

THEMES AND SOCIO-CULTURAL IDEOLOGIES IN EMEKA NWABUEZE'S *RAINSTORM IN THE DESERT* AND *ECHOES OF MADNESS: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS*

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Abstract

Every creative artist has a story perspective that is made manifest in a literary genre or style that becomes evident in the output of his or her artistic project. In the same way, the playwright employs a particular dramatic technique in actualizing a conceived idea and vision that is often based on a people's social or cultural ideologies. Socio-cultural ideologies are elements of societal values that relates to the peoples' beliefs and worldview. They are social and cultural essentials evidence among folks, a traditional binding that guides a people and shapes their views as well as understanding of the world, transferred from generation to generation within a society and members beyond. In most Igbo societies, there are cycles of traditional and social values embedded in cultural ideologies that revolve around history and belief of the people as evident in Emeka Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the Desert* and *Echoes of Madness*. Although, evidences abound on critical studies of these plays by scholars especially on generic analysis, characterizations and performativity but this study looks at the presentation of major themes and socio-cultural ideologies that manifest in festivals, rituals, dance, language and others in the plays employing content analysis as its methodology. For its framework, Stanly Fish's concept of reader response theory is used to examine the dynamics and interplay between these cultural ideologies embedded in themes in the plays.

Introduction

This study examines themes and socio-cultural ideologies in modern Igbo drama. Socio-cultural ideologies are essential practices revered by a folk, a traditional binding that guides a people and shapes their views as well as understanding of the world in its totality. Beliefs and worldviews are valuables evident in festivals, rituals, music, dance and ritualistic activities that are central to human existence and relationships across cultures and its environments, playing a key role in the angle of its socio-cultural development. Socio-cultural ideologies inform behaviours and major dispositions of a given people. Although human nature is dynamic, it accommodates various forms of

change regardless of cultural beliefs and social order. This is because the freedom of man is his highest asset that enables him to organize his own world and dictate affairs around it. And the ability of man to propel his will to survive in the “nebulous and turbulent cosmos makes him in most cases, run counter to his cultural beliefs and worldview” (Ngozi Anyachokenya, “A Linguistic Study of Emeka Nwabueze’s *Echoes of Madness*” 34). The socio-cultural ideologies are built around in the religious culture and are manifest in festivals, folktales, myths, legends, rituals, songs, dance and music that are peculiar to a particular people in meaning and signification. This research tends to highlight various themes and socio-cultural ideologies in the two plays relating them to the beliefs and worldviews of the Igbo people.

Themes like infidelity, betrayal, injustice and human manipulations of culture and traditions are recently prominent in most African societies, creating negative atmospheric environment for society members threatening their inherited ideologies. Playwrights like Nwabueze project socio-cultural ideologies in festivals, rituals and ritualistic activities to make statements on cultural beliefs and the consequences of some of these prevalent themes in modern African drama. According to Ohaeto Ezenwa, content and form of the creative works, signifies realistically the impediments to social development and the sensitivity of the playwrights to the static and changing aspects of the cultural landscape of a dynamic society (55). Playwrights in their various levels of creativity capture the essence of cultural ideologies in themes and other socio-cultural elements to reshape and remodel the Igbo culture. Although as a creative work, drama is not a material of reality like archaeological or historical archival but a material from reality which means that both can synthesize as means of understanding the human society. As Ezenwa puts it, creative works play the role of regenerating, reshaping and rejuvenating culture in order to project appropriate nuggets of experience with wider implications for humanity (55). The playwright, no doubt, is a committed patriot, for he uses drama to arouse national consciousness; as a member of a social group, he employs drama to expose social foibles among the political elite. In Emeka Nwabueze’s words, since the writer is a member of a social group, his art relates to his society, and even if he rejects the literary tradition of his people, the components of the work are used to decipher the writer’s nationalistic goals (*Drama and National Consciousness*, 124). This is done through the portrayal of major cultural features that “widen the communal vision and creative horizon of the writer” (Ezenwa 41). Applying this pattern of writing in Igbo drama, the playwright uses it to portray the Igbo cultural essence, beliefs and worldview. James Amankulor contended that while the dramatic art among the Igbo shares mimetic principles that are basically universal with the dramatic arts in other parts of the world, its performance conventions are nonetheless distinctive, as they relate specifically to the Igbo culture (114). Hence, dramatic art in Igboland exists primarily within the context of festivals, the myths of which it concretizes. Frequently uses dance and music to embellish such cultural

festivals and ceremonies, therefore, dramatic arts in the Igbo context can hardly exist outside festivals, rituals and ceremonies.

Synopsis of Emeka Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the Desert* and *Echoes of Madness*

Rainstorm in the Desert: Synopsis

The play revolves around Odogwu Nwagbo, a degree holder in Theatre Arts and a Master's degree in Business Administration and a successful business entrepreneur, a returnee and an astonishing cultural activist that suddenly finds himself a doomed man because of the situation surrounding him without his knowledge. Odogwu is a great man in the western sense of attainment or accomplishment, who certified himself capable of participating in the Abia Dance, a traditional dance that is highly ritualistic. For a person to qualify for Abia Dance, the person must be a man, an accomplished free born of the land and of good standing. Of course, he must be married and must have at least a son that comes from his inward part; that is, the child must be his genetic son. In addition, his biological father must be late. If the man meets these simple but challenging and paradoxical criteria, then he can present himself for the contentious Abia Dance to become an Abia Laureate. Hence, Odogwu thinks he is qualified having met all the criteria. He is affluent and successful as his credentials testify, but he is oblivious of other criteria which he has no access to which his family members who have access to advised him not to partake in the dance. But against the advice of Ezinne, Okosisi Nwogbo and Ugoada (mother, uncle/father, and wife respectively), Odogwu participated in the Dance. The sad and tragic consequences of Odogwu's participation in Abia Dance are enormous because he's miserably not qualified (The sons, who he brags of being a proud father of two boys, turns out to be false; he's only but a social father and Maazi Okosisi, his supposed uncle turns out to be his biological father) and that incurred the wrath of the gods (the death of Okosisi). At the height of Odogwu's agony following the confirmation and other revelations by Agidigbo, the native doctor, he kills his mother and his wife.

Echoes of Madness: Synopsis

Echoes of Madness focuses on Obiora Nnadozie, an abroad graduate who has returned with his American wife after many years to establish in his homeland but unknown to him, the gods already chose him to be the next Eze *Avuja* following the death of the chief priest of *Avuja*. There is doubt in amongst the people since the chosen one stays abroad and has not returned for many years, and without the presence of the new Eze *Avuja* in the land, the remains of the late chief priest cannot be laid to rest. Osuofia, the spokesman for the oracle convinced the people that there is a ritual that will be performed to bring Obiora back from the Whiteman's land. Osuofia performed the ritual and Obiora returned with his American wife. The return of Obiora and the believe by the people of *Onwuama* in the potency of the gods and the ritual performed by

Osuofia did not go down well with Akamonye, Obiora's uncle who has been trying everything possible to have the position of Eze *Avuja* including bribing Osuofia to name 'the man who has been in the Whiteman's job' but the oracle made spokesman to name 'the man living in the Whiteman's land'. When this particular plan failed, he goes ahead to beg Obiora to accept the offer and hand it over to him so that the position will still remain in the family but when Obiora failed to listen to all they have been trying to make him do, Akamonye frustrated all his plans to the point of killing Obiora's wife and rendering him useless that Obiora begins to yearn for America as home, a land that contains his hope instead of the home he has longed to see that turned to nightmare.

Analysis of Themes and Socio-Cultural Ideologies in *Rainstorm in the Desert* and *Echoes of Madness*

As stated earlier, this study employed content analysis, a qualitative method of research for analysing literary works. This method generates interpretations based on the information and details provided by the playwright in the material and its contextual knowledge. It is a methodology applied in the studying of written or spoken language in relation to its social context. The method is applied in this study to examine themes and socio-cultural Ideologies in *Rainstorm in the Desert* and *Echoes of Madness*.

The play, *Rainstorm in the Desert* can be seen as a critic's favourite in the collection of Nwabueze's recent works. This is because of the contemporary, imminence and diversity of issues and themes especially that of infidelity and betrayal prevalent in the play. Anyachonkeya's "interrogating conventional wisdom in Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the Desert*" observes that, it is an attempt to place "proverbial knowledge over conventional wisdom". He states that,

Proverbs of all clime and land hinge on cosmic laws; in this play, proverbs constitute inestimable linguistic paraphernalia in realizing literary corpus. Odogwu is caught in the sword of Damocles; the proverbs adroitly harnessed in the play linguistically dramatized the escapades and predicaments of the protagonist. In effect, as flies are to wanton boys, so we are to the gods for sport. Sadly, Odogwu falls prey to the cosmic phenomena as he relied on conventional wisdom for his actions ("Interrogating Conventional Wisdom in Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the Desert*", 1).

Godstime Eze opines that, Odogwu's egoistic dispositions is conspicuous in his reactions towards various refusals from his family members, that blindfolded his sense of reasoning on why every member of his family is against him participating in the Abia Dance (31). The received warnings and perceived dangers and yet no genuine effort to find out reasons for both individual and collective refusal to support his intention by his family. For instance,

Odogwu: But Sweet, you were there when I gave my word; you were there when I participated in the auditions. Now I am bound by my words. They are deliberating on the finalists who will participate in the activity tomorrow, unless I am rejected, I must be in Abia dance tomorrow...I am exercising my principle of free thought. So, please let me be. Abia dance is unique. It has a distractive vocabulary. The quintessence of the dance is the transmission of an ancestral message. Decoding and interpreting the message without psychological distraction is the ultimate goal of a potential laureate (*Rainstorm in the Desert*, 26.)

His ego and self-trust beclouded his sense of reasoning of the intricacies of Abia dance is evident in the above and that affected possible quest for knowledge in the hidden knowledge of the dance. Having examined himself and found himself more than qualified to participate in the dance without seeking further clarification is as a result of pride which I consider his tragic flaw. In Rowland Amaefula's "Toxic Masculinity and shifting Hegemony in Emeka Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the Desert*," Amaefula submits that, Odogwu's aggression against his mother and then wife represents the personal phase of toxic masculine behaviour that manifest among relegated and frustrated men who resort to power and force (22). He furthers, while violence and indeed toxic masculinity may not be part of men's routine behaviour, men's complicity is widespread and routed in the flawed socialization process that deprives them of complete human psychology. For instance, in the Igbo culture, men are forbidden to cry or show signs of weakness, emotional helplessness or vulnerability, especially in the public. They are expected to be infinitely aggressive, firm, strong and above all, tough. This accounts for Odogwu's resort to brute force declaring that "in this matter, (he) is devoid of emotions (24). This claim is in consonance with Eze's above opinion of Odogwu's egoistic dispositions that are culturally based on African social construct, where the society tries to construct men's display of emotion, actions and reactions differently. As Adichie pointed out,

patriarchy thrives on having lower standards for men and boys... we have to smash and dismantle the way that we have constructed masculinity. I think it is toxic. We have to teach little boys to be vulnerable. We have to make vulnerability something to be proud of. And I also have lately been thinking about the power of shame... what if we have to teach boys how to be ashamed of many of the things that define toxic masculinity? What if we teach boys to be ashamed of not being able to communicate? Not being able to be in touch with their emotions? What if vulnerability was a thing to be proud of for boys and I think, related to that, it's important for us to teach girls that it's okay for boys to cry (cited in Amaefula 25).

It is common in Nigeria to find people both male and female shame a young boy with comments like, why cry like a girl? Making show of emotions a woman's affair or attribute. This pattern of shaming, Amaefula laments, hardens the young male into a domineering figure who would later become adept at toxic masculinity (25). This social construct is rooted in language as Oha (cited in Amaefula) states,

Both the repression of women and erection of hegemonic masculinity are tucked into the use of proverbs and generalized discussions on the positive roles of adages in Igbo culture... Igbo traditional philosophy of language holds that it is produced and consumed by individuals. This is represented in an Igbo proverb-about-proverbs which says, "Ilu bummanu e ji eriokwu" (proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten). But if proverbs are used in "eating" the meaning in verbal interaction, it is very necessary to pay attention to the semantic and rhetorical qualities of these proverbs and how such qualities of these proverbs and how such qualities are utilized by individuals on producing (gendered) meanings that others may consume to their 'health' or 'ill-health' (Oha cited in Amaefula 26).

The above is evident in the use of proverbs in the play which Odogwu in his assumed sophistication could not read meanings beyond the spoken words of his assumed uncle, Okosisi. Though Okosisi offers a vague and feeble reason that the Abia dance has enormous consequences as it involves the living, dead and the unborn, and has hidden consequence, but meanings are hidden in his use of proverbs in the play. For example:

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| Okosisi: | A wise man does not beat the drum of war if he is not ready for war. |
| Odogwu: | Uncle, there's no need of talking about war in this situation, I'm wise enough to know how to avoid anything that portends war. |
| Okosisi: | Wisdom is like a vast desert and cannot be covered in simplicity...one does not need to climb the palm tree in order to drink palm wine...Abia dance is so intricate that you think you know but you do not know the meaning of what you think you know. |
| Odogwu: | Uncle, I can assure you that before taking this decision, I carried out extensive research on that and other traditional activities involved in it. I'm convinced that I am in a perfect position to be the Abia dancer. |
| Obi: | What is there to be afraid of? The main stipulations are that the persons father must have joined the ancestors, else he will be compelled to join them soon after; that the person should be a |

married man, have a son, and must never have been involved in forced sex or violation of another person's spouse.

Okosisi: (*Sadly*) It's only the tree that is in the swamp that understands the language of fishes...you have great responsibility to this family, to your wife and children. You cannot discharge that responsibility by embarking on a dangerous activity. It is like *usugede*, a dance of evil consequences. Odogwu, don't allow the gods to judge you for not judging them (*Rainstorm in the Desert*, 34-36).

The tradition of the community regarding the festival of Abia dance is crystal clear and culture-based. Odogwu is familiar with the stipulations regarding participation in the Dance but fails to realize that two of the conditions are not in his power, both involving paternity. According to Toni Duraku,

Rainstorm in the Desert raises a number of issues: we are not the master of our fate, and we can only determine the future with the prison of the past... Odogwu had the opportunity to investigate before his dance but made a conscious even if presumptions choice that was built on trust... at any case, naivete' is Odogwu's flaw because careful men would before embarking on the contest fitter the requirements of the ritual dance for one can depend on circumstances within his control and not place faith in another, particularly with paternity (41).

Although, the major focus of the play is dance as a traditional essence of the people but the contemporary issue of infidelity as a social affair becomes the platform to reemphasize the potency of some cultural beliefs within a community, and a people. Duruaku furthers, the play does not so much concern infidelity as it about presumptuous trust, the shadow of the past, and the potency of cultural caveats (41). Published in 2018, *Rainstorm in the Desert* is amongst the most recent plays of Nwabueze and has gained avalanche of critical reviews and studies due to the uniqueness of the story that is based on contemporary or modern issues of infidelity and betrayal. In recent years, the issue of infidelity has become more rampant that couples have resorted to divorce and separation as a result of infidelity from their spouses after conducting DNA on their children. The plot of the play is structured into five scenes with descriptive dramatic capturing: The journey begins; The Arena; Darkness Dawns; The Aftermath; Golgotha with a preceding overture.

The plot of *Rainstorm in the Desert* is closely knitted with an interplay of past and present incidence captured in different settings within the above descriptive dramatic captions. From the author's preface, the play is designed as audience participatory drama, some nicely-timed actions, dramatic surprises, and an avalanche of comments and situations of life and living are dramatically designed to make the

paly oscillate from the traditional to the contemporary. Audience participation that would help it to foster dramatic comprehension. It is also designed to help the audience feel the impact of the social pulse and socio-cultural problems of the society in its entirety. Conceived as "peoples' theatre", the play portrays the society as an arena where outrageous activities take place and these activities are covered by social masks, the masks of deception designed to hoodwink the world. Because of the importance of song, drum, the *Ogene* and *Oja*, there is need to render the songs faithfully in order not only to enliven the play and heighten dramatic tension but to enact non-verbal actions capable of engaging the attention of the audience and eliciting rhetorical action and reaction... this play advocates that the distance between the performer and the audience needs to be drastically reduced, or even completely dominated.

The criticism of Igbo drama has been mostly based on critical relativism. This process is tied to human cognition that is based on socio-cultural background of both the playwright and the critic. Literature can either be read for pure pleasure or be subjected to scholarly study that is as precritical or critical. Precritical response occurs when a pedestrian reader gives immediate response to an artistic creation while critical response occurs when a reader uses intellectual and professional knowledge for the ultimate appreciation of a piece of literary work. Nwabueze gives an example of both situations as thus:

A group of university students decided to spend their free period watching a masquerade performance. They head for the village square where the performance is taking place. The mingling with other peers as they discuss excitedly about the performance and its interesting aspects increases their pleasure. They perceive the aesthetics of the costume, makeup, diversity of movement, and the coordination of dramatic action and their suggestive archetypical message. What they perceive is a precritical response to the performance. From another angle, another group emerges, this time less boisterous and excited. They are students of theatre arts, accompanied by their lecturer who is leading them on field research to analyse the performance. They are versed with the theories of performance and the exigencies of dramatic productions. On the general level, they receive the experience as the first group, but their special intellectual knowledge places them on another pedestal of comprehension and analyses of the performance. This leads to the application of learned interpretative techniques to intellectual analysis of the proceedings. This is the critical response ("Igbo Masquerade Drama and the Origin of Theatre: A Comparative Synthesis", 10-11).

The theoretical framework for the study is Reader-Response theory in the perspective of Stanley E. Fish, an American literary critic. This analytical tool is considered most appropriate than other theories because the work centres on identifying, examining and analyzing themes and socio-cultural ideologies in the plays under study. Fish's postulation of Reader Response theory which he explained in his essay "interpreting the variorum" introduced this seminal concept that radically reverses the interpretive theory of literary works by locating meaning not in texts only but in readers, not in individual response only but in the protocols of communities (playwright inclusive). By implication, community or societal opinion reflects the meaning and understanding, interpretation and analysis of a text. According to Fish, texts are empty in themselves and made meaningful only by the reader applying societal ideologies. The meaning of a text is created by the community, rather than discovered by the reader.

Rainstorm in the Desert aside being a cultural drama can also be construed as a historical drama because of the abovementioned societal issues. As Julie Umukoro opines, a historical drama is one that takes retrospective view of society, from factual perspective of its artistic or imaginative essence (154). This thus attributes historicity to any drama depicting society in the light of existing truth and reality, be it a past or present situation. In addition, Anyachonkeya states that, the play could be read as a historical drama, in that it is a true tale, in fictive milieu, on the polarized social climate of Nigeria in recent times. *Rainstorm in the Desert* really fits into the picture of a historical drama (135). With Odogwu's desire to acquire fame as the Abia Laurette having acquired a university degree and successful in his line of business, a social reality of modern times, realizes the marital infidelity of his mother and his wife against his supposed late father and himself. This is an abnormality ravaging the contemporary Nigerian families in recent times. It is through this singular act of acquiring fame that his entire existence came crushing. Akamonye in an attempt to play god in the chief priesthood of the community in the play, *Echoes of Madness* shows the theme of human manipulations of social and cultural affairs. But to prove the potency of the cultural belief of the people, the prophecy of the gods was fulfilled in the return of Obiora on that day of the occasion. The quest for fame and power in Igbo socio-political space bereft most contenders the consciousness of thinking in the direction of the core essence of service to humanity.

In *Echoes of Madness*, the quest to acquire power and position as a prevalent situation in Nigeria where most people struggle to enter public offices for the benefits therein. In the ideological culture of Onwuama clan, the oracle names the Eze Avuja which has no form of human interference. In the play, the oracle names Obiora as the next chief priest even when he has been outside the country for over fifteen years, and returned the same day that this pronouncement was made following the shrine path leading to his family house when he could have followed another road to his house. As Agozie Ugwu submits in his article, "scenographic representation of Diasporic themes... it is a matter of tradition that the spokesman Osuofia inquires

from the gods to find out the person to succeed the deceased chief priest and revealed that the duty of breaking kola nuts for the gods falls on Obiora Nnadozie, the man that lives in the Whiteman's land" (156). The people doubted the possibility of this declaration from Osuofia because the said person lives far away in a foreign land without any form of communication in recent times. Osuofia assured the people that after a sacrifice to the gods that Obiora will return. Indeed, Obiora returned with Brenda, his American wife towards the tail end of the festival.

The people of Onwuama believe in the potency of sacrifices and ritual especially to the Avuja deity and that explains the gathering at the shrine for the coronation of a new chief priest even when they are very much aware that the chosen one is living in the Whiteman's land. Even after the scheming of Akamonye to influence the answers from the gods during pronouncement, Osuofia pronounces "a man that lives in a Whiteman's land" instead of "a man that has worked with the Whiteman". This is evident in Akamonye's conversation with Okanume:

Akamonye: Okanume! Come off that argument. There is no road there. In this modern age, oracles are no longer potent. It's the voice of man that directs the wisdom of the oracle. As I was saying, I saw Osuofia three nights before he faced the elders to interpret the wisdom of the oracle. I gave him some stipulated amount of money to purchase his voice. But he was so overtaken by palm wine that he made a wrong pronouncement. Instead of saying that new chief priest was a man in the white man's job, which could have pointed directly at me, he said it was a man living in the Whiteman's land which panted the arrow at Obiora.... Osuofia was told what to say. It was unfortunate that semantics failed him during the assembly of elders.

Okanume: Or that Avuja directed his tongue accordingly.

Ojinnaka: What did you do to correct the error.

Akamonye: Very good. I was going to convince the elders to ask for a second interpretation, to give Osuofia the opportunity to correct the error... Then, the unfortunate thing happened. Obiora returned from America and spoilt everything. You're all witness to this.

Ojinnaka: Don't you think it was Avuja who brought him back.

Akamonye: ... how do you think such a thing is possible? His return was a mere coincidence. Believe me. Avuja has no hand in it.

Ojinnaka: ... There is a lot of complication in this matter, and I am reluctant to continue with this arrangement. I know times are bad, but one has to be careful to notice when he's being warned by the ancestors. I was born and bred in this village,

and I can discern the voice of the ancestors... I was one of the elders who confronted him and demanded to know how a man living in a foreign land could possibly be the chief priest. He said he would perform some rituals to bring Obiora back. He did, and Obiora returned. And now you tell me that his return was a coincidence. D'you think I'm a child? (*Echoes of Madness*, 52-54)

In *Echoes of Madness*, the postulation of Fish is evident in the authorial voice clearly spotted in the words of Ojinnaka representing the Onwuama people. A core Igbo man believes in tradition (Odinala), the potency of the gods and control from the world beyond (spirituality of human existence). Uche Nwaozuzu posits that socio-cultural ideologies in the play are made manifest in the "tragic plot that revolves around Obiora's resistance to tradition and the capitulation to a confluence of fate and human machinations championed by his uncle Akamonye (195). The acknowledgement of the supernatural and ancestral control is not alien to Igbo people, Hence the continuous attempt to make clear statement in this regard by playwrights. Bringing divine injunction that are characterized by character portrayal and dramatic themes. It is worthy to note that both Akamonye and Brenda are forces against tradition and the cultural beliefs of the people. While Akamonye plays the physical and mental destructive role on Obiora and other elders of the community concerning the potency of *Avuja*, Brenda continuously destroys the mental Igboness of Obiora through her words and actions. For example:

Brenda: What a family? We have to get the hell out of this dungeon. Nothing appears to work here. People are so goddam unfriendly, so hungry looking, so vicious and dishonest. A bunch of creatures without any moral scruples or conscience, selfish, callous, hypocritical creatures whose wickedness borders on the satanic display of sadistic action. This place is a bedlam. It's no place of habitation for normal human beings. I wonder if God really created the people around here. They should more appropriately be described as the descendants of Beelzebub... This place is an excellent description of hell (*Echoes of Madness*, 192).

In addition, Ifeoma Nwosu-Okoli in her article, "perspectives on cultural values: An appreciation of Emeka Nwabueze's *Echoes of Madness*" describes Brenda's attitude as madness especially her disgust and hatred for her husband's folks as captured in her statement. She observes that,

Brenda would not allow Obiora to return home after his father's death. As far as she concerned, the burial of Obiora's father is the business of

undertakers, and Obiora from buying some gift items for his relations when he is eventually released by Brenda to go home (of course, not for the sake of going home but for the sake of establishing her, 'dream business empire' (that Obiora talked so much about) while her husband is on his own 'dream big' job as director of a newly created government parastatal (268).

Another socio-cultural ideology in both plays is in the use of language as a linguistic repertoire of the proverbial genre in African literature. As Anyachonkeya submits in his article, "A linguistic study of Emeka Nwabueze's *Echoes of Madness*", since the play has a rural setting, where the dramatic personae are predominantly elders, it is not unusual to expect these adult characters ply each other with rich linguistic heritage of their culture, in proverbs, idiomatic structures and the idiolect or language habits and patterns of thought of the speech community of the people (277). The same is obtainable in the play, *Rainstorm in the Desert*. Nwabueze largely explores dialogue using the dramatic technique of extrospection in his works. He shows versatility and flexibility in the understanding of theatre and society, and applies the embellishments of language and dialogue in his literary works of drama. He has proved his gallantry in dramatic techniques as well as his scholarly works especially by applying the extrospection of dialogue. Nwabueze uses this dramatic charisma, coupled with his academic prowess to re-awaken the spirit of Africa's philosophical picturization and social realities through his use of dialogue to add aesthetics to his plays. According to Cajetan Nwosu,

Good diction (in language or dialogue) should be clear without being common, poetry elevates language and removes it from everyday usage and makes it unusual metaphorical and ornamental. Therefore, playwrights and agents of social organizations should popularize a dialogue that will project a cultural identity of the people and promote "active Dialogue" and engaging dialogue which in the perspective of researcher would inject fresh into the dramaturgy of literary drama (194).

Language as one of the essential techniques in writing and analysis of any dramatic text. A playwright through language communicates his ideas and deploys it to suit the objectives of writings. A versatile playwright applies the use of language as means to create different characters with distinguishing nature. This is what Nwabueze achieves with dialogue embellished with axioms and idiomatic expressions among characters in his plays. In choosing language for Obiora, Akamonye, Osuofia, Brenda in *Echoes of Madness* and Odogwu, Okosisi, Agbalanze, Ugoada and Agidigbo in *Rainstorm in the Desert* and in fact all the characters in the plays, the playwright portrays accurate

choice of language according to emotion of the characters, social status, individual ideologies and beliefs.

Conclusion

Nwabueze's *Rainstorm in the Desert* and *Echoes of Madness* present creative and contemporary issues based on culture and belief in the Igbo setting, a challenging and multi-layered work for the critic. The plays explore various themes and ideological issues that are prevalent in Igbo societies, relating to culture and traditions, post-colonial struggles, and various constructions of realities. Bringing various Igbo beliefs and worldview to the knowledge of the reader. Also, the use of 'dance' to project and articulate such serious issue as infidelity in the play. *Echoes of Madness*, adds layers of complexity to the works of the playwright, requiring careful consideration of knowledge in the sensitivity of certain political but sacred cultural activities in various African societies that are beyond human manipulations and schemes. Similarly, *Rainstorm in the Desert* and *Echoes of Madness* offer creative contemporary piece for theatre directors who are willing to explore the challenges of bringing these sociocultural imperatives to the appreciation of the audience. As Ossie Enekwe observes,

When we read a novel, a short story, or even the play script, we cannot see (with our eyes) the characters and their situations. We have to imagine the characters and setting talked about by the writer through words on paper. This is quite unlike what happens when we watch a drama performance which appeals to us mainly through the senses. We actually see the characters, represented by actors, real human beings. We may see their settings, costumes and props (what they use such as hoes, plates). We can also hear sound of these people. We hear them talk, sing, cry or laugh. If a plate falls on the floor, we hear it clatter. All this is not possible when we read a novel, a play script, a short story (17 as cited in Eze).

This work identified themes and socio-cultural ideologies in the two plays. These findings are made manifest in some Igbo ideological leanings, sociological inferences and cultural essentials in the plays. The ideological leanings also known as ideological culture are based on beliefs and worldview of a people which includes supernatural manifestations, gods and ancestors, spirits and divination, axioms and proverbs. The sociological inferences are made manifest in the following prevalent themes such as infidelity and betrayal, politics and power, Human influence and manipulation, Clash of modernity and tradition, and Greed and Selfishness. The cultural essentials in these plays manifested in communal activities like festivals, music and dance, masquerade and masquerading, and rituals and ritualistic elements.

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