



“Introducing Esiaba Irobi and Augusto Boal to Nigerian Pupils, Playwrights and Critics”

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to encapsulate the personality, artistic and stimulating playwriting skills of Esiaba Irobi, the 2010 Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) sole award winner, with *Cemetery Road*, prototypical of his dramatic oeuvres. The paper is aimed at introducing Irobi's works, not widely known yet, to students of theatre and communication arts, theorists, theatre critics and those who must be interested, and need to be more educated on the positive change-orienting portents of drama and theatre as a most communicative art. The same is no less applicable to the theoretical and critical direction of August Boal, the iconic exponent of the theatre of the oppressed. The paper concludes with assertive advice on the need to be intimately acquainted with the theoretical and critical impetus, as contrasts to the well-known and more trafficed dramatic and critical terrains; of Aristotle and other masters.

INTRODUCTION

This introductory essay attempts to zero in, only, on Irobi's just two enthralling, thought-provoking plays, viz *Hangmen also Die*, and *The Other Side of the Mask*. Remarkably, his *Cemetery Road* has won the NLNG (Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas) prize for the 2010 season of that prestigious award.

Who is esiaba irobi?

Professor Esiaba Akpara Irobi (1960 – 2010) was born to Mr. Enoch Amaikpe Irobi and Mrs. Rosannah Irobi on October, 1st 1960. He began his early educational career at the Practicing Primary school, Umuakwu before proceeding to Wilcox Memorial secondary School, Aba in 1970. In 1975, Isiaba proceeded to Teacher Training College, Uzuakoli. While at the college, Esiaba, within a short time lost both parents as well as his uncle, HRH Eze Andrew Irobi. These series of calamities culminated in his first, though unpublished, story titled, “Chains of Calamities”, in which he

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chronicled their death and the impact on him.

Esiaba later had his Bachelor's Degree (English and Drama) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and thereafter, a Masters degree in Comparative Literature from the same University. His excellent performance earned him a British Council Scholarship to study at the University of Leeds, England where he obtained another Masters Degree in Film/Theatre, followed by a Ph.D in Theatre Studies. He was later employed as Lecturer at the same University. Between 1997 and 2002, he has worked as lecturer in over three Universities, including the New York University, Townson University; all in the United States of America. Between 2002 and 2010, when he died, he was an Associate Professor of International Theatre at the Ohio University, Athens, USA.

Esiaba's major works include *Colour of the Rusting Gold*, *Cemetery Road*, that won the World Drama Trust Award, *Nwokedi*, *What Song Do Mosquitoes Sing*, *The Pope Lied*, *Hangmen Also Die*, *Before they danced in Chains*, and *The Other Side of The Mask*. All of these have undoubtedly established him as a great dramatist of postmodernist trend.

AN X-RAY OF *HANGMEN ALSO DIE*, AND *THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MASK*

The thematic exploration of Irobi's plays is so mesmerizing that these two plays, under focus, shall be analyzed, specially, from their impressive thematic perspectives. In *Hangmen Also Die*, and *The Other Side of The Mask*, Esiaba periscopes some of the major tenets of post-modernism, wherewith, according to Robert Cohen, "the theatre brings the individual problem to collective attention and collective problem to individual attention"; stressing a deep sense of pessimism. This is not a surprise because the Nigerian state where Irobi crafted or located his art is a "postmodernist" state; a state where not just capitalism, but evil capitalism without human face is deeply rooted, and manifests in all its primitive and alcoholic inebriations.

In *Hangmen Also Die*, Esiaba Irobi epitomizes this phenomenon by unfolding the travails of the Niger Delta, the dirty politics, the hunger and deprivation in the midst of plenty, as well as the pessimism that radiates with rather endless human suffering. Esiaba paints this phenomenon through a vivid picture of the gory evils of corruption, which has engulfed our beloved nation, Nigeria. Zeroing in on the Niger Delta, Esiaba exposes the complicity of some dubious leaders, who connive with other unscrupulous elements to short-change and deprave the oil communities. This symbol of corruption is also encapsulated in his *The Other Side of the Mask*, in which the sculptor, Jamike, having been robbed severally by corrupt judges of his laurels goes into frenzy, into an expressionistic dreamlike state to kill his colleague and later himself; perhaps, in despondence, man's inhumanity to man or penury in the midst of abundance!

Hangmen Also Die, unfolds the tragedy of seven young graduates sentenced to death by hanging for the murder of a commissioner, Chief Isokipiri Erekosima. These young men are victims of a raped environment; victims of betrayal and of the total ugliness in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. As undergraduates, they had hopes and vision; they were pregnant with dreams; dreams to change their society to a better place and “create a new lease of life for its citizens”. This optimism which is later contrasted with thick pessimistic feelings due to the inabilities of those who so had them, seems to be a reoccurring element of his plays as it is more fully blown in his *The Other Side of the Mask*. Each appears to be a castigation of the multifarious paradoxes of Nigeria; a country so blessed, and yet so cursed, the doom and gloom of oil boom and great human and natural resources-resource potentials. Unfortunately, the hopes, the dreams of the young graduates are soon crumbled as they graduate into the sorry state of joblessness, of hopelessness and of countless promises by an unjust, corruptive, corruptible, corrupt and insensitive government. As Soyinka rightly puts it, “in a country where the leaders do not respect the rule of law, every individual fathoms his own cannons for what is right”, providing, perhaps, an alternative government. So, the young men redefined their situation and turned into vagabonds; stealing, maiming, kidnapping and killing, until they met their “waterloo” in the brutal murder of the Commissioner who stole the community's money; three million naira given to the community by the government to curb the effect of oil pollution that damaged farmlands as well as polluted their homes and lives. The young graduates spurred by Princess Tamara, and by the ever-reoccurring philosophy of their mentor, Dr. Ogbansegebe, located and hanged the chief. They are caught and also sentenced to death by hanging. Similarly, in *The Other Side of the Mask* Jemike, the young lecturer had lofty dreams, to become a world legend; that his name would one day, through his sculptural pieces, Picasso-like, be mentioned amongst such legends like Michael Angelo, etc. but we are living in a society where hens even guzzle their own eggs talk less of those of others. He fasted for three to four days, mortifying the flesh that the spiritual perfection that drives him into creativity be sustainably attained. Having done this, each year he enters into exhibition, into contest, but corrupt panelists, using the whom-you-know syndrome always had a candidate to award the laurels. Jamike is frustrated each year for six years and this frustration, just as it drove the young graduates in *Hangmen Also Die*, into gangsterism that finally culminated in their killing of the Commissioner, also attained a propensity that drive him equally to commit murder. He tells Dr. Animalu, one of the panelists:

Jamike: (*simmering*) Dr. Animalu, do you realize that when the creative juice is neglected it falls like a fruit and ferments. And when it ferments, it evaporates into the vehicle of violence? (:19)

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Plot

Esiaba Irobi's *Hang Men Also Die* is a good example of a play with complex plot. The play opens with a group of young boys awaiting execution by hanging, for killing the Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs. Why they killed the Commissioner is not made known to us. Through the technique of flashback, the entire story starts unfolding. The play starts from the end and weaves itself to the beginning, through the middle and back again to the end. Therefore, the thrust of the plot is finding whether the boys should or should not be hanged. This is the focus of the play. *The Other Side of the Mask* is a very fast-tempo play. The play is divided into two scenes which the playwright simply refers to as "Sides". All the actions take place in Jamike's house and garden. There is no space for interruption as to change of scenes. It is a single fluid straight-forward linear plot. Our major focus in this study, as earlier limited, is the thematic exploits of Irobi. The themes are as biting as they are satiric, and as painful as they are unvarnished-truth unfolding. They are engaging to the mind and enriching to the spirits.

THEMES VIS-À-VIS CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SITUATION

Hang Men Also Die is very rich thematically, and touches, almost, all the nooks and crannies of the Nigerian polity. It is a play with a deep scent of postmodernism, exhibiting such postmodernist traits such as overt individualism and undigested capitalism. The present Nigerian state, with its flair and endemic penchant for gross corruption is neck deep in pervasive individualistic tendencies. Before the so-called modern Nigeria, the people very humanistically cared for one another. In fact, within Nigerian cultural cosmology generally, there is no word for "orphanage" or "Old people's Homes". The reason is quite obvious; the individual was a collective responsibility of the community. Such less privileged persons were, therefore already absorbed by their kith and kin as aspect of the African extended family system. On the contrary, people are currently daily drifting more and more into detached and self-centred lives as a result of the borrowed capitalist ideals, which now guide our sensibilities. In *Hangmen Also Die*, Irobi reminds us that our political leaders are guided by this spirit of individualism; hence when accused of breaching morality by stealing the community's money, Erokosima replied:

You political illiterates. Have you read a book called *The Prince*, written by Niccolo Machiavelli? ... Politics is the art of what is possible. It is the art of survival. Personal survival. Morality does not come into it (85).

For personal survival, that is devoid of morality, some crooked individuals in

the Niger Delta have wormed their ways into the oil companies, liaising with them at the expense of the communities. These individuals have been encouraged by the divide-and-rule tactics of the companies, which they crony for, indirectly play brother against brother, sister against the others. At the end they become "untouchable" bourgeoisies who, pretending to fight for the communities, are in actual fact fighting for their own pockets. They crack the miserable nuts given to the communities by the government and the oil industry, take the seeds, and then give the empty shells to the communities. Olorede (15) reveals that these cronies or local bureaucrats siphoning the communities began their nefarious exploits from the early military junta. According to him:

The incursion of the military into governance in 1966 and ever since, has concentrated political and economic decision-making in a few hands and underpinned not only the tremendous profits of multinational oil enterprises but also the unprecedented primitive accumulation by various representatives of Nigeria's ruling class (including) top military and civilian officers, bureaucrats and their business partners. (15).

However, in his play, *All for Oil*, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo traces the root far beyond military intervention into the political arena of the country. For Clark, the disease began as far back as the 19th century when the British imperialists discovered a wealth of oil in the Niger Delta; this time, not crude oil but palm oil. In order to have absolute control of the trade in the oil, they established local cronies, who amassed so much wealth and power for themselves to the detriment of the community. In *All for Oil*, Chief Dore would stop at nothing in circumventing his position for selfish reasons to covet and appropriate the land of his compatriots without their consent or knowledge (22).

Similarly, in *Hallgmen also Die*, Erokosima subverted part of the money for his coronation to acquire more titles; for in the society, we find ourselves today, the more the titles, the more "prestigious and untouchable" one becomes. J. P. Clark-Bekederemo also exemplifies this theme in his *The Wives' Revolt*:

KOKO: And again money, no matter how it was got will do the trick. Oh, we know who has the money has the title in this land. That's why you men are keeping to yourselves a great part of the money that belongs to everybody (6).

Regrettably, the traditional institutions, in the Niger delta, are also culpable in this matter. Apart from dolling out chieftaincy titles to the highest bidders, irrespective of the source of his wealth, they have also reduced themselves to petty contractors, running the gates of the oil companies almost everyday, seeking belittling contracts and small favours. This situation is highly glorified in Esiaba's *Hangmen also Die*, in which Chief Erokosima outrightly embezzled the three million Naira compensation money given to the

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entire community to alleviate the oil spill, which “ruined farmlands, their homes, and their lives”. It is interesting to reveal how he spent part of the money as the playwright uses this as a window into other critical issues, plaguing the Niger delta and the Nigerian state, leading, summarily, to the controversial amnesty deals that appear to blow no one any durable winds of positive good.

Of the three million naira given to the community, for instance, Erekosima gave two hundred thousand naira to his godson to cool the mind of some eminent citizens from Degema local government area, who threatened to write petitions against him for embezzling the money. As could be expected, these so called “eminent” citizens actually sealed their lips as is the recurrent case in the Niger Delta, where for the sake of gratification, those who could have stood for the vandalized communities; even traditional rulers, look the other way, having been serially compromised.

He also sent two hundred thousand naira to Harvard and Cambridge Universities for his children’s school fees. This could, of course, be expected as is the recurrent scenario in our society today. Funds meant for infrastructural development that could upgrade our educational and health sectors are subverted by successive administrations. While they leave our nation a perpetually “developing” one, without any improvement, they take their children to the developed countries to school. Our universities have gone on endless strikes to correct these anomalies, but to no avail. Is it not because of the sorry state of our raped health sector that our leaders often run overseas for their medical check-ups? For common ankle dislocation, former vice-present, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar was flown abroad! Was it not to get better facilities that the late First Lady, Chief Stella Obasanjo flew abroad for cosmetic surgery, from which ironically she did not return alive?

Moreover, Erekosima used five hundred thousand naira of the community’s money for personal aggrandizement; for the renovation of his palace, awaiting his new chieftaincy title. For personal aggrandizement, money meant for the entire communities has been siphoned to acquire chieftaincy titles and other frivolities, at the expense of the communities, and thanks to the traditional institutions that do not bother to mind the source of the wealth of chieftaincy awardees.

Again, the, unemployment situation faced by the seven graduates that eventually forced them into hooliganism is a replica of the unemployment condition in the country, especially the Niger Delta region. The problem is more painful when one realizes that the oil companies operating in the region always prefer to carry out their recruitment exercise in far away Lagos. More so, while indigenes of the area are posted to embark on their National Youth Service in the far northern and western Nigeria, their counterparts are posted to the Niger Delta to serve very cosily in the oil companies. Tactically, they are retained to the detriment of the indigenes who return to meet (“NO VACANCY”) intimidating them from the gates of the companies. These unemployed youths, therefore, find solace in unscrupulous activities. This is unquestionably, one of the many causes of the recurrent militancy being

wrongly addressed in the controversial amnesty programmes!

The manipulation of youths and the people for selfish interest by politicians is also exposed in the play through the activities of Dr. Ogbansiegbe and Princess Tamara Ogbansiegbe, who having lost an election, instigate the young undergraduates to burn the house of his political rival. He roused the boys:

Terrorism. is a legitimate tactic of all down-trodden people seeking to combat oppressive governments ... you are all young men. And being young men in a third world country where no one, not even your leaders, makes any plans for your future, you are potential revolutionaries.... Revolutions are always based on violence. On bloodshed and terror (25-26)

Princess Tamara, a priestess on her own part, also rouses the youths to become more daring. She tells them:

AMARA: Why then are you hiding among these cowards ... Your mates in other parts of the world are guerrilla fighters, fighting for the liberation of their country. Haven't you heard of the Red Brigade of Italy who kidnapped their Prime minister and murdered him because he could not find them jobs? Haven't you heard of the Frelimo of Mozambique? .. young men dying for their land? ... A man has three million naira belonging to you in his house and you are here choking on crumbs. (62)

This is how politicians have been brainwashing our youths for selfish interest. The Police Inspector General has on several instances hinted that the escalating armed robbery in the country is compounded by politicians who during their campaigns acquire arms for the youth to intimidate their political opponents, but after the election process these youth who no longer "have jobs" become public menace. They naturally become available recruits for the recurrent unrest in the Niger Delta.

In *The Other Side of the Mask*, the propelling force is Zhipora, the "Muse". For selfish reasons, she inspires Jamike, almost driving him into an automated being, who responds only to her with his soul. She confronts Elesie, Jamike's supposed fiancé:

Zhipora: ... I have a certain power over him. (lyrically) over the man you call your fiancé, I have a certain power. Why you should ask yourself does he strive for garlands and laurels, if not to please me? Why does he torture himself day and night ... I am his inspiration, his irritation, his motivation, his satisfaction! I am his Muse ... without me he is nothing. (29)

The "who you know or godfatherism" syndrome in the country did not go unnoticed in both plays. In *Hangmen also Die*, Daminigbo was not only helped to secure the job in the prison, but was also accorded accelerated promotion through the effort of his influential uncle, Chief Erekosima. This is one of the problems plaguing the Nigeria Civil Service, especially the Nigeria Armed Forces and the Police. Numerous police officers remain in

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one rank for as long as fifteen years while their counterparts with godfathers have accelerated promotions. Regrettably, this ugly trend has equally permeated the academic circle where professorship and other exalted positions are now politicized ethicized and religionized. This motif is highly displayed in Esiaba's *The Other Side of the Mask*, in which Jamike, for six years; was denied recognition in the National Art contest due to politics:

Jamike: ... I am weeping for that which I know is mine which I never get. Prof., where are my laurels?

Njemanze: Jamike, what's come over you?

Jamike: (quivering) Are you not the chairman of the panel that gives out national awards in sculpture? Are you not the hand that denies me my destiny...?

Njemanze: Look, you must understand that every prize, every laurel, every award has its own politics of acceptance ...

Jamike: What is your own politics of acceptance?

Njemanze: ... and you must also understand that simply because a work wins an award does not mean it is better than all the other works submitted. In fact it does not even mean that is a great work of art or meaningful contribution to society, humanity and ...

Jamike: Do you then give awards to mediocre works?

Interestingly, though he could not win a single laurel in six years in his own land, the very first entry outside the country, even without him being present, won the International Contest in France.

The abuse of intellectualism in the country is another theme that both plays x-ray. In *Hangmen also Die*, the boys were all intellectuals. In fact, to be admitted into the group, one needs to have graduated from the university, with a minimum of a Second Class Upper Division. Among them are First Class graduates. But the coercive and corrupt system they find themselves could not provide them with jobs.

Similarly, In *The Other Side of the Mask*, Jamike graduated with a First Class, he is secretly admired but yet frustrated. The clampdown on intellectuals is not new in the country. Babangida and Abacha's evil regimes also incarcerated intellectuals, forcing many of the intellectual cream of the country to flee out of the country in what has been popularly called "brain drain". A past military regime had once echoed that an ordinary sergeant in the army is a better trained, better reformed person than a university professor! Herein lies why the so called political elitist class, some who never saw the four walls of the ivory tower could act, without according the intellectual class its due space and respect.

Finally, Esiaba warns on the consequences of taking laws into one's hands. No one has the rights to take another's life. That youths are unemployed is no justifiable reason for them to rob, kidnap and kill innocent people. Awake reveals that:

"Criminals choose to commit crimes ... crime is caused by the way the person thinks, not by his environment. Behaviour is largely a product of thinking. Everything we do is preceded, accompanied, and followed by thinking. Criminals cause crime not bad neighbourhood, inadequate parenting ... or unemployment. Crime resides within the minds of human beings and is not caused by social condition" (5)

These are controversial bits for thoughts and rationalizations. As exemplified in *Hangmen also Die*, many groups have sprung up in the Niger Delta; killing, kidnapping and destroying oil installations all in the name of fighting for the emancipation of the region; whereas they are only fighting for their pockets. Since the past three to five years, billions of naira have been collected as ransom by the various militant groups "fighting for the emancipation" of the region. How much of this have they used in advancing the case of the region? Rather, they have unleashed their terror not only on the oil industry alone, but on innocent compatriots as well. The once glorified and booming Port Harcourt city popularly tagged "Garden city" has been turned into "panic City" by these militia. As they unleash and vent their anger on their victims, the words of Chief Erekosima in the play; that "hangmen also die" must keep hunting them, for the Bible says he who kills by the sword, dies by the sword. Similarly, in *The Other Side of the Mask* Jamike, out of frustration, kills his fellow lecturer, Dr. Animalu but anguish forced him to commit suicide, and emblemizing the title of the play.

Both plays under focus are thematically very rich, and are definitely the product of a genius whose works deserve keen attention, not only by Nigeria's mainly target audience, but others who need to be well-acquainted with the causes and affects of restive issues in the Niger Delta of our great country Nigeria. As for our pupil and other playwrights, the plays would, no doubt, awaken, and reactivate their creative potentials; generated and regenerated from their exposures to their socio-political environments.

AUGUSTO BOAL: A FAVOURITE THEATRE CRITIC

Budding and established critics need to know more about Augusto Boal, a Latin American, and his groundbreaking work. Boal's approach to the theatre is utilitarian. Boal is a complete anti-Aristotelian. He conceptualizes theatre as a people's possession that has been usurped by the aristocratic class because they saw the theatre as a weapon of cohesion. In his treatise titled *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal argued that the poor oppressed people of the world could seize the theatre and transform it from the weapon of cohesion which aristocracy had employed it, to a weapon of liberation. In the Forward to his treatise, Boal reveals straight away that:

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In this book, I also offer some proof that the theatre is a weapon. A very efficient weapon. For this reason, one must fight for it. For this reason, the ruling classes tried to take permanent hold of the theatre and utilize it as a tool for domination. In so doing, they changed the very concept of what the theatre is. But the theatre can also be a weapon for liberation (iii).

This assertion qualifies his treatise to be rightly christened a pedagogy of the oppressed, as opposed to the iconic treatise of Aristotle. Augusto Boal contends that that art is re-creative machinery whose principal aim is corrective. To expatiate on this, Boal (1974) uses Aristotle's conception of nature for illustration; that human beings yearn for good health, but people sometimes fall ill; man tends towards a peaceful world, but wars do regularly occur. He further illustrates this by adding:

That the body "would tend" to resist rain, wind and sun, but it does not in fact do so since the skin is not sufficiently resistant. Thus we invent the art of weaving and the manufacture of fabrics to protect the skin. The art of architects constructs bridges, so that men can have shelter and cross rivers; medical science prepares medications for organs that have ceased to function as they should. Politics likewise tends to correct the fault that men have, even though they all tend to the perfect communal life.(9)

These illustrations underscore the fact that why perfection is desirable, imperfection is unavoidable. To Boal, therefore, art (as well as science) attempt to recreate the creative principle of things in order to correct nature's imperfection. In other words, art strives to put aright the inadequacies of nature by using the very raw materials of nature.

Boal, therefore, contends that the only way through which the theatre as an art form can be an effective instrument of change is to liberate itself from the old Aristotelian conception of the theatre as a form of art, which he feels, is too aristocratic. Writing about Aristotle's conception of the theatre, and how the theatre has been subverted, for instance, Boal comments:

Theatre was the people singing freely in the open air; the theatrical performance was created by and for the people, and could thus be called dithyrambic song. It was a celebration in which all could participate freely. Then came the aristocracy and established divisions: some persons will go onto the stage and only they will be able to act; the rest will remain seated, receptive, passive – these will be the spectators, the masses, the people. And in order that the spectacle may efficiently reflect the dominant ideology, the aristocracy *established* another division: some actors will be protagonists (aristocrats) and

the rest will be the chorus – symbolizing in one way or another,
the mass. (iii)

Thus for Boal, through the above subversion and re-conceptualization of the theatre, the aristocracy could coercively indoctrinate the masses. It is through this type of aristocratic indoctrination that the classical era conceptualized tragedy as being an art to be located only within the aristocratic class; that the tragic hero must be of noble birth. This conception was to run from the classical through the neoclassical Elizabethan, and even down to some modern plays, and repertory with their anti-classical sing-songs exemplified by the strindbergians, Ibsenists and even the Brechtians with their bourgeoisie and proletarian ideologies.

Boal, however, postulates an answer to counter this aristocratic thought; that for the oppressed people to liberate themselves from the political doldrums they have been, is to reclaim the theatre and make it their own; "the walls (the dividing walls created by the aristocracy) must be torn down. First the spectator starts acting again ... " (119); albeit making the theatre an ideal tribunal, a la Brecht. Boal's concept of the theatre, therefore, is contingent on the fact that the theatre should not make the people docile, but rather active. Boal is, no doubt, Brechtian through and through. Like Brecht, he feels that the theatre is a strong political weapon that people could use to free themselves from the shackles of oppressive subjugation. To do this, Boal says the audience must never be passive. This philosophy, among others, contributed to the formation of the "People's Theatre," popularly known as community theatre or theatre for integrated development. In this way, the role of theatre arts as the most talkative, dialogical and communicative of all the arts is to conscientize man's intrinsic potentials to the development of the total man; in terms of moral and humanistic edification through dynamic entertainments. Thus, Boalic like the Brechtian, alienation effect; is protestant and propagandistic, as dynamic tribunals towards the maximization of man's gestaltic moral edification, through his intricate passions.

CONCLUSION

This paper is bi-focal. The first section reveals Esiaba Irobi as a favourite playwright of the writers, while the second section is focused on Augusto Boal as a favourite theatre critic. Interestingly, while both writers have not been given due space in theatrical discourse, they have in their various arts contributed to theatrical development. For Irobi, his plays touch on the Nigerian social-political system, like opening an old wound. His brilliant capturing of the ugly trends in the Nigerian polity is very graphic. It is the candid belief of these writers that Esiaba will be celebrated more in the near future when his works are more accessible to more Thespians. For Augusto Boal, it is rather an irony that in spite of

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his contribution to theatrical development that so many Thespian pass out of the university without even a familiar mention of his name or work. But this should not be so for his concept of the People's or Parliamentary Theatre is, no doubt, the tap root in the formation of community theatre in the modern sense.

This essay has been deliberately made energisably bifocal, and comparatively so, to direct a kind of attention to two very remarkable, important personalities in the theatrical profession, as a most communicative medium in the expression of human emotions, viz the playwright and the critic for the overall interest of the audience, without which the two can hardly exist, individually or collectively. The works of the two energizing artists are used here to exemplify our thesis. While that of Esiabia Irobi has been focused, to articulate a very positic direction in contemporary dramaturgy or playwrighting in respect of his sensitivity to the environments vis-à-vis creative sensibilities, that of Augusto Boal, an anti-Aristotelian theorist and critic, has been chosen to adumbrate a new direction in drama and theatre criticism. He deserves to be accorded more attention for a more holistic consumption of the theatrical communication toward greater interests of humanity.

Irobi's plays, thematically, dwell on the nerves centres of Nigeria's socio-political system, opening and reopening wounds, old and new, graphically capturing and reechoing the ever-recurring ugly trends in the Nigeria's corruptive, corruptible and corruption-ridden polity. Esiabi's prestigious NLNG prize with his Cemetery Road, prototypical of his works, serves as invitation to the deep study and stage and/or cinematic performances of his other plays that are enriched with such thought-provoking sensibilities; emblematic imageries and status-ameliorating stimulants.

Counterpointally, also, the need to increasingly embrace Augusto Boal's critical direction can hardly be overstressed, as a refreshing alternative to that of Aristotle and the Aristotelians that has dominated and influenced playwrighting and critical directions from the neo-classical, the romantic, through Shakespeare down to Ibsen, Brecht, Arthur Miller and our own Wole Soyinka among others; all with increasingly energizing postmodernist sensibilities.

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