

**DRAMA, WELTANSCHAUUNGEN AND PASSION IN AMIRI  
BARAKA'S GREAT GOODNESS OF LIFE AND  
ESIABA IROBI'S HANGMEN ALSO DIE**

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**Abstract**

A life without a future has a greater tendency of depreciating into violence. Drama as a genre of literature is built on mimesis; man in the confines of the theatre is offered the opportunity to preside over judgment against his actions and inactions. The sense of good or bad in a man's judgment is an embodiment of his world view, which defines his morals, beliefs and value. Consciously or unconsciously, these filter into a passion that propels the desire for a better living condition. The playwrights under study: Amiri Baraka and Esiaba Irobi are African-American and African respectively. These societies suffer injustice in different shades: racism and neocolonialism, and are yet to be totally free. It is the interest of this paper to discuss the relationship shared by the passions generated by the individual world view of these societies in their drama as they utilize the theatre as veritable tool in their struggles for liberation. The selected plays for this discourse are *The Great Goodness of Life* (1966) and *Hangmen Also Die* (1989). These are studied using sociological perspective of literature. Apart from being from different regions, the playwrights are different eras apart, as a result, that will help the researcher to arrive at a result based on the human condition irrespective of the society and era. This research will guide the various bodies to understand the causes and consequences of youth restiveness in societies.

**Key words:** Drama, Weltanschauungen, Hubris, Passion and Freedom.

**Introduction**

"Weltanschauungen" is a calque of the German word interpreted "World view". It can be broken down into "Welt" meaning world and "Anschauung" meaning perception or view. The world view of any society is defined by their value and beliefs system, which is a direct response to their ultimate reality or allegiance. It also defines their moral standard. Drama as a genre of literature radiates passion and this is based on the society's Weltanschauungen. A good drama may be performed on the people's stage within the people's flora and

fauna, but does not challenge the inmates of the society. Drama as a genre of literature represents human experiences on the stage with passion replica to life lived in the society, although within the confines of mimesis. Most tragic heroes of drama have passionately exhibited the strong feeling which Aristotle describes as "hubris". Hubris is a Greek word that is translated as excessive anger. In the ancient Athens, it is seen as the intentional use of violence to humiliate or degrade or to recover or to revolt, however the word hubris through ages has ameliorated to be defined as overweening presumption that leads a person to disregard the divinely fixed limits on human actions in an ordered cosmos. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Passion can be called feeling of intense enthusiasm towards compelling desire for someone or something. *The Cambridge English Dictionary* defines Passion as, "Strong Interest". It is also defined as: strong and barely controllable emotion. It is a strong feelings or emotions in favour or against an object, an issue or a condition. Passion can motivate one to fight and even lose his life because of his belief. A passion for something is capable of pushing one into selfless sacrifice. Psychologically speaking, passion is a strong inclination towards a self-defining activity that people like or even love or find important to invest their time and energy or whatever they value including their life. Passion often requires one taking up violent action to re-define and liberate himself from conditions of inhumanity and injustice. When people are passionate, their world view is driven by their concept of standard of living better than what they already have.

Often, scholars of tragedy in the studies of drama have associated hubris to the strong force behind the actions of the tragic hero. The playwrights under our discourse represent two different regions and experiences. Amiri Baraka, a playwright of the African-American Black Arts Movement era, whose history is built on strife as a result of slavery and segregation occasioned by American racism. Amiri Baraka is the founder and champion of revolutionary theatre. Esiaba Irobi on his part is a post-colonial revolutionary playwright of Nigerian extraction whose testimony is that of misrule garnished with avarice, greed and undue exploitation of the masses by the political elite. Irobi's plays have boldly challenged the theatrical structure and changed the dance steps of revolutionary theatre in Africa, especially in Nigeria.

The theory of explication in this paper is the sociological perspective of literature. The relationship shared by literature and society was raised by Priscilla Clark's essay "Literature and Society". Clark's sociological perspectives of literature link society to their works of literature. She describes the literary

product of art as a collective phenomenon. In other words, the literature of any society is a product of the collective institutions and forces of the society. (108) By implication Clark asserts that, one may read the society through the text or read the text through the society (114). Jeffery Sammon building on this foundation maintains that, every literature should be an illumination of its social environment (7-8). This leaves a lot to be desired, because as Clark notes, the literary raw materials like characters, theme, ideology and others are supplied by the society, which invariably is the first consumer of the literary products.

Georg Lukacs, in "the Sociology of Modern Drama" observes that, modern drama has taken on new social dimensions (117). Comparing modern drama to the Elizabethan drama, Lukacs maintains that:

The conflict of generation as a theme is but most striking and extreme instance of a phenomenon new to drama but born of general emotion. For the stage has turned into the point of intersection of pairs of world distinct in time; the realm of drama is one where "past" and "future", "no longer" and "not yet", come together in a single movement (117-118).

Our major thesis in this discourse is the relationship shared by world view and passion in shaping the revolutionary theatre of a people, irrespective of the society. To achieve the above, the primary text will be Amiri Baraka's *Great Goodness of Life* (1966) and Esiaba Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die* (1989). These playwrights are not contemporaries and are of different societies, yet there are leas that relatively draw the human condition vis-a-viz the replication of action of the inmates of the individual society in another especially under congruent condition. This research draws on the similarities of societies in relation to human condition hence the sliminess of passion and world view under similar inhuman condition.

Theatre since inception has remained an occasion of self-appraisal. Lukacs points out that, adding to the concept of class representation in drama is a new determinant, "value judgment". He adds that, "in the new drama not merely passions are in conflict, but ideologies, Weltanschauungen as well. Weltanschauungen is translated world view. World view is the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the whole of the individuals or society's knowledge and point of view. Lukacs maintains that, because men collide who come from differing situation, value judgment must necessarily function as importantly, at least, as purely individual characteristics"

(117). This is majorly as a result of the differences in world view. Lukacs' point here remains that; modern drama is purely complicated than the old drama, that circumstances of the society defines the circumstances of the people and this is vividly and elaborately enacted in the actions of their drama according to the society's world view. Addison Gayle Jr. has observed the same in African-American drama. He notes that,

There is a discernible element in black art today that is new. Hoyt W. Fuller has come close to pointing it out when he notes that, the revolt in the African-American literature, especially in the drama, is as palpable in letters as it is in the street. Change revolt to war, and the characteristics that distinguished the old from the new are readily apparent (xvii).

Gayle in the above statement draws attention to the fact that the violent revolt that characterizes the Black theatre in America is a replication of the life lived in the various streets of the African-Americans. Richard Wright addresses the African-American situation and writing when he notes that, "the black (artist) entered the court of American public opinion dressed in knee pants of servility, curtsying to show that he had a life comparable to other people" (xvii). In other words, they waged war not against the society but against the societal laws and mores that barred them from equal membership. This quest to be integrated has remained one of the fundamental themes in the African-American Literature otherwise called "the Negro Question".

Mishael Nwaiwu in a research work "Aesthetics and the Negro Question in the Poetry of Langston Hughes and Claude McKay" has observed that "The Negro Question is a political problem with psychological effect which has crept into the literature of the Negroes consciously or unconsciously" (2). A fact which Malcolm X defines as a play within a play in his speech. He says that, America is:

Where in spite of the constitutional guarantee of the inalienable right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in America, the Blackman has to suffer to declare his right on this earth to be man, to be human being to be respected as a human being in American society on this earth in this day (1).

Henry Louis Gates Jr. recaptures these experiences in his theory of the signifying "Monkey". The concept of the signifying Monkey, though drawn from linguistic phenomena has its root in the fertile soil of African-American vernacular. Gates Jr. in this theory explores the relation of the black vernacular

tradition to the African-American literary tradition (xix). Planting its root on the Yoruba tradition of "Eshu-Elegba" the trickster. Eshu-Elegba is an African orator (epi) trickster, whose figure is built on its nature and function of interpretation and double-voiced utterance. The function of Eshu is based on what is encoded into it. Gates Jr. buttresses this concept in relationship to African and African-American literature when he notes that,

A vernacular tradition's relation to a formal literary tradition is that of a parable discursive universe. By explicating two seemingly distinct bodies of myths, one common to several black traditions and the other an American phenomenon, I have tried to show how the vernacular informs and becomes the foundation for formal black literature (xxii).

This refers to the antecedents of the literary culture which has its foundation in the culture of the African-American society that produced the literature. Most of the literary productions of the African and African-American writers aim at fighting the societal war of colonialism/neocolonialism or racism in their various regions. Richard Yahborough underscores the prevalence of this concept by referring it to the popular concept of "American Adam" he notes that:

One of the significant bodies' evidence to be adduced in this connection is that which is comprised by work of Negro writers ... knowing so intimately as they do the world of the insulted and the rejected, theirs is an experience of life in the United States. That has breed in them a habit of reflection whose natural fulcrum is in the dialectic of innocence and experience: the "wounded Adam" is bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh (2).

For the African writers, what is left of African states after colonialism is been devastated by the neocolonialists. Ngugi Wa Thiongo adding his voice in *Writers in Politics* says,

Literature cannot expect from class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here, a writer has no choice whether or not he is aware of it; his works reflect one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural, and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battle

field: the side of the people or the side of those social forces and classes that try to keep the people down. What he or she cannot do is to remain neutral (iv).

Thus the forces of the society create and shape the cursor of the literary fluid. Okot P'Bitek, the East African poet draws attention to the potentials of the society to create and shape a people's literature thus:

Like laughter and crying, literature is first and foremost an expressive activity. The joy or sorrow of the human hearts finds way out through song. When the poison tripped darts of sadness strike the heart of the listeners the sufferings of the singer. When the story teller strips off our garments of pretence and we are exposed, as we really are, in the person of elephant the bully- we laugh at ourselves. When our hopes and dreams are realized and the poet expresses our feeling in his song, our hearts are filled with exhilaration and joy (37,22).

Andrew Brink in his candid interpretation of the literary experiences of the apartheid in Southern Africa notes that; "One basic fact of society is that it is not a fate handed down by God, which must be endured. It is a practical organization of men by men for men and it can and must be changed when it no longer express adequately the wish of the masses" (Mapmakers, 67,8). However, harnessing the reflection of the culture and tradition of society in their expressive literature will prove that the concept of art in any form is not some universal truth that inhabits a world of super reality; art in any form before it goes public has evolved and become ingrained in language as part of the cultural tradition of which we are heirs. The culture and tradition are embodied in the people's world view. Considering the above, Emeka Nwabueze opines that, "Literature from these societies cannot be viewed in isolation of the heterodox socio-political matrix. Since literature is recognized universally as a social phenomenon (28).

Thus, the art of any society develops from the society's actions and inactions, which are the product of their world view; this world view is the collective articulation of the peoples' value and beliefs as expressed in their concept of reality or allegiance. Cooper maintains that; "art that does not confront society with its ideological demands and point forward to a potential social transformation is condemned as regressive, both in the realm of high art

and in the popular culture (5). Achebe with all bluntness makes it clear in his article "The Novelist as Teacher" that:

The writer cannot be excused from the task of re-education and re-generation that must be done. In fact, he should march right in front. For he is after all-as Ezekiel Mphahlele says in his *African Image*-the sensitive point in his community ... perhaps what I write is applied art as distinct from pure. But who cares? Art is important but so is education of the kind I have in mind (162).

Apart from its entertainment function, literature's role in teaching and un-teaching the society cannot be overemphasized. Hence we draw from the fact that literature is a strong bearer of the society's world view as well as her passion especially in the struggle for liberation and survival.

Most importantly, drama as an art form gathers the inmates as audience to judge and re-judge their passion and world view for the sake of today and tomorrow generation. Amiri Baraka attesting to the social responsibility of art during the Black Arts Movement era made it explicit in his concept of "the Revolutionary Theatre". He says that, the revolutionary theatre, "should force change [...] Expose: [...] ... teach [...]... Accuse and attack [...] ... take dreams and give them a reality; [and] show victims so that their brothers in the audience will be better able to understand that they are the bothers of victims, and that they themselves are victims if they are blood brothers" (1899 -1901).

Drama as a genre of literature gives a public confrontation to the society within the confines of the theatrical pleasure. Williams B. Worthen notes that:

Of the many kinds of literature, drama is perhaps the most immediately involved in the life of its community. Drama shares with such other literary modes as lyric, poetry, the Novel, the Epic, and Romance, the ability to represent and challenge social, political, philosophical and esthetic attitudes. But unlike most literature, drama has generally been composed for performance, confronting the audience in public, sociable confines of theatre (3).

This strongly relates to Clark's stance that the literature of any society is produced by the phenomena generated by the society and this goes back to entertain as well as purge the society. Thus Clark is of the view that, literature translates social equations into literary equations and takes it back to the society for purgation and for positive social change. In other words, drama

carries the passion of society's world view, commending the positive aspects as well as condemning the aspects that are evil.

The playwrights Amiri Baraka and Esiaba Irobi are our focus in this work and their works to be examined in line with our subject are *The Great Goodness of Life* (1966) and *Hangmen Also Die* (1989) respectively. The literary tradition of the African-American society has consciously been growing along the route of their quest for freedom and actualization of the Black Nationalism. Amiri Baraka stands out as one of the major playwright of the Black Arts Movement era. His emphasis during this era remains:

An art that is recognizable Afro-American, An art that is mass oriented that will come out of the Libraries and stomp and an art that is revolutionary, that will be with Malcolm X and Rob Williams, that will conk Klansmen and erase racists, we meant this not only with the fervor and new fire of youth, but with the certainty and necessity of our realist history (Baraka, Xii).

He further concludes when he says that:

My writing reflects my own growth and expansion, and at the same time the society in which I have existed throughout this longish confrontation. Whether it is politics, music, literature or the origin of language there is a historical and time/place/condition reference that will always try to explain exactly why I was saying, both how and for what (Baraka, xiv)

On a general note, as James Baldwin has explicitly made this clear in the preface to Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1964) that:

Any writer, I suppose, feels that the world into which he was born is nothing less than a conspiracy against the cultivation of his talent which attitude certainly has a great deal to support it. On the other hand, it is only because the world looks on his talent with such a frightening indifference that the artist is compelled to make his talent impart (2).

Beyond this general conception of most of the writers of the Black Art Movement era, Baraka sees his art as a weapon of warfare. Hence he says, "The deepest problem, aside from our history being covered and gains won by our struggles being reversed being claimed by our enemies, conscious or un-, is that we still have not built organizations and institutions to struggle for self-



determination, self-respect, self-defiance" ("The Black Arts ...", 505), With these burdens, he is determined to use his art for the liberation of his people hence, he says;

That is the continuing task we face as revolutionary Black artists and intellectuals, is to make Cultural Revolution. To fight in the super structure, in the realm of ideas, philosophers, the arts, academics, the class struggle between the oppressed and oppressor. To recreate and maintain our voice as a truly self-conscious, self-determining entity, to interpret and focus our whole lives and history. And create those organizations and institutions that will finally educate, employ, entertain and liberate us ("The Black Arts ...", 506).

From the above statement, one sees a passion emanating from the experiences burdened by the activities in the society which created a world view, vivid in the passion of the playwright Amiri Baraka as he searches for solution to the society's problem. Okur opines that:

For Amiri Baraka Black Theater had a revolutionary force. His rhetoric of cultural resistance was meant to engage African Americans actively in the process of identifying with Black cultural and social norms. Much of Baraka's work is revived in the millennium, and some of his early plays are inherently connected to Black Lives Matter movement as much as to the Black Power consciousness (Abstract).

Esiaba Irobi is a post-colonial African playwright whose passion is clearly defined in the Vernon of his plays. This Vernon is made clear in his undeletable definition on the popular characteristics of his period, which he describes in a sentence in the play under study. "There is a thief in all of us". (*Hangmen Also Die*, 89) Isidore Diala classifies Irobi as:

African's most innovative and productive younger playwrights. Deeply rooted in the indigenous performance traditions of his Igbo ethnic group, Irobi's drama in the tradition of Wole Soyinka, is a hybrid production involving an iconoclastic reconceptualisation of the heritage he appropriates, its fascinating conflation with other performance traditions, and their projection into the arena of contemporary Nigerian politics ("Esiaba Irobi's Drama ..."21).

Diala further identifies three basic fixations of Irobi's career as a playwright which include; "the cosmology and performative heritage of his Igbo ethnic groups, the Nigerian post colony and Wole Soyinka" (26). Although Diala notes that the three are linked integrally in Irobi's writing, yet Irobi's passion was about the paradoxes that restricted the aspiration of the country to purposeful and responsible nationhood, which also held in check the frontiers of human freedom and achievements (26). These paradoxes include the political behaviour of the post-colonial politicians and their wastages of the country's resources to the detriment of the future especially the youths and the unborn. Esiaba Irobi, as Diala has observed:

...dramatizes typical post-colonial themes: oppression, migration and cultural alienation, Identity crisis and revolutionary violence, he equally revalidates indigenous traditions, interrogates colonial stereotypes, and consciously seeks to appropriate pre-colonial African values in seeking a resolution to the post-colonial dilemma (28).

Comparing Esiaba Irobi to Amiri Baraka, one sees that each of them has passion for the freedom of his people, and this they are advocating with their literary tools within their world view. A study on these playwrights strives to define and identify their passion in the fight for the liberation of their people from oppression and domination. For this study, we have selected *Great Goodness of life* and *Hangmen Also Die* by Amiri Baraka and Esiaba Irobi respectively.

*Great Goodness of Life* represents the endemic conflict between the white Americans with their black supporters and the Blacks or African-Americans in the American society. The play represents the recognizable socio-political realities in the world view of the African-American persona. The upper class members of the African American society are seen in the same way as the oppressors, "the white American". The lower class members among the African-Americans look upon the middle class for help in their struggle for freedom and liberation in the American society. In *Great Goodness of life* Baraka carefully addresses the complaisance of the middle class in the African-American quest for freedom, liberation and integration in the American society.

Most of the lower class members of the African-American society believe that the complaisance of the middle class is responsible for the pains, injustice and inhuman treatment they are receiving in America; hence their ultimate expectation is the Day of Judgment in which their oppressors will be rewarded according to their deeds. Nilgun Anadolu Okur underscores that,

Baraka portrays the general anticipation of the African-Americans as a form of the general characteristic of the human conflict in an impossible social situation showing the evil of racism as well as exposing it as the most heinous scandal of American society (411), hence the faces of the ordeal is clearly written in the death of the Civil Right activists like: Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and others.

This play is a mono-voiced consciousness that echoes the pains and joys of vital forces that have fought in one way or the other in the battle for liberating the Blacks from White domination within the American society. The play carefully indicates all the blacks irrespective of the class, who did not use their position no matter how little to advance the course of black liberation. This stand is an age long principle from the days of WEB Du Bois, who says in "Criteria of Negro Art" that:

I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever Art I have for writing has been used always for propoganda, for gaining the right of black folks to love and to enjoy art that is not used for propoganda. But I do care when propoganda is confined to one side, while the other side is stripped and silent (757).

In fact, *Great Goodness of Life* is a blatant condemnation of all the African-Americans for not fighting back no matter the measure when their kith and kin were murdered in broad day light. Court Royal is a representative of all the Blacks especially the middle class. This is clearly defined in both his behaviour and costume such as in this scene:

I work in the post office. You know me, probably. Didn't you over see me in the post office? I'm a supervisor. You know me. I work at the post office. I'm no criminal I've worked at the post for thirty-five years. I'm a supervisor. There must be some mistake. I've worked at the post office for thirty-five years (227).

These claims stand out as the credentials of an average middle class member of the African-American. They count their achievement on services rendered to the oppressors of the Blacks.

The play is a court session without a physical judge, instead a voice. This voice serves as both the prosecutor and the judge. The aesthetics of the play is routed in the familiarity of the judge with the experiences of the "Blackman" in America; hence he uses the derogatory names and languages used on the Blackman in America such as "nigger", Black lunatic and others. The charge

against Court Royal is "harbouring a murderer". Those murdered whose murderers he harbours are: a young victim (whom Court Royal later recognized his voice), Malcolm X, Patrice, Rev. King, Garvey, Dead Nigger kids killed by police, Medgar Evers and others (234).

Court Royal pleads not guilty to these charges at the beginning of the court session, and claims he has an attorney Mr. John Breck. Ironically, Mr. John Breck is the court's legal aid man. Court Royal denies these charges until he is shown his son who is among the victims, then he shouts "Oh son... son... dear God my flesh forgive me (Begins to weep and shake) my son (He clutches his body, shaken throughout by his ugly sobs) Dear God..." (236). It was at this point that he gets convinced and freely surrenders himself to be sentenced with the murderer. "I must be sentenced. I am the one. (Almost trance like) I must be sentenced with the murderer. I am the one (236).

At this point of the play, Baraka indicts all African-Americans irrespective of their class and makes them feel the guilt of their inactive silence in the society, but instead of sentencing Court Royal, he is absolved of the crime with a fresh responsibility of performing the rite that will mark the death of the murderer. "The final instruction is the death of the murderer. The murderer is dead and must die with each gift of our God. This gift is the cleansing of guilt and the bestowal of freedom" (238). The play director indicates that the rite is to be performed on the shadow of the murderer to bind it forever with death. Hence the voice says,

The rite must be finished. This ghost must be lost in cold space. Court Royal, this is your destiny. The act was done by you and a million years ago. This is only the memory of it. This is only a rite. You cannot kill a shadow a fleeting bit of light and memory. This is only a rite to show that you would be guilty but for the cleansing rite. The shadow is killed in place of the killer. The shadow for reality, so reality can exist beautiful like it is. This is your destiny, and you already lived-out life. Instruct Court Royal, as the centuries pass, and bring back to your natural reality. Without guilt, with shame, pure and blameless, your soul washed (pause) white as snow (236).

This speech though directed to Court Royal on the stage is addressed to the audience as representatives of the African-Americans. It is a clarion call for revolution, hence Court Royal as the representative figure answers on behalf of

all, and says, "Oh yes ... I hear you. And I have waited for this promise to be fulfilled" (237).

Even after discovering that the person he fired the gun short is his son, he still felt fulfilled, thus he asserts the fulfilment of all African-Americans, because the murderer has been given the appropriate judgment and punishment irrespective of his person or affiliation. Court Royal affirms it; "My soul is as white as snow.../my life is a beautiful thing. (239) By tagging the African-American, freedom to this rite of cleansing and murdering the memory of the murderer, Baraka directs the blacks in America on what to do in order to gain total and absolute freedom. Baraka in his comment on *Great Goodness of Life* says, what I did was fake that situation, and draw an obvious extreme (223).

In *Great Goodness of life*, Baraka presents a weak-kneed assimilationist as a warning, because the lesson to be learnt is that African-Americans are unintentionally not living up to the challenges of blackness and their desires for the freedom of the Blackman in the American society. They have everything it will take to fulfil their destiny, yet they are complaisant, busy with selfish ventures and aspirations to whiteness. The play makes it clear that the complaisance of the Blackman in America is what has condemned them to lifelong humiliation and subjugation in the American Society. Hence they can only be free when they rise up to the duties and responsibilities that will bring in their self-liberation. This can only be by fighting for their destiny which must be a change from within and a search for and performance of the cleansing rite irrespective of who is involved.

Esiaba Irobi's *Hangmen Also Die* is a testamental probe on instruments of justice, and punishment in the post-colonial Nigerian nation. Beyond the perennial obsession on Marxism, which Diala has carefully exposed in *Esiaba Irobi's Drama and the Post Colony...* (2014) there is a passionate probe on the various drives of the Nigerian post-colonial instrument of justice and punishment, especially as it relates to the political class and the upcoming generation. For Irobi, the structures and attitudes of the political elites offer the upcoming jobless graduates no other option than a violent revolution to recover their fate.

The discovery of oil in commercial quantity at Oloibiri in 1956 in the present day Bayelsa State changed the Nigerian economy from its agro base to oil base. The oil base economy has come with so many adverse effects: such as the oil spillage on the farms and water. Often times, the government release money to the oil communities as compensation for the oil spillage and the destructions on the farms but this compensation money is embezzled by

government agents who are neither farmer nor victims of the oil spillage. Yekinni, the Hangman of the Prison says it thus:

Yekinni: Thank you. You see some time ago, the Federal Government gave the citizens of this state, which as you know is a Riverine State, the sum of three million naira as compensation money for oil spillage which has ruined their farms, their homes and their lives. But the man they killed, one chief Isokpiri Erekosima, a commissioner for Local Government, Rural Development and Chieftaincy Affairs, connived with his councilors and local Government Chairman to confiscate the 3 million naira. The Counselors took one million and shared it among themselves. The local Government Chairman shared one million. The Commissioner or himself, one million. No single citizen no matter how wretched got a single kobo. That was when these young men stepped in (*Hangmen*, 12-13).

The irony of the entire experience is that, those who shared in the money have no farm or crops among the destroyed farms, while the victims are utterly neglected in the compensation.

Furthermore, the young men being children of the real victims are unemployed in spite of their excellent performance in their various field of study.

One important thesis in the dramaturgy of Esiaba Irobi is the tendencies of depreciation of values from good to bad, especially when not in proper use. In his other play, *The Other Side of the Mask*, he boldly states that the instrument of creativity can be instrument of destruction, but it depends on what the society impinges on the subconscious soul of the artist. Irobi bluntly made it clear that the creative chisel can be used for destruction. Addressing Dr Animalu his colleague,

Dr. Animalu, don't you find reality horrible? Aren't you shocked by the killings? The massacres, the pogroms, the murders, the executions, the letter bombs! And what else do you expect from a sculptor except to ask questions with his chisel. To ask what is the quality of the life we live? To tame these horrors and miseries by giving them form and shape, by chiseling them into images (*The Other side... 44*).

Irobi insinuates that, as the sculpture uses his chisel to ask question, so also these young men use the available tools or weapon of warfare to ask questions

as well as fight to recover their fate. Acid one of the characters in *Hangmen also Die* makes it clear in the following lines:

Terrorism is a legitimate tactic of all down-trodden people seeking to combat oppressive governments, without terrorism by the I.R.A would the Republic of Ireland have gained its Independence Today? Without terrorism by the Mau Mau, would there be Kenya Today? Without terrorism by the Irgun and starn gangs, would there be Israel Today? Without terrorism by the Algerians would the French ever have agreed to leave North African 1962? Without Terrorism in South Africa, do you think apartheid would ever be dismantled? I am asking you! (*Hangmen ...25*)

The young men see themselves in the state of blank future. After their studies no employment, they came home to meet oil spillage on their farm and land, the hopes raised by the compensation paid was also high-jacked by members of the political class who are neither victims of the oil spillage nor were their land part of the ones destroyed. Acid clearly states the obvious in the following statement:

You are all young men. And being young men in a third-world country where no one, not even your leaders make any plans for your future, you are potential revolutionaries. (fierily) so I want you to write this down on the walls of your mind and remember it now and always, that revolutions are always based on terrorism. Revolutions are always based on violence. On bloodshed and terror. Revolutions are never achieved by holding hands and singing. "We shall overcome" (he sings it cynically; they join him. Revolutions are never achieved that way because a revolution is not a dinner party, it is not a disco competition, it is not an ideological romance. (With power) It is an act of insurrection where one party overthrows the other. It occurs as the accumulated grievances of the common man. It explodes like gun powder (*Hangmen ... 25-26*).

Violent obsession irrespective of location is a product of the accumulation of grievances, generated from inhuman activities of various injustices that leave the victims with no other alternative but violent actions of self-defence or get eroded away. The inhumanities of men to men gradually

take a permanent seat if not checked hence all society under human condition develop the passion which integrally add to their world view as they grumble with the quest for freedom, liberation and self-defense to escape extinction.

Irobi fundamentally lays it bare that the society is the creator of the terrorism that engulfs it especially, when inhumanities flow unchecked. Discharge puts it in its right perspectives in the following lines; "because after seven years of joblessness you are toughened, hardened and so humiliated into a human beast that you can no longer be lured back into the society by the softer indulgences of those living on the other side of life" (*Hangmen*, 50). This feeling gradually forms the subconscious mind of the victims that he thinks himself to be exactly the way Dimeari does in the following expression:

(Bitterly) I am a reject of the society. A piece of human furniture standing unobserved in the living room of a blind world. I feel empty. I feel impotent. I feel useless. I want to do something that will shock the world. Something that will make the world realize I exist. And also make me feel I am somebody. Something challenging. Something violent! Some form of dangerous employment (*Hangmen*, 51).

This is because these young men have worked hard to live in a society they call theirs, yet they were not given the chance. Dimeari explains:

(Bitterly) Yes. But after serving your country as a youth corper for one year, is it too much to ask your country to serve you for even one day. For even one month. Three months. To put a shirt on your back and some bread in your hands? Friends, that's why I want to join you so that I can hit back on those who have turned me into a spiritual nomad, into an economic destitute please I want to live dangerously, I want to be a terrorist. A member of the suicide squad, I want a price on my head, I want to be wanted by the police Dead or Alive, I like yourselves! Your picture appeared in the newspaper yesterday (*Hangmen*, 52).

Weltanschauung is a particular philosophy or view of life; otherwise defined as the world view of an individual or group. It is the embodiment of the people's perceptions, definitions and interpretations of their lives' experiences in the society. It also includes the various methods they mapped out to solve challenges of the society as responses to the various challenges. *Oxford*



*Advance Learners Dictionary* defines a world view or world view “as the fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the whole of the individual or society knowledge and point of view”. Fundamentally speaking, every individual or society operates at a conscious level. This invariably is not far from the compendium of the positive and negative experiences of the individual or the society. Langston Hughes an African-American writer of the Harlem Renaissance era broadly articulates the place of world view and experiences in his celebrated article. “Which significantly describes the writings of African-American, that:

We young Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter, and we know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain free within ourselves (sic.1271).

The expression above unequivocally asserts that, literature of every society is a reflection of the pleasant and ugly experiences of the producing society. Hughes adds, to this when he says that, “it is the duty of the younger Negro Artist, if he accepts any duties at all from outsiders to change through the force of his art that old whispering” which Ralph Ellison explores in his only novel *Invisible Man* (1952). World view simply put, relates to the various aspects of the society and individual relationship to his or her world of reality. This entails the attitude of the individual or society, the feelings, understanding and ways of thinking.

Irobi raises questions on the post-colonial Nigeria especially on the morality of the officials or the judges of the judiciary in *Hangmen also Die*. In the play, the boys are condemned to die by hanging for fighting for their rights stolen by the government officials of society that supposed to protect and preserve them as citizens. This simply means that, the custodians of the law and justice are unjust. The Hangman, Yekinni in the play says it all:

Doctor, they are also human beings. (enacts) when I enter their calls and talk with them, I see guilt written on their faces in capital letters. GUILT when I see that I press for a confession. When I hear the confession, my conscience becomes charm and I

go home and prepare myself for my job knowing that they know their blood is on either head..... But do you know what I saw last night when I looked at the faces of these boys in the moon light?  
(9)

The discussion between the post mortem Doctor and Yekinni, the Hangman, says it all:

Doctor: Guilt?

Yekinni: No

Doctor: What did you see?

Yekinni: Defiance

Doctor: Defiance?

Yekinni: DEFIANCE! (*The convicts begin to hum a song*) Do you know what attracted me to their cell in the first place?

Doctor: No

Yekinni: A song. They were singing. As they sang, their voices swept across the face of the mind like sea breeze on a cold night when the moon decides to peep into the soul of the ocean, and becomes a lantern for the lonely fisherman.....

Yekinni: It was as if cold dew was descending on my head.

Doctor: I felt as if spiders were crawling across my spine towards the neck.

Yekinni: I went in and asked them, "What did you do?" They said they killed a man. I asked them "Why did you do it"

Doctor: And what did they say?

Yekinni: They said, "We did what we did because we believed in it. We have no regrets.

Doctor: No remorse?

Yekinni: What is remorse? Defiance! (10-11)

Yekinni reveals the power behind the defiance attitude of the condemned boys instead of remorse, as sited above.

The commissioner they killed is superintendent Damigbo's godfather.

He smuggled Damiagbo into prison services after Damiagbo failed West African School Certificate in 1962. He also gave him N200, 000 out of his own one million.

Yekinni (Continues) That commissioner who they killed was also responsible for Damigbo's rapid promotions in the Prison

Service. That is why, when all the Citizens of Izon State petitioned the Governor asking him to commit the death sentence of these boys into life-imprisonment, Chief Superintendent Damigbo went to the Governor's house and spoiled his mind. He told the Governor that these boys were armed robbers, criminals, head hunters, terrorists, everything (13).

The judgment of Court Royal in *Great Goodness of Life* is a vividly reflection of the injustice of in the middle class in the society. Their lives are characterized with falsehood and hypocrisy, especially with regard to the experiences of the lower class members of the African-American society. Their major interest is to achieve self-satisfaction irrespective of the experiences of the others, leaving the oppressed with no option to violently challenge his right to live. A condition which Malcolm X observes about America in his revolutionary speech cited above. Where in spite of the American constitutional right for every citizen to live, have liberty and the pursuit of happiness irrespective of colour, class or creed, yet the Blackman has to suffer to declare his right to be man, to be human being, to be respected as a human being in American society on this earth in this day (1). Ellison, Ralph in the prologue to *Invisible Man* puts it explicitly:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those of Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood movies ectoplasms. I am a man of substance of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids- and might possess mind. I am invisible, understand simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination- indeed everything and anything except me (iv).

The man who is made invisible by man's inhumanity to man has no alternative but to do what will make him visible. This is the point that Dimeari makes clear in the statement cited above. These youths may have passed through the difficulty of getting education in Nigeria in the midst of incessant strikes, lack of equipment and other hardships associated with education in Nigeria. They were also subjected to the ordeal called National Youth Service Corps for one year where they serve without appreciation in an unknown land,

only to join the cue of unemployment, in most cases they are forced to take appointments outside what they studied in the university with poor salary. As if that was not enough, they are also confronted with the ordeal of oil spillage. The so called compensation which the government managed to pay is also stolen by the same people who held the country captive, hence they have no other alternative but to put a shirt on their back and some bread in their hands and join gangs, so that they can hit back on those who have turned them into spiritual nomads, into an economic destitute. Their earnest desire is to live dangerously, to become terrorist and suicide squad members (*Hangmen*, 52). Thus developing a world view of revenge and violence to recover their destiny and fate stolen by the visible oppressors that made them invisible.

Beyond the above, there is an instinct that naturally depreciates a peaceful society into a violent one; *Hangmen Also Die* gives a clear analogy of it in relation to other nations as cited above. Acid defines terrorism as a legitimate tactic of all down-trodden people seeking to combat oppressive governments. Mr. Court Royal in *Great Goodness of Life* changes into violent actions when he discovers the enormity of his *laissez-faire* attitude then he takes the gun and shoots to fulfil the rite for his freedom and that of his people even when he finds out that the person he has shoot is his son. Also, the members of the suicide squad take it upon themselves to live dangerously, staking their life for the liberation of their nation. Everyone needs freedom, every freedom has a price and someone must pay the price now or later and freedom cannot be got without terrorism. Without terrorism, the oppressor will think he has monopoly of violence. Acid's illustration represents a world census of revolution and violent obsessions, he says, without terrorism by the I.R.A, the Mau Mau, the Irgun and starn gangs, the Algerians and South Africa, would not have been free today (25)

In conclusion, every oppressor thinks oppressing others is a natural way of life until he is countered by a violent force. The depreciation of a peaceful society into a terrorist nation develops from a world view which emanates as counter world view to combat oppression and inhumanity. It is a belief system that values the future more than today's complaisance. It is a bold step towards fighting for the unborn and a passionate change of *Weltanschauungen*. This is a desire to die today and live forever in the mind of the born again nation. Among the genres of literature only drama can unleash such passion on the stage as well as give the audience the opportunity to make a wise choice as they live the theatre which Amiri Baraka and Esiaba Irobi have elicited in *Great Goodness of Life* and *Hangmen Also Die*.

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