which are intricately linked. This base also includes the superstructure of human experiences.² On such foundations also depends the essence on which the dramatic, theatrical theories, criticisms and practices are derived for their general sustenance. In this regard, it can be stated that if culture, politics, economics, among other psycho-social dynamics are the sinews of critical theories, so-called, emotions of love, hate, ambitions, jealousy, envy, pity, fear, empathy, sympathy, among other humanistic passions are the blood and phlegm³ that stimulate them. On these elements of histrionic sensibilities, however, Aristotle has been quoted, Butcher (1948:xv), as asserting

tha, “Those who are influenced by pity or fear and every emotional nature, must have alike experience and others in so far as each is susceptible to such emotions, and all are in a manner purged and their souls lightened and delighted?”⁴

It is worthy of note here to remark on an important difference between scientific theories and aesthetic or artistic theories, in terms of their relative durability. In the words of Alan S. Downer (1965: xiii): “Science is a constantly unfolding or developing discipline while the principle of art are eternal.” He elaborates:

Surely there is no other instance in history – aside from religion – where the principles elucidated by one man, Aristotle have been tested and found to be unchanging truths by every succeeding generation. Don’t forget it was the Aristotelians who made possible the rebirth of the drama in Europe after the Dark Ages, and brought form and order out of the chaos of the seventeenth century French theatre.⁵

This assertion reminds us about Aristotle’s classic and timeless definition of Greek tragedy that has not only assumed a status of placeless definition of that genre or dramatic form, but has also become, seminally, influential guidelines for most playwrights from Aristotle through the Ages, including the Renaissance, and beyond; to Shakespeare, Brecht, Soyinka and Osofisan among others, overtly, covertly or subvertingly.⁶

Main Focus:

Our main focus in this paper is on, “dramatic theories and criticism, as impetus for creative intellection.” We are dwelling on a few theories, critical theories, criticisms, and associative movements in the theatre that have influenced and would continue to have significant impacts on theatre practices like playwriting and other theatrical endeavours. Our emphasis here is on emphasize the historical sketch or survey treatment. This include the classical, with Aristotle at the apex; the middle Ages, with St. Augustine as most controversial, leading on to the Renaissance – Italian and English phases – with their relative effects. Personalities, theorists and critics that made the Restoration, the Eighteen century, Early Romantic Tendencies, transiting to actual Romanticism would be highlighted; with, and including the unavoidable impacts of verses and other forms of poesy on the dramatic and theatrical.

Similarly, what can be called forms. The Expansive Nineteenth Century with its retrospective classical and introspective modernistic tendencies would be briefly profiled in their historical and developmental perspectives. Its American, European or continental equivalents also deserve considerable discourses, stressing especially the personalities, the ideas, circumstances and other tendencies that propelled, and nourished their theoretical, critical and creative endeavours (Holman:130-142).

The characteristics and influence of the well-made plays as formative backgrounds to the Ibsenist, realistic and Zolaist or Strindbergian naturalistic tendencies, vis-à-vis their impacts on anti-realistic school from which Bertolt Brecht and other Brechtians cut their influential sharp teeth, leading onto the Epic Theatre’s anti-Aristotelianism, and by implication, anti-Stanislawskianism, would be deservingly profiled, including all the

putative Marxist Praxis, and Scientific Age Theatre practice.

Developments such as theatrical concepts such as “The Theatre of Cruelty” developed by Antoni Artaud, in paradoxical theatrical revolt, from the surrealist, symbolist other tendencies of the psychoanalytic theories would include the reverberating reanalysis and reinterpretations of Shakespeare and other classic⁷. Remarkably too, the Theatre of the Absurd in terms of definition, practice and philosophical formulation, is endowed with rich and elevating theoretical and critical criteria that deserve close attention, here, too.

The African experiences in drama and theatre have also developed consistent philosophical, ideological and metaphysical paradigms, along historiographical chronology; especially from colonial, postcolonial, mythopoeic and Marxist coordinates of theoretical and critical frameworks. Expectedly, dramatic theories and criticism have kept pace with globalization, artistic impulses, stimulated by creative impetus and intellection, propelled by pos-modernist paradigms, socio-political, phenomenological, and psycho-social imperatives. As can be gleaned from the above sketch, the historically discursive approach to the review of the development of dramatic theories and criticism has become particularly inviting and irresistible.

Conceptually, the terms, theories and criticism have been adequately defined earlier. Another recurrent concept or term that needs to be defined; clarified, is critical theories which are really analyses or attempted analyses of a given theory. For instance, analyzing his famous definition of tragedy, Aristotle has to distinguish, among other aspects that, “Every Tragedy, therefore have six parts, which parts determine its quality”. He continues; naming the parts as:

Plot, characters, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Melody. Two of the parts constitute the medium of imitation, one the manner, and three the objects of imitation. .. every play contains spectacular elements as well as Character, Plot, Diction, Melody and Thought... (Aristotle *On Poetry and Music*, Trans. S.H. Butcher: pp.8 – 9)

This is a good example of critical theory, a step quite distinct from mere theory, formulated, and mere criticism as statement of value or appraisal, negatively or positively, objectively or subjectively. It has become acknowledged that Aristotle based his classic theory, criticism and analysis, on Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex* (*King Oedipus*), as his primary source. But it is known that this has become, undoubtedly, the standard to appraise, analyze and criticize the dramatic and theatrical worth of other Sophoclean dramas as well as those of other Greek tragedians, such as Aeschylus’ and Euripides plays, Agamemnon and *Hypolytus* among others, respectively contrasting with the concepts of comedy described as:

An imitation of an action that is ludicrous and imperfect of sufficient length, in embellished language, the several kinds... being separately found in the several parts of the play; directly presented... through narrative, through pleasure and laughter effecting the purgation of the like emotion.⁸

In contradistinction to the tragic catharsis, the definition concludes with a theory of

comic catharsis that: "It (comedy) has laughter for its mother", with laughter arising from diction (expression) and the content (*Dramatic Theory and Criticism*... pages 64 – 5). Here, even though the *Tractatus Coislinianus*" (c.4th – 2nd century B.C.) is credited to an anonymous writer, it bears all the theoretical or critical imprints of Aristotelian language and critical personality. It may not be theoretically farfetched to regard it as the putatively lost Aristotle's thoughts and theory of comedy. It has an unidentical twinship of Aristotle's classic definition, theories and criticism of a tragic play; using, perhaps any of the Aristophanic comedies as a primary source. It is important to compare and contrast the Longinus treatise on "On the Sublime" which is radically different from the *Poetics* in both content and spirit. Locating the sources of the sublime in great conceptions, noble passions and elevated diction, among other criteria, Longinus asserts that sublimity, height, and imagination; intimate companions to work that are eloquent and enthusiastic, must be clearly stately, and perhaps as elitist as classic tragedy. Similarly, in his very influential treatise, "Art of Poetry", Horace, while discussing types of poetry and of character, stresses the vitality of the Greek classical models, also emphasizing the essence of decorum, cautioning that the poet, dramatic or poetic, must stress both entertainment and instruction; a lesson quite well-imbibed by Brecht as recounted later in his theory of the learning/entertainment of Epic Theatre.

Middle Ages: With regard to Medievalism, as recounted by Sylvan Barnet et al (1962: 226), though the Christian church strongly opposed the Roman Theatre, and suppressed theatrical activities during the Dark Ages, in the Medieval period, also called the Middle Ages, the church in the 10th century, put up playlets in form of religious cycles on the birth, death, resurrection and other aspects of Christ's history of salvation, out of which its own dramatic theories and criticism developed. The medieval was less imaginatively and intellectually based than the eras before or after it. Holman (1976:131) puts it more roundly:

There was little interest in criticism in the Middle Ages. Much of what there was dealt perfunctorily with Latin versification, Rhetoric and Grammar. The ecclesiastical theologians who dominated intellectual life regarded literature as a servant of theology and philosophy, and there was consequently a reduced interest in imaginative literature.

Noteworthy, St. Augustine condemned poets because of their putative portrayal of the gods as vicious. In the words of Holman, his teachings contributed to the general distrust of literature on moral and religious grounds." This distrust persisted throughout the Middle Ages, into modern era. Heartily, happy to say, however, his attack on imaginative writing, according to Holman, produced replies, anticipating "Later critical attitudes and arguments".

It was not until after the end of the Middle Ages that the like of Italian Poet Dante arrived with a fresh breath of critical discourses reflective of the classical ideas on Decorum, Imitation and the nature of writing, dwelling on diction, sentence structure, style, versification and dialects. Interestingly, also, it was during the Middle Ages that theorists and critics such as Aelius Donatus (c.350) projected his ideas of Comedy and

Tragedy reflective of the classic; Robert Mannyng “On Handling Sin” (1303), as well as Giovanni Boccaccio (c.1365) among others, contributed theoretical and critical works which straddled both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Renaissance:

Consequently, with retrospective, insightful comments on Medieval theological aestheticism, the Italian Renaissance theorists and critics concerned themselves with varied topics, dwelling on “Poetry as a form of philosophy, and an imitation of life”. Here, the theorists and critics such as Robertelli, Daniello, Vida, Gherardi Cinthio, J.C. Scaliger, Castelvetro, among others, usefully articulated far-reaching theories of verisimilitude, of pleasurable instruction as the kernel of poetry, other theories of drama, especially of tragic hero as well as dramatic unities vis-à-vis the theories of epic poem were vigorously and rigorously debated. In the words of C. Hugh Holman (132), “The causes for the growth of classicism have been assigned to Humanism, Aristotelianism and Rationalism... with Platonism, Medievalism and Nationalism, acting as Romantic forces.”

It is significant to remark that these Renaissance impetus and intellections, so favourable toward classical learning, pulsated on the Italian theories and criticism of the sixteenth century, and that of the French in the 17th century, having lasting impacts on French neo-classical trends in the 18th century. Particularly impulsive and stimulating in terms of generating creative ideas, here, are the so called Horatian and Ciceronian rulings against mixing genres, in playwriting. Dukore’s comments that tragicomic trends had their precedents in classical playwrighting is instructive, “... Satyr plays, happy endings in some of Euripides, and serious elements in comedies of Terence... and loopholes in both Aristotle and Horace helped provide academic justification for the mixed genre, tragicomedy...”⁹

For us who feel no cultural shock, and feel that tragicomedy is a perfect reflection of life, exemplified by ample coexistence of disparate experiences, namely sadness and joy, the rich and the poor etc., one enriching the other, arguably, Guarini’s argument in the *Compendium of Tragicomic poetry* (1599) in Dukore (pp.150 – 155) that “tragicomedy is one of the two component genres spoiled by others”, and should justifiably be separate, distinct and legitimate genres”, sounds remote and untrue to human life which drama and theatre attempt to mirror realistically.¹⁰

Later Romanticism:

At this point, the need to jump over historical bursts of theoretical and critical decades such as English Renaissance, Restoration and Early Romantic periods for certain expediencies, appears excusable, and we do just that now, not because they did have nothing to offer us, but rather because they have much to offer mostly along the realms of poetry and the non-dramatic.

However, it is conceivable that the tendencies that preoccupy poets are also usually the same that do the dramatists or the novelists, for that matter. It is their moods and styles of expression and presentation that differ in the main. Generally, in the later nineteenth century, therefore, we find the Romantic tendencies still in vogue, with the theoretical principles of Realism and Impressionism engaging critical attention. Breakthroughs in natural science facilitated the progress of realistic and naturalistic tenets of criticism as the

impacts of heredity and environment; as a reaction against classicism and romanticism. Here, we have Historical Criticism, the attempt to theorize in the light of “the man and the milieu”, or environmental influences. Impressionism grew out of Romanticism just as Expressionism would grow out of Realism/Naturalism, as shall be seen later. As Holman (136-7) observes, even “though there were no real schools of critics, the tendency for criticism was away from the application of standards towards the use of impressionistic methods”.

Critical Elements:

M.H. Abrams has pointed out that all critical theories, no matter their languages, discriminate four criteria in “the total situation of a work of art”; that is, against “the kinds of criticism and the history of critical theory and practice, especially in terms of the dominance of one of these elements” (Holman:137). Abram’s analysis deserves elaborate quotation as profiled; the elements are, “The work... the thing made by the maker, the poem produced by the poet, the artifact created by the artificer; the universe, The ‘nature’ that is imitated if art is viewed as IMITATION, the materials of the real world or the world of ideal entities out of which the work may be thought to be its subject; the audience, the readers or spectators or listeners to whom the work is addressed.”

In a very guided descriptive tour de force, Abrams suggests the following, further: while the Mimetic Theory suggests that the critic views art fundamentally in terms of the Universe so imitated, the Pragmatic Theory is in question, if the artist or critic perceives art mostly in terms of its effect on the audience; on the other hand, if he perceives it as expressive of the maker, he is adopting the Expressive Theory or the Objective Theory, if the work is seen as a self-contained entity. According to Holman, a retrospective overview of the history of criticism in the light of the above stated theories reveals that, “The Mimetic Theory is characteristic of the criticism of the classical age, with Aristotle as its great expounder. Horace, however, introduced the idea of instruction with pleasure – utile et dulce – and thereby put the effect upon the audience in the center of his view of art.”

As Holman also asserts, from Horace through most of the eighteenth century, the pragmatic Theory was quite dominant, even though the Neo-Classic critics also revived a serious interest in Imitation. In the words of Abrams, “the Pragmatic view broadly conceived, has been the principal aesthetic attitude of the Western World.” Unquestionably, however, as rightly observed, criticism was quite confident of the imitative nature of art, throughout the eighteenth century; a perception still significantly so in this century. It is equally significant to note that the Expressive Theory most characteristic of the Romantic spirits emerged at the dawn of Romanticism. Paradoxically, it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century that the concept of the “Poem per se... written solely for the poem’s sake”, as Alan Poe stated, assumed currency, becoming dominant in the twentieth century. This appears to be the foundation stone for the so-called Art-for-Art’s-sake school of thoughts. Here, it is observed that form and structure, patterns of imagery and symbols, become the epicenter of the critic’s preoccupation, wherein he views the work of art as a separate entity or cosmos, independent of any extrinsic assessment; theoretically, a misguided and misleading concept, one may assert.

Dichotomies: Supplementing Abrams’ categorization of the major critical theories as Mimetic, Pragmatic, Expressive and Objective, discussed earlier, the following dichotomies

can be profiled.

Aristotelian Versus Platonic: Aristotelian implies a judicial, logical formal criticism, which tends to locate the value of the work within the work itself or inseparably linked with the work. Platonic, on the other hand, implies a moralistic, utilitarian view of art where the values of the work are to be found in the usefulness of art for other and nonartistic purposes. The Aristotelian – Platonic typology is really generally characterized as intrinsic – extrinsic dichotomy.

Relativistic Versus Absolutist Criticism: Here, the relativistic critic employs any or all systems which will aid him in reaching and elucidating the nature of a work of art. The absolutist critic, on the other hand, as an absolutist, proffers that there is one proper critical procedure or set of principles and no others should be applied to any critical task.

Theoretical Criticism Versus Applied or Practical Criticism: Theoretical Criticism often attempts to arrive at the general principles of art and also attempts to formulate inclusive and enduring aesthetic and critical tenets. Practical or Applied Criticism attempts to apply principles or standards enunciated to bear upon particular works of art.

Purpose-Oriented Criticism II: This subunit of criticism which attempts to justify one's work or to explain it and its underlying principles to an uncomprehending audience has its recorded exponents to include John Dryden, William Wordsworth and Henry James, a list that can arguably be extended to include our own WS (Wole Soyinka), at last, and even Bertolt Brecht; especially with respect to their respective outstanding theories of drama and theatre.¹² **Justification – Oriented Criticism:** This is an artist's attempt to justify the named imaginative work of art in a world that tends to find its values questionable. Also called the New criticism, so-called, the major exponents include Philip Sydney of "the Defence of English Poesy fame, and the English Poet Shelly". **Prescriptive Criticism** attempts to prescribe rules for writers and to legislate taste for the audience as well. The chief exponents of this class include Alexander Pope, Boileau and the Marxists, which would, again, include Brecht, especially in the application of his Short Organum for the Theatre which is his prescription for Scientific Theatre, also gleaned from his Messingkauf Dialogues, as can be argued.

Interpretive criticism, which attempts to interpret specific works of art to readers who might putatively, otherwise, fail to understand or appreciate such works. The Chief exponents in this category include Edmund Wilson and Matthew Arnold, and perhaps, Wole Soyinka, in his myth, literature and The African World.

Judgmental Criticism attempts to judge works of arts by clearly defined standards of Values well-known. The Chief exponents include Samuel Johnson and T.S. Eliot of *Murder In the Cathedral* fame, and nearer have, Biodun Jefe in all sense of the words, among others, arguably.

Discover-and-Apply Criticism, as the name here suggests attempts to discover and apply appropriate principles which describe the foundations of good art, with its exponents including Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Addison and I. A. Richards. The early Abiola Irele and C.N. Nnolim appear to epitomize this aspect here in Nigeria, one can suggest.

The following varied division of Criticism, though repetitive of some of the types profiled earlier, can still serve our purpose here, not necessarily for emphasis, but, perhaps, as a bough with it's own associated branches. These include impressionistic, emphasizing how the work of art affects critics; historical, which examines the work against its

historical milieu vis-à-vis the facts of the author's own life and times; textual, which attempts to reconstruct the original work or manuscript or textual version of the work using all available scholarly means; formal, attempts to evaluate work in the light of the characteristic type or genre to which it belongs; the judicial criticism – judges the work by a definable or set standards of evaluation; the analytical category attempts to arrive at the nature of the work as an object in itself through detailed analysis of its parts vis-à-vis their respective organization; the Moral angle of criticism examines the work in the light of putative human life and the values thereof. Finally, the mythic typology which attempts to explore or investigate the nature and significance or meaning of the Archetypes and archetypal paradigms in the given work.

As Holman roundly and very rightly opines, these extensive and varied systems of classifications for criticism are by no means mutually exclusive nor exhaustive. They, undoubtedly, however, indicate and affirm that a good critic could employ a great variety of creative strategies in explicating a work of art; dramatic, poetic, proseic, among other works, so as to effectively communicate appropriately with or to his readers (Holman: pp. 141 – 142). These are all well-thoughtout, sound, orderly and in-depth theories of criticism; very erudite in all sense of the word, adumbrating the role of a knowledgeable critic as an encyclopedia of sound judgement for the stimulation, cultivation, production, reproduction and refinement of and for creative works of art. These are for the perpetuation of holistic culture, philosophy among other ingredients of humanistic coexistence or disparate contradictions that plague man individually or as a collectivity, in an ever-changing world.

The merits of dramatic theories as a solid foundation for the ideational, practical, philosophical, experiential, metaphysical, among other tested facts, reality and emotional or other precipates of life and existence or play, equally laden with appropriate forms relevant to all these, underly the worthiness or lack of it in a play as appraised by the critics. The richness or worthwhile preoccupations of a play producer and director also give meaning or justification for other stage collaborators, such as actors, varied designers toward holistic consumption or appreciation by the target audiences. A critic/theorist is a reliable watch-dog of such values.

With appropriate synergy of sound ideas and realistic theories, come critical theories and theoretical criticism in mutual, collaborate with honest, broadminded playwrights, and other creative artists of the theatre, the better would be the learning – entertainment of this medium.

Spotlight: From the above profile of theoretical criticism, critical theories, historical survey, and analysis of categories of criticism among other discourses, we can expediently spotlight and discuss a few very influential theatrico-dramatic movements which have generated very creative theories and critical criteria. From these have grown formalized, controversial or consistent directorial concepts that have impacted very significantly on dramaturgical practices, such as playwrighting, acting and designs among other theatrical endeavors. Outstanding among the theatrical movements based on shifts in perception of reality are the Well-made play formula, Realistic/Naturalistic tendencies, Anti-realistic trends of the so-called Avant-Guarde School of dramaturgy, foreshadowed the theatre of the Absurd. Others include “Epico – Marxistic” paradigms, radically contrasting with the Aristotelian-Stanislavaskian paradigms vis-à-vis the African poetic-mythopoetic,

on the one hand, and the Mythologizing and Demythologizing cocktail of theories and critical tendencies, on the other. We also have Modernist and the Postmodernist, in their phenomenological and empirical analyses.

The Well-Made Play: Foreshadowing the modern theatre was the well-made play school of dramaturgy, which according to Stephen S. Stanton (1957:vii), is characterized as, “The play that by strict definition adheres to an ingenious, commercially successful pattern of construction and usually contains at least a dash of moral or thesis, a lesson taught satirically and amusingly, though not usually insisted upon... once the darling of the theatre.”

Commenting further, Stanton asserts that, “We ought to admire the well-made play as we admire the well-made man... . The term has become synonymous with trashy playwrighting – with the play that amuses but says nothing...”

The structural features of the well-made play also called *piece bien faite* or “social” or “thesis play” (*piece –á- these*) are a plot based on a secret known to the audience but withheld from certain characters... until its revelation... in the climatic scene serves to unmask a fraudulent character and restore to good fortune the suffering hero with whom the audience has been made to sympathize. A pattern of increasingly intense action and suspense, prepared by exposition... assisted by contrived entrances and exits, letters and other devices. A series of ups and downs in the hero’s fortunes, caused by his conflict with an adversary. The counterpunch of *peripeteia* and “*scene a faire*”, or obligatory scene, making respectively the lowest and the highest point in the hero’s adventures, and brought about by the disclosures of secrets to the opposing side. A central misunderstanding or ‘*quidproquo*’, made obvious to the spectator but withheld from the participants. A logical and credible denouement. The reproduction of the overall action pattern in the individual acts (Camille: xii-xiii).

Among the famous dramatists of the well-made play are Eugene Scribe, the grandfather of the so-called Scribean formula outlined above, the writer of *Peculiar Position* and *The Glass of Water*, improving on the *comédie-Vaudeville*, a most popular form of light entertainment in vogue in France of the early 19th Century. Other famous plays of this school include *Camille* by Alexandre Dumas Fils (1830) *Olymp’s Marriage* (1855) by Emile Augier and *A Scrap of Paper* by Victorien Sardou, is a comedy in three Acts. Bernard Shaw, who ridiculed the Scribean playwrighting as “Sardouledom”, after Victorien Sardou, is famed to have written his *Arms and the Man* as an improvement of the Scribean dramaturgy. So also are Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* (1878) *Ghosts* (1881) and *Hedda Gabler* (1890) said to be based on improved Scribean style. In the words of Stanton (1957:xiv): “All these dramatists employed the same general methods, but Scribe alone imparted to them a probability and a logic previously unknown in the theatre. Though his plots and characters were contrived, they were plausible; they followed the demands of common sense.”

As rightly observed, Scribe’s denouement were not tacked on, but derived believably from the plot structure. He had careful and precised expository backgrounds. According to Stanton, “for this reasons, the ‘*piece bien faite*’ (well-made play) “was more suited than any other to the demands of the nineteenth century problem play”. Emile Zola, the great exponent of Naturalism regarded Sardou, Augier, and Dumas fils as forerunners, in the tradition of John the Baptist as forerunner to our Saviour, Jesus Christ. The comparison

appears apt in a way: "I have tried, in rapidly glancing over MM. Victorien Sardou, Dumas fils and Emile Augier, to tell for what reasons I look upon them as simple labourers who are clearing the paths of debris, and not as creators, not as geniuses who are building a monument. Then after them I am waiting for something else". Naturalistic trends?"¹³

Modern Theatre: Robert Brustein (1964: 4–5) has tried to draw the relationship between what he called the "theatre of Communion" and his famous term, the "theatre of revolt". The former is dominated by Sophocles, Shakespeare and Racine, the latter by Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, Shaw, Brecht, Pirandello, O'Neill and Genet. According to him, whereas in the former, the "traditional myths were enacted before an audience of believers against the background of shifting but coherent universe", the theatre of revolt agglomerates "the great insurgent modern dramatists, where myths of rebellion are enacted before a dwindling number of spectators in a flux of vacancy, bafflement and accident". Paradoxically, however, even though these modernists are very individualistic, they share a common denominator, separating them from their predecessors, with whom they also share organic connections. Thus, while the theatre of revolt of the Modernists artist derives its strength from the nineteenth century Romanticism, it is in the words of Brustein, "in a larger sense the inevitable consequence of a long preparatory process which begins in the Middle Ages". Brustein stressed that "Naturalism" in modern theatre, is replacing Supernaturalism in the theatre of communion, experiment in the former supplanting apparition in the latter.¹⁴

Realism/Naturalism: Forcefully, therefore, "realism" according to Sylvan Barnet et al, (1962:246) is "the reproduction of life, especially as it appears to the eye and ear; the illusion of nature. Usually, it deals with ordinary men in ordinary situations, moving in scenery that closely imitates reality". In this regard, the dialogue as well as the sets, are closer to what the sense would perceive, as real. Generally in prose, realistic plays avoid soliloquies, asides and even declamation. The influential dramatists of realistic movement include Ibsen in what is called Ibsenist Realism, and the Chekhov, epitomizing the so-called Soviet Realism. Theoretically, realism shaded its essence into naturalism both in Ibsen, Chekhov, and Strindberg, further shading into symbolism. Critically, it must be asserted, we see Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1878) and *Hedda Gabler* (1890) as well as Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (1881) and *the Father* (1887) and Chekhov's *the Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters* and *Uncle Vanya*, for examples, all bear the interpretative haulmarks of realism and naturalism as well as those of symbolism, blended in complex critical and theoretical sensibilities. The dominant influences of heredity and environment, (nature and nurture) superimposed with the physical observations as scientific outposts, therefore, epitomize realism as well as naturalism, designated in the twin concept characterized as realism/naturalism. In naturalistic perception of reality, man and his milieu are thought as one and the same, in terms of reciprocal effects; causality, the science of cause and effect, dominates his action or behaviour. In this regard, the chemistry of society affects the essence of man, and thus the *essence of the stage, making environmental impact a sine qua non* for naturalistic dramatic sensibilities or portrayals. In the elaborate words of Emile Zola, the grandfather of naturalism: The naturalistic formula carries us back to the source of our national stage, the classical formula. We find this continuous analysis of character, which I consider so necessary, in Corneille's tragedies, and Moliere's comedies; plots take a secondary place, the work is a long dissertation in dialogue on man. Only, instead of an

abstract man, I would make a natural man, put him in his proper surroundings, and analyze all the physical and social causes, which make him what he is. 15

Anti-realism: Though symbolism had been strong in application of dramatic theories and criticism, right from the dawn of theatrical history, through the classical to the renaissance, down to realism/naturalism, it is in reaction to the latter movement, particularly, that modernist symbolic perception of reality emerged as a prelude to anti-realistic mode of expression, itself, in the words of Robert Cohen (2000:237), “an emotionally charged social and cultural movement, marked by scandals, manifestos, counter attacks and calls to arms”, with symbolism as “the anti-realistic counterforce”. Here, inner realities and symbolic characters epitomize “philosophical ideals”, ‘warring internal forces”, in the artist’s or humanity’s soul. Albeit short-lived, symbolist dramaturgy later embraced disparate artists such as Ibsen, with his *The Master Builder*; *Rosmersholm* and other later plays. Strindberg’s *Miss Julie* and *The Father* assumed not only naturalistic, but also symbolic interpretations, just as those of Gerhart Hauptman’s in *the Weavers* and *Rose Bernd*, Strindberg’s *A Road to Damascus*, *A Dream Play* (1902) or *Ghost Sonata* emerged at the twilight of his conversion to Naturalism, while foreshadowing Expressionism.. On directorial discipline, Stanislavsky broke off from Soviet realism to embrace production of Maurice Maeterlinck’s impressionistic plays in the Moscow Arts Theatre (Cohen: 240). Similarly, according to Cohen, Stanislavsky’s former disciple, “the ‘Constructionist’ Vsevolod Meyerhold broke with the Russian Master to create a non-realist ‘biomechanical’ style of acting,” contrasting with the tenets of the Moscow Arts Theatre.

Thus, even though mid-and late-twentieth-century dramatists, as Cohen asserts, were individualistic, preferring not to be members of a school, their categorization by critics, as widely as, characteristically “ritual theatre,” “poetic theatre,” “holy theatre,” “theatre of cruelty,” “existentialistic,” “art theatre,” “theatre of the absurd,” and “theatre of alienation,” all bracketed into various “isms,” grew to dominate not only critical theories, but categories into which meaningful playwrights are intellectually appraised. The directorial and acting styles as well as school of designs fell into no less stylization, interestingly. Dukore and Gerould (1976:viiff) encapsulate the Avant-Garde 16 movement into, “First, the turn-of-the-century symbolists such as Maeterlinck and Hauptmann; then, the revolutionary playwrights of the interwar years, such as Brecht and Pirandello; finally, the Absurdists of the 1950s, represented by Beckett, Ionesco, and Pinter.”

Dukore and Gerould regard the interwar period as the peak of various tendencies and movements away from the nineteenth century theories and critical criteria, sustaining “one of the most widespread, innovative outbursts in the history of theatre”. “Determined to break with the past, to create something entirely new”, these dramatists “helped to fashion the experience and outlook” of artists, “who became not only contemptuous of the old dramaturgy, but also of the audiences to whom it catered”. The interwar years avant-gardists such as Brecht, according to them, “rejected illusionism; and Pirandello dismantled conventional partition between stage and auditorium”, just again, as Artaud and Brecht, among others, advocated an end to traditional drama. Each proposed a replacement completely new. While Andre Breton proposed surrealism based on precipitates of dreams, like Artaud, Brecht called for drama that was science-based. Again, just as Artaud called for an end to literature with “No more Masterpiece”, and the “Theatre of Cruelty”, Brecht advocated and practiced “explosively Marxist demonstration in multimedia with his

theories of alienation effect (Verfremdungseffekt) of Epic Theatre, revolutionarily anti-Aristotelian in theory and Anti-Stanislvkian in practice, with well-known plays.

The significance of Alfred Jarry (1873 – 1907), whose *King Ubu* (*Ubu Roi*) premiered in 1896, became the foundation stone of theatrical and dramatic avant-Garde in terms of language, characterization, theatrical designs, dramatic structure among other iconoclasm, as briefly articulated by Cohen (243ff):

Jarry had called for an outrageously anti-realistic stage-painted scenery depicting a bed, a bare tree at its foot... characters entered through a painted fireplace. Costumes, in Jarry's words were divorced as far as possible from (realistic) colour and chronology... character stepped forward to begin the play with a word that quickly became immortal: 'Merdre' or 'Shit'.

The timelessness and placelessness of *King Ubu* theme and its other political ingredients can be adumbrated by Soyinka's recent adaptation premiered in the National Theatre, Igaanmu, Lagos, about 2002, recalling Nigeria as a theatre play in which Sani Abacha (King Baabu) is the lead-role as antagonist or protagonist. Similarly, Expressionism with its tempestuous characteristics¹⁷, though historically short-lived, has left its significant timeless traces in plays such as Toller's *The Man and the Masses*, *The Adding Machine* by Elmer Rice and *The Hairy Ape* (Eugene O'Neil) and even Soyinka's the *Madmen and Specialists*, to name only a few.

The timelessness and placelessness of dramatic theories and criticism, as impetus to creative intellection, are emphasized by the shifting relevance of varied themes, forms and contents of most plays, either reinvigorated, recreated or refashioned through adaptations, translations or transpositions, and other recreative modes. It is an aspect of this phenomenon that Cohen (250) suggests, when x-raying Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, he says that the play, "Expresses from its famous title onward a 'theatricalist motif in which the theatre itself becomes part of the content of play production, not merely as the vehicle. 'All the world is a stage' said Shakespeare; but in this play, Luigi Pirandello (1867 – 1936) explores how the stage is also a world"...

Absurdism: What Dukore and Gerould called "the Absurdists of the 1950s agglomerates dramatists as diverse in their personalities and philosophical colorations. They include Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Albee, Genet and Vaclav Havel, among others. The term absurdism was codified by Albert Camus, a foremost French playwright, essayist and theorist, in his analysis of *The Myth of Sisyphus*. The concept of the absurd (absurdism) has been popularized by an erudite critic – essayist – theorist, Martin Esslin in his biblical-book of the absurd, titled *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1969). Using varied frames of reference, Esslin defined the absurd as "out of harmony", either in musical context or "out of harmony with propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical". On common usage, absurd expresses the simple meaning, "ridiculous". Quoting Ionesco, Esslin asserts that "Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... Cut off from its religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost, his actions become senseless, absurd, useless", he concludes. Broadly speaking, therefore, the angst of "metaphysical anguish at the absurdity of human condition", as Esslin puts it, is the theme recurrent in the plays as varied as Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*

or *Endgame*, Ionesco's *The Chairs* or *The Lesson*; *Jenet's The Blacks* or *The Maids* and *Pinter's The Birthday Party* or *Homecoming*, among others. Kenneth Tynan's assertion, quoted by Esslin, would apply to the dramatists of the absurd, exemplified above, among others, with their varied plays and themes. He says, "...A playwright simply writes plays, in which he can offer only a testimony, not a didactic message... Any work of art, which was ideological and nothing else would be pointless... inferior to the doctrine it claimed to illustrate... An ideological play can be no more than the vulgarization of an ideology"... (Esslin:101).

A good play, whether the author says so or not, should contain a certain degree of didacticism and ideology; not reducibly Marxist ideology though. The degree of didacticism and ideology suggested here are ideational, philosophical and other aspects of human experience, which can be the take-home dividends of watching a play in the theatre, film or cinema or read in closet, wherein the recipient is entertained, educated or informed, or all of these as packaged. This is probably what Cohen means when he says that, "... five perspectives can be particularly useful in helping us focus our response to any individual theatrical events. These perspectives relate to a play's social significance, its human or personal significance, its artistic quality, its theatrical expression, and its capacity to entertain "(Cohen: 496ff).

Any dramatic or theatrical menus or fare that offers less is like "art-for-art's sake theory", that is, a brainless, barren or fruitless concept, that should be thrown to the pigs. George Bernard Shaw of *Man and Superman* fame, a play dubbed an "Intellectual Comedy," is in consonance with the above rationalization when he asserts that, "that stage was a vehicle for the discussion and transmission of ideas that were important only in so far as they had the power to transform social institutions."

The themes of the absurd are generally more accommodative of the tragic than the comic, or at best of the tragicomic wherein even the comic partnership with the tragic is in the realm of the sardonic or the farcical, serving perhaps only as therapy to the bitter emotions of pity and fear provoked by the tragic. It is perhaps Ionesco himself who expressed this paradox particularly graphically, "... humour is the only possibility we possess of detaching ourselves yet only after we have surmounted, assimilated, taken cognizance of it from our tragicomic human condition, the malaise of being "(Esslin:158).

Future Direction: theories and Criticism of the future can hardly be reliably forecast today. If we may hazard a guess that Aristotle's theories of drama and theatre will still provide reliable, albeit innovated dynamics. So would the critical tenets and theoretical framework articulated by A.C. Bradley, G. Wilson Knight and other critics and theorists that have expounded or propounded guidelines for the appreciation of Shakespearean tragedies, comedies and histories. No less so would the Brechtian and Beckettian theorists and critics, probably. The erudite analysis of the Esslins, the Brusteins, the Bentleys and Raymond Williams as well as Willetts will still be reliable guides for reliable interpretations and futuristic insights, standard or new, into the dramas and theatrical practices of Brecht, Ibsen, Ionesco among others; adaptable to recurrent shifts in the perception of reality or human problems. In all, antirealism of Brecht, Beckett among others in the shifting sand of human condition may be the most likely direction. Their antirealistic perspectives may transit into the current concept termed Postmodernism or modification or adaptation of same. Cohen (274) puts the predictable phenomenon convincingly:

... The theatre of the future may spurn the acknowledged masters of our immediate past and turn in directions still unforeseeable. But what is certain is that it will reflect the needs and respond to the spiritual inquiries of its time.

As he has also succinctly expressed it, man is at an age when reality often disappoints, so man is looking beyond reality, super and supra-reality, perhaps, in the theatre. Man may be looking for radiations of truth not observations of details. So synthesis and no analysis; harmonies rather than discordance may be preferred. Symbols, patterns and motions for the subatomic paradigms of human condition may become the dominant trends, especially in an age increasingly suffused with contradictions, and other acts of man's cruelty to man.

The African Perspective:

African drama and theatre have come a long way, comparatively; equally evolving a pattern of reliable theoretical and critical perspectives, from which to appropriately evaluate African" large dramatic and other creative outputs, pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial or post-modern. At this point, and for obvious expediencies, the paper will limit itself to cataloguing only a few, but very outstandingly seminal in creative intellection and creative impulses, manifested in large dramatic works; plays, theories and critical criteria.

Among the pre-colonial theatrical efforts that subsequent dramatic and other theatrical practitioners have learnt considerably from have been Joel Adeyinka Adedeji's documentation of the Alarinjo theatre among other researchers such as "The Church and the Emergence of Nigeria Theatre: 1866 – 1914..." "The Church and Emergence of Nigerian Theatre 1915 – 1914"... "Oral Tradition and Contemporary Theatre of Nigeria"... "A Profile of Nigerian Theatre 1960 – 1970"... "Cultural Nationalism and the African Theatre"... (Gbileka: 226) etc. Equally influential have been the following documentation: "Indigenous Drama at the Festival" by Adedeji (*Nigerian Magazine*: pp.3 – 8); "Ogunde Theatre: The Rise of Contemporary Professional Theatre in Nigeria 1946 – 72" (*Nigerian Magazine*: pp.24 – 33), as compiled, among others. The Theatrical practices of Ogunde accumulated quite insightful dramas such as his operas or concert plays namely, *Swing the Jazz*, *Half and Half*, *Journey to Heaven*, *Strike and Hunger*, *Worse Than Crime*, *Tiger*" *Empire*, *The One Who Tried* among others, are all highly patriotic endeavours.

He same is equally true of Duro Ladipo and Kola Ogunmola or Obotunde Ijimeré rewarded with such dramas like *Moremi*, *Oba Koso* and *Born With Fire On His Head* etc. (Three Nigerian Plays 1967). Dapo Adelugba's insightful translation of Bakary Troare's *The Black African Theatre And Its Social Functions* (1972) as well as Soyinka's translation of D. O. Fagunwa's Ogbuju Ode..." into *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons*... "(1968) have been seminal. Other influential seminal books that have considerably impacted directly or indirectly on creative intellection and impulses include Soyinka's *Myth Literature* and *The African World* (1976), and the African – American penetrations also include *Theatre and Nationalism* coauthored by Soyinka and Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka) and translated by Femi Osofisan (1983) and *The Theatre of Black Americans* (vols. I & II), 1980. In this regard, also, one cannot but enumerate the following critical and theoretical resources

and sources: Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi (1978), The Truthful Lie: Essays in a Sociology of Drama by Biodun Jeyifo (1985); The Tragic Paradox by Akomaye Oko 1992; Understanding Brecht and Soyinka: A Study in Antitheroism by Edde M. Iji, 1991 and Three Radical Dramatists: Brecht, Artaud and Soyinka: A Study by the same author (1991). So also has become the Radical Theatre In Nigeria by Saint Gbileka, 1997, among other innumerable books of theories and criticism, including articles or essays agglomerated in innumerable journals.

Agglomerated in these academic sources, enumerated and unremunerated are far-reaching, well-studied theories and critical criteria that have made significant contributions to the world of dramatic literature and criticism. These theories and critical perspectives include the influential, controversial mythopoetic theories of Soyinka and his numerous dramatic opus¹⁸, the Negritudist and the anti-Negritudist theories of Senghor and the Senghors or Soyinka and the Soyinkas; theories and critical options agglomerated by Mythologizing creativities of Soyinka, Clark-Bekederemo and Rotimi etc., on the one hand, and the Demythologizing dramatic (effervescent) efforts of Osofisan and his theories and criticism; with their Marxist thrust, and Brechtian collective heroism, embedded in his numerous dramatic opus²⁰. The plays of Ngugi WaThiong'o: *I Will Marry When I Want* (1981), co-authored with Ngugi Mirii, and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* (1977), co-authored with Githae Mugo, though Marxist in inclination are not necessarily stressing collective heroism. A number of plays of Soyinka have considerable sympathies with anti-realism. These arguably include *Madmen and Specialists* and perhaps *Opera Wonyosi* that are out-rightly anti-heroic, as opposed to *The Strong Breed*, *Kongi's Harvest and Death* and the *King's Horseman* among others that are overly Aristotelian, like those of Clark-Bekederemo and most of Rotimi, especially the *God Are Not To Blame* and *Kurumi*. Rotimi's *Our Husband has Gone Mad Again* and *Holding Talks* are rated and assessed along anti-realistic, absurdist criteria, just as *IF: A Tragedy of the Ruled and Hopes of the Living* all attempt, arguably to emphasize the so-called "pragmatic socialism, call it "Marxism in African Costumes", where effective collectivization, reflective of African brotherly coexistence is intimately practiced.

Arguably, Chris Nwamuo's plays such as *The Prisoners* and *The Squeeze*, perhaps, reflect what one can call quiet tone of Marxist interpretation as attempted by Kelechi Ogbonna, a directorial Master's thesis analysis of *The Prisoners...* This interpretation may have direct or covert bearing on a quiet sympathy with victims of oppressive system, the traps of which

Conceivably, Tewfik AI Hakim, an undisputed pioneer of dramatic writing in Arabic, has considerable outputs in his favour. Some of these, like the *Fate of a Cockroach*, *The Prison of Life* and *The Tree Climber* contain ingredients, experientially, suggestive of existentialist dilemma and absurdist contradictions; with all their echoes of freedom and manifest obstacles to freedom and operable choices. Theoretically, the existentialist dilemma that plagued Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* or Sartre's *Orestes* or Miller's *Willy Loman* among other classic heroes and heroines, is the bitter experience of the cockroach King, though operably different.

Femine Concerns: Interestingly, Zulu Sofola and Tess Onwueme, both of Delta-Igbo origin, assumed the positions of foremost frontline female Nigerian playwrights, with considerable outputs to their respective credits. Onwueme's theme in *The Broken Calabash*

(1984) resembles and compares with Sofola's *The Wedlock of the Gods* in many ways. So also are her social concerns in *Go Tell It To Women...* (1992) and Sofola's *The Sweet Trap* or *The Scent of Onions* (1986) and *Old Wines Are Tasty* which have some distance echoes reminiscent of the same concerns that are just feminine rather than feminist themes. Theoretically and critically, each of them can be perceived as a feminine representative of their human family rather than feminist advocate of women's concerns in the comity of male domination, with few feministic voices hankering for their oppressed kind.

Conclusion

It can be asserted here, without fear of contradictions, that theories are the gems, ivories, lodestone, treasury of values or hidden treasures deductible and deducibly perceivable, beyond the surface values, giving form, substance or enduring worth to a body of knowledge; in our case, a play or any work of art. Theories are the meat or kernel encapsulated in the ideas, themes or philosophies beneath the superficial structure and other external adornments of a body of knowledge; here the dramatic or literary endeavour. It is the foundation and hooks on which meaningful practices can be built or derived for human edification, through entertainment and information packaged.

Criticism, on the other hand, is a judgmental, judicial, judicious and opinionated evaluation of the qualitative and quantitative content and form of such a body of knowledge like drama or any work of art, literary or plastic, visual or auditory. Citing Aristotle, Goethe, Shaw and Nietzsche, as examples of those dramatic critics, who simply through their analyze of drama, have helped to... shape our vision of life itself", Cohen (505) asserts that, "Such criticism is itself a literary art, and the great examples of dramatic criticism have included brilliantly styled essays that have outlasted the theatrical works that were their presumed subjects."

In the light of all these, among other considerations and experiences, it is the height of professional myopia or intellectual stuntedness to regard criticism as parasitic, and a critic as a gold-digger, profiting undeservingly from the creative endeavours of the creative artist or playwright or other literary works of art. It is arguably incontrovertible to assert that the playwright has equal right to be as grateful to the critics as the latter to the former. Cohen's assertion can provide a fitting last line in this discourse, when he says: "Cogent, fair-minded, penetrating criticism keeps the theatre mindful of its own artistic ideals and its essential responsibilities to communicate (507).

In conclusion, what could have been the aesthetic and other values of Soyinka's plays such as *A Dance of the Forests*, *The Swamp Dwellers* or his *Idanre* and other Poems among other turgid and dense works, without their erudite critical and theoretical analysis by the likes of Eldred Durosimi Jones in *The Writings of Wole Soyinka* (1975) or Oyin Ogunba's in *The Movement of Transition* (1975)? Similarly, so are the invaluable landmark influences of Aristotle's *Poetics* on the French neoclassicists and modernists, such as Racine, Corneille, Sartre and Camus and their innumerable plays; adapted or original vis-à-vis the theories and criticisms, which they, in the turns, generate as mutual durable legacies.

No doubt, literature; dramatic, or theatrical, in prose or in verse is the richer for it, and for man, for the division - of - labour coexistence of the playwrights, novelists and poets etc and their critics. The same is no less true of the relationship between the stage

directors, film directors, actors or actresses and scenic or other stage or screen designers and their critics. The critics' or theorists' conventional, conceptual, judgmental, ideational and theoretical formulations, principles and enuntiations help to guide the other practitioners from unnecessarily falling into the pitfalls of otherwise restrictive or out-of-style, outmoded, aesthetic, artistic or even philosophical or ideological expressions of human experience.

As the most experienced, most erudite and most enlightened members of the audience in terms of the theories and other aspects of literary and related knowledge, vis-à-vis the world of ideas, in general, the theorists and critics are metaphorically the ombudsmen on cultural, ethical, moral and related values of the works of arts in favour of the other consumers of the artistic products. They are more so, for the purpose of enriching information and education through entertainment. Theorists and critics are watch-dogs and gatekeepers for the cultivation of ideas, upholding cherished traditions. They help the rejuvenation or regeneration of outmoded ones that arts mirror towards nourishing a holistic, humanistic coexistence and perpetuation of the human race. There is hardly any question about it, theoretically and practically, that the literary critics and theorists are creative artists in their own rights. For professionally, they weave and craft words out of dynamic ideas. They also use ideas to empower words, which stimulate, generate and regenerate knowledge that rules the world in many ways.

End Notes

¹*The Random House Dictionary...* (1975: 317) defined Criticism quite extensively and intensively too, viz; describing it as the act or art of analyzing and judging the quality of something, especially a literary or artistic work, musical performance, dramatic production etc. It calls it an act of passing severe judgment; censure; faultfinding, a critical comment etc.

²Raymond Williams (80) has credited G. Plekhanov with providing the classic summary of 'the relationship between the base and superstructure; in five sequential elements as ... elements as (i) the state of the productive forces (ii) the economic conditions (iii) socio-political regime (iv) the psyche of the man (v) various ideologies, reflecting the properties of the psyche; all characterized as fundamental problems of Marxism.

³Blood and phlegm when they flow in certain degree or quantity influence human emotions. The former in the region of sanguinity may result in cheerful optimism, while the latter could produce one of the humours e.g. of self-possession.

⁴The element of pity and fear here is said to provide therapeutic effect to the listening audience by lightening the soul as well as have the soul delighted and energized, as beneficial aspects of drama.

⁵It is however to be stated here as a counterpoint that Lope de Vega would have nothing to do with the Aristotelian rule which he even respected. For when he wrote his own plays he liked to lock such rules and threw away the key so as not be influenced by them.

⁶The pervasive influence of Aristotle's rule can also be seen in its being used Subversively as exemplified by the Brechtian anti-Aristotelian stance, emulated by Femi Osofisan. Others like Shakespeare and Soyinka take their bearings, no doubt, from Aristotle

to create their distinct forms (e.g. Soyinka's "The Fourth Stage").

- ⁷A good reading of the Poetics, along with the Freudian psychoanalysis, could have, no doubt, helped significantly in the analyses and interpretations of Shakespeare's Hamlet and King Lear for instance, as well exemplified by Francis Fergusson in his *Idea of Theatre*.
- ⁸The language and phraseology here are so Aristotelian, when compared with his classic definition of tragedy that one cannot, but believe that it must be to him that the credit of this definition anonymously attributed can go.
- ⁹It should be noted here that the moderns, like the neo-classicists have become so comfortable with mixed genres that we now wonder what the classicists meant by all the hoolabloo about the purity of genres which appears more abstract than real life experiences.
- ¹⁰The ready coexistence of joys and sorrows so common to the modern man makes for meaningful adoption and ready acceptance of tragicomedy as a realistic theory rather than any exception to the contrary.
- ¹¹This portion (d) i – vi represent this writer's adaptation or modification of the classification rendered by Holman.
- ¹²Note here, for instance, Brecht's theory of *Verfremdungseffekt* or that explicated in the "Short Organum for the Theatre", as well as Soyinka's "The Fourth State..." among others as quite exemplary, as counterpoints to Aristotle's Poetics.
- ¹³Zola attempted to reflect his theory of naturalistic flavours in his play, *Theresa Raquin*, which however did not live up to his theoretical billing; in terms of nature and nurture.
- ¹⁴Brustein's *Theatre of Revolt* is a classic theatrical guide in the modernistic analysis and criticism of the modern playwrights and their works, encapsulated in this book.
- ¹⁵It can hardly be contested that the works of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides and even those of Aristophanes were also naturalistic in their own class; though vastly different in terms of heredity and environment; nature and nurture, than those of modern costumes.
- ¹⁶The word *Avant-Garde*, etymologically, according to Cohen, derives from the military, means towards the advance battalion or the Vanguard, the shock troops, initiating a major assault. First born in France, the term initially referred to the wave of playwrights and directors who rose to openly and out rightly confront realism in the early twentieth century. Contemporarily, it connotes, everywhere, adventurous, boldly experimental and unorthodox artistic effort that is rather groundbreaking.
- ¹⁷Historically and philosophically, Expressionism was an emotional reaction to Impressionism in painting and in drama; of a German origin, just as its immediate or contemporary rival, surrealism was of French origin; its hallmarks include provoking revolution to grow out of a dream of spiritual rebirth.
- ¹⁸Playwright, critic, poet and much more, Femi Osofisan deftly manipulates African sensibilities through the silhouettes of Brechtian and Marxist philosophies to create his dramas of ideas, images and other illuminating echoes of diverse human experiences.

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