A Playwright's Commentary and Interrogation on Nigerian Politics: A Reading of Innocent Ohiri's Selected Plays

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Abstract: *This paper examines Innocent Ohiri's dramatic works, Hire and Fire and Bound to Die, as a commentary on Nigeria's socio-political landscape. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, the study analyzes Ohiri's portrayal of systemic issues such as corruption, unemployment, poor governance, and the abuse of power. The plays utilize satire, realism, and allegory to critique leadership failures while highlighting the resilience and agency of ordinary citizens in demanding justice and accountability. Ohiri's narratives expose the moral decay and socio-economic inequalities entrenched in Nigeria's political systems, yet they also present a vision of hope by emphasizing collective action, ethical governance, and the inevitability of justice. This paper contributes to the discourse on African political drama by situating Ohiri's works within the wider tradition of postcolonial literature and demonstrating their relevance to contemporary governance and civic engagement in Nigeria. It recommends that there should be scholarly attention to Ohiri's contributions and explores how his dramaturgy can inspire meaningful political and social transformation.*

Keywords: - *Dramaturgy, Politics, Governance, Innocent Ohiri.*

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Introduction

The relationship between drama and politics is profoundly rooted in the historical role of the arts as a medium for societal commentary. Consequently, theatre and drama have long been adopted as tools for reflecting societal concerns and critiquing governance in Nigeria. From pre-colonial to post-independence periods, Nigerian dramatists have used their craft to question power dynamics, challenge corruption, and advocate for societal change. Specifically, drama is a form of literary expression, hence has been used to critique, reflect, and influence political realities. In Nigeria, where political instability, corruption, and socioeconomic struggles have been recurring themes, dramatists have played a pivotal role in highlighting these issues. Innocent Ohiri, a prominent Nigerian playwright, is among those whose works provide critical insights into the political landscape of the country. His plays do not only entertain but also interrogate governance, justice, and societal values.

Drama has historically served as a tool for political assessment and social mobilization. This relationship can be traced to ancient traditions such as the classical Greek theatre where theatrical performances often mirrored societal tensions and questioned authority. In modern African societies, drama exceeds entertainment to act as a medium for addressing socio-political concerns. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1981), emphasize this role with the assertion that literature should be a reflection of the struggles within a society. Nigerian dramatists have adopted this philosophy to address issues such as colonialism, dictatorship, and democratic failure.

Nigerian drama, in particular, has been shaped by the Nigeria's complex history which is marked by colonial exploitation, civil war, military coups, and the challenges of democratic governance. Playwrights like Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, and Ola Rotimi have used drama to critique oppressive regimes, explore themes of social justice, and promote democratic ideals (Obafemi, 2008). Given this instance, Innocent Ohiri, offers a unique perspective on Nigerian politics through his plays, which reflect the relationship between governance, morality, and cultural identity. Ohiri's works focus on the relationship between personal ethics and political governance,

thereby commenting on the human cost of political failure. His narratives often dramatize the effects of corruption, poor leadership, and the erosion of societal values. Ohiri's energy aligns with the institutional makeup of African drama, which uses storytelling to critique and reconstruct political realities (Bamidele, 2000). Summarily, this study seeks to unearth the ways in which Ohiri engages with political themes. A closer examination of Ohiri's select plays can reveal how he employs characters, plots, and dramatic techniques to provide a commentary on Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

The Nigerian Political Landscape

Politics in Nigeria has been a central point of scholarly inquiry due to the country's complex political history and varied population. Counting from colonial times through independence, military regimes, and democratic changeovers, Nigeria's political narrative have been characterized with challenges and transformations. From a historically viewpoint, it is a fact that British colonialism, which began in the late 19th century, imposed artificial boundaries that amalgamated over 250 ethnic groups into one entity (Falola & Heaton, 2008). According to Ekeh (1975), the colonial administration's indirect rule system favoured certain ethnic

groups, notably the Hausa-Fulani in the north, creating structural inequalities that persist in modern politics. Scholars argue that colonial policies sowed the seeds of regionalism and ethnic divisions that have been exploited in post-colonial governance (Ake, 1996). Relatively, post-independence politics were marked by the struggle to integrate diverse ethnic groups into a cohesive nation-state. Early political leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Ahmadu Bello, and Obafemi Awolowo pursued regional rather than national interests; this situation sparked divisions. It is interesting to note that, the First Republic (1963–1966) collapsed under the weight of corruption and ethnic tensions, which culminated in a military coup and the Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970) (Osaghae, 1998). This in consequence ultimately deepened political fractures.

Typically, governance in Nigeria has been a mix between military and civilian regimes. Notably, both kinds of governance faced significant condemnation for poor leadership and systemic corruption. Joseph (1987) emphasize the "prebendal" nature of Nigerian politics, where state resources are distributed based on patronage rather than merit or national interest. Clearly, this system perpetuates inefficiency, inequality, and public disillusionment with governance. The military

era which spanned between 1966 and 1999, promised stability but successive regimes often make do with authoritarian practices. Scholars note that military leaders like General Sani Abacha institutionalized corruption on an unprecedented scale, while civil liberties were severely curtailed (Adejumobi, 2000). Be that as it may, the return to democracy in 1999 marked a significant milestone, nevertheless civilian administrations have struggled to deliver good governance. Sizing this point, Suberu (2007) holds that presidents such as Olusegun Obasanjo, Muhammadu Buhari, and Goodluck Jonathan have faced criticism for failing to tackle systemic corruption and ensure equitable development.

Granted the foregoing, it suffices to say that corruption is a central character in Nigerian politics and a critical impediment to development. Transparency International consistently ranks Nigeria among the most corrupt nations globally. According to Ake (1996), this problem is attributed to a patrimonial system where public office is seen as an avenue for personal enrichment. This culture of corruption has led to the mismanagement of Nigeria's vast resources, particularly oil revenues, which constitute the backbone of the economy (Watts, 2004). In reaction to the culture of corruption, most

efforts to curb political fraud have proven futile. The anti-corruption campaigns of recent administrations, particularly under Muhammadu Buhari for instance, have been met with mixed reactions. Agbiboa (2012) holds that while some progress has been made, critics argue that these efforts are often selective and politically motivated. Targeting opposition figures while shielding allies has been a major driver. The implication has not been friendly; as a matter of fact, the endemic nature of corruption in the system has eroded public trust in government institutions and undermined democratic consolidation.

As a related factor, scholars have debated on the issue of election. Since the transition to democracy in 1999, elections have been marred by violence, voter suppression, and allegations of rigging (Onapajo, 2014). It is within frame to state that these challenges undermine the legitimacy of electoral outcomes and weaken democratic institutions. Given this instance, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), instituted to conduct credible elections becomes a central theme. Reforms such as the introduction of electronic voting systems and voter card technology have shown promise, but issues such as vote-buying and political thuggery persist (Omotola, 2010). The 2015 presidential election for instance, which saw the peaceful transfer of power from Goodluck Jonathan to Muhammadu Buhari, was greeted as a significant milestone. This instance indicated that democracy could thrive in Nigeria despite its many challenges (Suberu, 2015). Relatively, ethnicity is a colourable concept. This subject is perhaps the most contentious issue in Nigerian politics. The weight of this matter has shaped voting patterns, party affiliations, and governance outcomes. The politicization of ethnicity stems from colonial practices that institutionalized divisions among Nigeria's major ethnic groups; the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo (Falola & Heaton, 2008). In the post-independence era, political parties have often aligned along ethnic lines, thereby expanding regional disparities and marginalization. Osaghae (1998) argue that ethnic politics destabilize national unity and hinder development. For instance, the zoning system, which allocates political offices based on regional and ethnic considerations, has been criticized for prioritizing representation over competence. However, Ihonvbere (1999) contend that ethnicity cannot be ignored in a diverse society like Nigeria, and mechanisms to balance representation are essential for stability.

It is of interest to note that Nigeria's status as an oil-rich nation has profoundly influenced its

political economy. The discovery of oil in the 1950s transformed the country into one of Africa's largest economies but also created a state heavily dependent on petroleum revenues (Watts, 2004). Stating its direct implications, this dependence has had adverse effects, including the neglect of other economic sectors and heightened regional tensions, particularly in the oil-producing Niger Delta. The Niger Delta region has been a host to conflict due to environmental degradation, resource control struggles, and underdevelopment. Militants such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) have used violence to demand greater control over oil resources (Ikelegbe, 2005). Whereas initiatives such as the Amnesty Program (2009) have reduced hostilities, the underlying issues of inequality and environmental injustice remain unresolved (Okonta & Douglas, 2001). Today, militancy is the Niger Delta is more or less an acceptable parade.

With Nigeria's political stay, lots of questions have been asked in reaction. Civil society organizations (CSOs) for instance have played a significant role in Nigeria's political development, advocating for accountability, human rights, and electoral reforms. During the military era, groups like the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) were instrumental in resisting authoritarianism and pushing for democratization (Adejumobi, 2000). In the democratic era, CSOs continue to hold governments accountable, though they face challenges such as limited funding and government repression. In another interest, the rise of social media has also transformed political participation in Nigeria, particularly among the youth. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook have become spaces for activism, as observed in the #EndSARS movement against police brutality in 2020. Akintola (2021) notes that digital activism reflects a growing awareness and engagement with political issues.

The challenges of Nigerian politics are complex and deep. The problem encompasses issues of corruption, ethnic polarization, and weak institutions. There are however reasons for optimism. The peaceful transfer of power in 2015 presidential elections, ongoing electoral reforms, and the rise of politically conscious youth movements suggest that change is possible. Scholars emphasize the need for a holistic approach that combines institutional reforms, civic education, and inclusive policies to build a more stable and equitable political system (Suberu, 2015; Onapajo, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

This paper shall rely on the Postcolonial theory in treating its theoretical concern.

Postcolonial theory is a very important framework that examines the enduring effects of colonialism on the political, cultural, and economic structures of formerly colonized nations. Engrained in the works of scholars like Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the theory critiques the power imbalances established during colonial rule and their persistence in post-independence societies.

Edward Said's *Orientalism (*1978) appraises how colonial powers constructed non-Western cultures as inferior "Others" to justify imperial dominance. Frantz Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), emphasizes the psychological and cultural alienation caused by colonialism and the necessity of resistance for genuine decolonization. In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha's concept of "hybridity" explores the cultural negotiations and mixed identities resulting from colonial encounters (Bhabha, 1994), while Gayatri Spivak's work, particularly *Can the Subaltern Speak*? (1988), interrogates the silencing of marginalized voices in postcolonial discourses.

In a related interest, postcolonial theory critiques neo-colonialism. As highlighted by Kwame Nkrumah (*Neo-Colonialism: The Last*

Stage of Imperialism, 1965), the theory addressing how economic dependency and global power structures continue to subjugate former colonies. Granting an outlook on the themes of resistance, identity, and power, postcolonial theory provides intuitions into the ongoing struggles for autonomy and cultural repossession in postcolonial societies.

Per application, the postcolonial theory aligns seamlessly with the topic under scrutiny as it provides a framework to analyze how Innocent Ohiri critiques the socio-political realities shaped by Nigeria's colonial past and its post-independence struggles. Postcolonial theory affords tools to explore the lingering effects of colonialism on Nigeria's governance, corruption, and ethnic divisions, which are recurring themes in Ohiri's plays. Given this instance, Ohiri's dramatic works can be examined as vehicles of resistance against neo-colonial practices, such as the exploitation of resources and the perpetuation of power imbalances by post-independence elites. In addition, the theory's focus on hybridity and identity permits an exploration of how Ohiri portrays the cultural and moral conflicts faced by Nigerians contending with traditional values and the inherited colonial systems. Ultimately, with postcolonial theory, the study can critically evaluate Ohiri's plays as cultural artifacts that

challenge colonial legacies and advocate for political accountability, social justice, and a redefinition of Nigeria's national identity.

Textual Appraisal

This paper explores the dramaturgy of Innocent Ohiri. Ohiri's works often explore social and political themes. Be that as it may, given the instance that this work is highly concerned with the subject of politics, a reading of two of Ohiri's finest plays, *Hire and Fire and Bound to Die,* will be carried out.

A Reading of Hire and Fire

Synopsis

Primarily concerned with one of Nigeria's most menacing issue, unemployment, *Hire and Fire* is a compelling political satire. The protagonist Johny is one of many members of the Ogbuoge community who is suffering from unemployment crisis. After enduring many failed attempts at gaining employment and suffers malpractice and ineptitude from the organizers of an employment campaign just concluded under the umbrella of the Ministry of Employment and Labour, Johny joins forces with others to take up an industrial action with the formation of the Association of Unemployed Citizens (AUC).

Under the leadership of Johny, members of the AUC protest publicly against unemployment, hunger, lack of basic amenities and bad governance. Obviously acting on the directive of some high-profile government official(s), police officers disrupt the peaceful demonstration and arrest some members of the AUC including Johny. Excos of the AUC quickly reacted and took Johny and the others on bail.

Amidst this complication, Johny and his wife, Jane, squabble over the children they had out of wedlock. Soberly, Jane initially breaks the secret of having a daughter prior to marrying Johny. Johny who lightly received the news, equally reveals that he also has three boys from three different mothers before marrying Jane. The furious Jane is soon brought to serenity upon the discovery that she is three months pregnant. Simultaneous to this event, breakthrough comes in view for Johny as the AUC leadership vote some good amount of money in the context of salary for him. In spite of the domestic tension, Jane who is since the breadwinner of the home is filled with joy now that Johny is gainfully employed. Johny and Jane soon make a big happy home as all four kids born out of wedlock reunites to form a single-family unit.

The AUC campaign is greeted with positivity as the Commissioner for Employment, Labour and Productivity host the AUC to discuss the way-forward. After listening to their complains and

demands, the Commissioner informs the house that there has been an approval of allowance for unemployed members, free computer literacy programme and free skill acquisition programme for all unemployed persons. In addition, the commissioner holds that the President of Ogbuoge has mandated all the companies within to increase their employment quota by twenty-percent.

Ohiri's Dramaturgy on the Nigerian Political Landscape: A Reading of *Hire and Fire*

Ohiri's Hire and Fire exemplifies his commitment to using drama as a medium for socio-political commentary, specifically in addressing Nigeria's political and economic challenges. The play clearly focuses on the pervasive issue of unemployment in Nigeria. This is a crisis with far-reaching consequences for individuals and society. Ohiri employs both satire and realism to critique bad governance, expose systemic ineptitudes, and explore the relationships between of politics, activism, and human relationships. Through its plot, characters' attributes, and thematic concerns, Hire and Fire serves as a microcosm of Nigeria's political landscape. Related themes shall be discussed below.

Critique of Governance and Leadership

Ohiri uses Hire and Fire to highlight the inefficacy of Nigeria's leadership in addressing unemployment and related socio-economic issues. The protagonist, Johny, represents the struggles of millions of Nigerians who are victims of systemic failures in the labour market.

> Kate: My sister… of course the number of people at each interview centre can baffle the most dedicated of workers.

> Meg: That tells you the rate of unemployment in this our Ogboge town… it is too high (Ohiri, p.3, 2005).

Johny's unsuccessful attempts to secure employment highlight the lack of coordinated, transparent, and inclusive policies for job creation. Specifically, the malpractice and ineptitude displayed by the Ministry of Employment and Labour during the employment campaign mirror the inefficiencies often associated with Nigerian public institutions.

At large, the play critiques the insensitivity of political elites who perpetuate unemployment through poor planning and corruption. The disruption of the peaceful protest by police officers at the order of government officials reflects the state's tendency to suppress opposition rather than address legitimate grievances. Ohiri thus portrays a political landscape where governance is marked by self-

interest, repression, and disregard for citizens' welfare. This is in fact a recurring theme in Nigeria's post-independence history.

Activism and Grassroots Mobilization

A significant aspect of Hire and Fire is its portrayal of grassroots activism as a response to systemic oppression. Johny's leadership in forming the Association of Unemployed Citizens (AUC) demonstrates the power of collective action in advocating for social and economic justice. Through the mobilization of unemployed individuals to protest against hunger, poor governance, and a lack of basic amenities, the play emphasizes the importance of civic engagement in holding leaders accountable.

> Johny: Yes, thank you! Madam I've come to intimate you with our plan to form an association for the unemployed citizens… an organization that would fight this menace that is unemployment. These two colleagues of mine know about it.
> Tina: Yes, we do, but the registration has not started.
> Johny: It has. That is why I am here. Many will be registered at the interview venue. I felt that madam may not come for the interview so I came in to register her here (Ohiri, p.9, 2005).

Ohiri celebrates the agency of ordinary citizens while acknowledging the risks they face in challenging deeply rooted power structures. Thus, the arrest of Johny and other protesters highlights the challenges of activism in a political environment where opposition is often criminalized. However, the eventual success of the AUC's campaign, resulting in policy changes and dialogue with the Commissioner for Employment, Labour, and Productivity, reflects Ohiri's optimism about the potential for transformative change through sustained advocacy.

Satire and Realism as Dramatic Devices

Ohiri employs satire to critique the contradictions and absurdities within Nigeria's political landscape. The initial ineptitude of the Ministry of Employment and Labour serves as a satirical commentary on the bureaucracy and corruption that dent public service delivery. Similarly, the Commissioner's eventual response; introducing allowances and skill acquisition programmes can be interpreted as both a genuine breakthrough and a reflection of the performative nature of Nigerian politics, where leaders often prioritize optical reflection over real substance.

The play's realism, particularly in its depiction of the personal struggles faced by Johny and Jane, adds depth to the socio-political

commentary. The domestic tensions between Johny and Jane mirror the economic pressures experienced by many Nigerian families, where breadwinning responsibilities often shift due to unemployment. Given this instance, Ohiri captures the complex impact of socio-economic challenges on both individuals and communities.

Social Justice and Equity

Hire and Fire focuses on themes of social justice, equity, and accountability, thereby challenging the government to address systemic inequalities. The Commissioner's eventual acknowledgment of the AUC's demands signifies a shift toward responsive governance. The introduction of skill acquisition and computer literacy programs reflects a recognition of the need for sustainable solutions to unemployment.

> Commissioner: He has also approved a free computer literacy programme and skill acquisition programme for all the unemployed (Ohiri, p.63, 2005).

This thus aligns with the call for policies that empower citizens and reduce dependency on government charity.

Relatively, the play questions structural inequalities in Nigeria's political economy, where resource allocation often favours elites over the marginalized. Thus, by giving voice to the unemployed, Ohiri strengthens the struggles of those excluded from Nigeria's economic opportunities.

Reconciliation and Hope

Despite its critique of governance, *Hire and Fire* make for a hopeful vision of reconciliation and progress. Firstly, the resolution of Johny and Jane's domestic conflicts, signified by the reunification of their children and the arrival of a new baby, reflects the bigger societal healing envisioned through the AUC's successes. Ohiri's dramaturgy suggests that unity, and collective action can overcome socio-political challenges. Additionally, the positive response from the government, including policy reforms and increased employment quotas, reflects Ohiri's belief in the possibility of meaningful change through dialogue and advocacy.

Summarily, in *Hire and Fire*, Ohiri masterfully uses drama to reflect on and critique Nigeria's political landscape. Through its vivid portrayal of unemployment, grassroots activism, and the dynamics of governance, the play presents a comprehensive commentary on the challenges and possibilities of socio-political change.

A Reading of Bound to Die
Synopsis

A drama full of intrigues, *Bound to Die* tells the story of a desperate and ambitious ruler of Ikuku land, Chief Osike. As a matter of fact, his

rise to power comes after Chief Osike kill the former Chief of Ikuku land thus, as the closest heir, he assumes office.

Chief Osike's ways are definitively wild as it is knitted with arrogance, violence and covetousness. The play's main conflict is born out of Chief Osike's desire for Wilo's wife, Ada. Despite the loads of warnings and pleas from elders of community, Chief Osike could not resist the urge to kill Wilo for revolting against Chief snatching of his wife, Ada. Chief Osike hurts even more of his kinsmen however, his doom comes out the orchestration of a close friend and ally, Mazi Onumbu. Mazi Onumbu who secretly bears grudge for Chief Osike for defiling his little daughter, Ogechi, feeds Chief Osike a mystic apple that slowly but eventually kills him. The demise of Chief Osike places the desirous Mazi Onumbu as the next heir to the throne, however fate did not allow his dream come to reality. After the community diviner, Ojionu, exposes Mazi Onumbu as the killer of Chief Osike, Mazi Onumbu is rather condemned to death by the law of Ikuku land.

Ohiri's Dramaturgy on the Nigerian Political Landscape: A Reading of Bound to Die

In Bound to Die, hoping to reflect the complexities of Nigeria's political landscape, Ohiri crafts a drama rich in intrigue, power struggles, and moral lessons. Through the tragic tale of Chief Osike and the corruption, greed, and betrayal that define his reign, the play provides a penetrating critique of leadership and governance. The thematic exploration of power, justice, and accountability clearly aligns with Nigeria's post-colonial experiences, where the interplay of personal ambition and societal expectations often dictates political outcomes. Like the other, Ohiri's Bound to Die uses allegory and realism to dissect the political culture of Nigeria. Related themes shall be discussed below.

Leadership and the Abuse of Power

Chief Osike's tyrannical rule in Bound to Die serves as a symbolic representation of the abuse of power often witnessed in Nigerian politics. His rise to power through the murder of the former chief reflects the violent and opportunistic tendencies associated with some political actors in Nigeria, particularly during military coups.

> Nne: Heard what? Nwigwe, did you hear our discussions?
>
> Nwigwe: That Chief Osike is being suspected to be among those assassins who killed Chief Obi? (Ohiri, p.2, 2008)

Ohiri portrays Chief Osike as a ruler driven by arrogance, greed, and self-interest. This in fact highlight the dangers of unchecked power.

The character of Chief Osike represents the behaviour of post-colonial leaders who prioritize personal desires over the welfare of their communities. His covetousness and eventual murder of Wilo to claim Ada exemplify how personal ambitions can lead to the erosion of societal norms and values. This theme is in fact synonymous with the conduct of some Nigerian politicians who exploit their positions for personal gain, disregarding the consequences for their constituents. Through Osike's character, Ohiri thus critiques leadership that is detached from accountability and morality which is a recurring issue in Nigeria's political history.

Corruption

Corruption is a central theme in *Bound to Die*, depicted through Chief Osike's actions and the larger culture of impunity in Ikuku land. Chief Osike's misdeeds, including the defilement of Mazi Onumbu's daughter and the oppression of revolting voices, mirror the systemic corruption that pervades Nigerian politics. His disregard for the elders' warnings reflects a leader who prioritizes his desires over collective interests.

> Chief Osike: Over my deadbody! Over my deadbody. Not even all the spirits in this land of Ikuku can

successfully plead on his behalf. He is bound to die (Ohiri, p.40, 2008).

Ohiri here highlights how such corruption destabilizes communities, leading to resentment and eventual retribution.

The character of Mazi Onumbu introduces another level to the narrative. With his case, focus is placed on how corruption and vengeance can perpetuate cycles of violence and instability. While Mazi Onumbu's actions are initially motivated by personal grievances, his ultimate goal of seizing power illustrates the corrupting influence of unchecked ambition. The exposure of his crime by the diviner, Ojionu and his subsequent condemnation highlight Ohiri's emphasis on the inevitability of justice, no matter how deep corruption may seem.

Justice, Accountability, and the Rule of Law

A significant aspect of *Bound to Die* is its focus on justice and the consequences of immoral leadership. Both Chief Osike and Mazi Onumbu meet tragic ends, thus the play's central message: no one is above the law. Ohiri uses the diviner Ojionu as a moral compass, representing the role of traditional institutions in maintaining societal order. Given this instance, by exposing Mazi Onumbu's crime, Ojionu restores balance to the community and accountability is met.

This very theme aligns with Nigeria's struggles to establish a functional rule of law, where political elites are often seen operating with impunity. The condemnation of Mazi Onumbu illustrates Ohiri's belief in the power of justice to address societal wrongs, even when delayed. The play's conclusion reflects the hope for Nigeria's political landscape, where leaders are held accountable for their actions, and governance is rooted in fairness and respect for the law.

Betrayal

The theme of betrayal, as seen in Mazi Onumbu's orchestration of Chief Osike's death, emphasizes the fragility of political alliances. Ohiri portrays Mazi Onumbu as a close ally who harbors hidden grievances, ultimately using his closeness to Chief Osike to exact revenge. This very dynamic mirrors the political maneuvering and backstabbing often observed in Nigerian politics, where alliances are frequently based on convenience rather than shared principles.

Ohiri's exploration of betrayal in fact highlights the dangers of a political culture driven by personal interests rather than collective goals. Mazi Onumbu's ambition to seize power after Chief Osike's death thus reflects the cycle of opportunism that perpetuates instability in Nigerian politics. The inability of Mazi Onumbu to achieve his goal now serves as a cautionary tale about the self-destructive nature of greed and the ultimate pointlessness of power obtained through betrayal.

Metaphor of Nigerian Political Landscape

Ohiri's *Bound to Die* serves as an allegory for the larger Nigerian political landscape, reflecting the challenges of leadership, justice, and societal values. The story of Chief Osike aligns with the experiences of corrupt leaders who exploit power for personal gain, only to face eventual consequences. Similarly, Mazi Onumbu's failed ambition illustrates the dangers of power struggles and the recurring nature of political instability in Nigeria.

The play's resolution, where justice prevails through the intervention of traditional authority, presents a vision of hope for Nigeria. It suggests that while the journey toward accountability and ethical governance may be attacked with challenges, the pursuit of justice remains achievable. With Bound to Die, Ohiri employs allegory, satire, and realism to critique the flaws of leadership and governance in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Innocent Ohiri's plays, such as *Hire and Fire* and *Bound to Die*, reveal a thoughtful way in which drama can serve as a mirror of society and a catalyst for political change. Through his incisive use of satire, allegory, and realism,

Ohiri critiques the endemic corruption, poor governance, and socio-economic challenges that define Nigeria's political landscape. His characters and narratives reflect the struggles of ordinary citizens whilst presenting a critical appraisal on the failings of leadership. Similarly, Ohiri's works embody hope as they emphasize the power of collective action, justice, and ethical governance in addressing systemic problems.

The analysis of Ohiri's plays stresses the importance of examining literature as a source of socio-political commentary, especially in a post-colonial society like Nigeria. Ohiri's dramaturgy do not only critiques but also advocates for solutions through dialogue, accountability, and reforms aimed at fostering equity and justice.

Granted the foregoing, future scholarship should expand on the study of Innocent Ohiri's works, situating his plays within the wider context of African political drama and exploring their relevance to contemporary governance issues. Comparative analyses with the works of dramatists like Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan could further enrich understanding of how Nigerian playwrights engage with politics. Additionally, more attention should be given to how Ohiri's plays come to terms with younger audiences and their

relevance to modern movements that advocates for social justice. As Ohiri's plays demonstrate, bridging the disconnect between leadership and the populace is key to building a stable and equitable society. Thus, by integrating the lessons of his dramaturgy into public discourse, Nigeria can harness the transformative power of the arts to inspire and sustain meaningful political change.

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