

# **AAJSMSHEL**

**AFRICA AND ASIA JOURNAL OF SOCIAL AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES,  
HUMANITIES, EDUCATION AND LEGAL STUDIES , SAN JOSE OCCIDENTAL  
MINDORO, PHILIPPINES**

## **AAJSMSHEL**

Africa And Asia Journal of Social And Management Sciences, Humanities, Education and Legal Studies (aajsmshel), San Jose Occidental Mindoro, Philippines

Volume 4, Issue, 2, 2023, ISSN: 2955-0548

Articles are Indexed in Google Scholar Email: [ajhsms2080@gmail.com](mailto:ajhsms2080@gmail.com)

Published by Africa And Asia Journal of Social and Management Sciences, Humanities, Education and Legal Studies: San Jose Occidental Mindoro, Philippines

## **Editorial Board**

**Professor Joselito Aguid (Editor)  
State University, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines**

**Professor Wilson Yayoh (Editor)  
University of Cape Coast, Ghana**

**Professor Akoh Harry Asana (Editor)  
Georgia, Perimeter College Atlanta, Georgia, USA**

**Dr Nsah Julius Bongkireh (Editor)  
University of Buea, Cameroon**

**Dr Sonia Dela Cruz (Editor)  
Polytechnic University of The Philippines**

**Dr Rodrigo V. Lopiga (Editor)  
Polytechnic University of The Philippines**

**Dr Elizabeth D. Roces (Editor)  
La Consolacion University Philippines**

**Dr John Mark Distor (Editor)**  
**Polytechnic University of the Philippines**

**Dr Maricris M. Usita (Editor)**  
**Occidental Mindoro State University**

## **Editorial Note**

**AAJSMSHEL** is a multidisciplinary online google scholar journal that encourages academic excellence in the dissemination of research. It welcomes and publishes well scholarly articles in Social and Management Sciences, Humanities, Education and Legal Studies. Submitted articles are subjected to total peer- review and editing before they are accepted for publication. The journal is domiciled in San Jose Occidental Mindoro, Philippines, Asia. Most of the editors are drawn from STATE UNIVERSITY, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO, PHILIPPINES , University of CAPE Coast, Ghana and other Universities.

**A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THEMES,  
CHARACTER ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL CRITICISM  
IN ASODIONYE EJIOFOR'S *WHO THEN IS SANE?***

By

Chizenum George Ohia PhD  
Department of Theatre and Film Studies  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
Email: chizenum.ohia@uniport.edu.ng

&  
Iloma, Nyenwemaduka Richard PhD  
Department of Theatre and Film Studies  
Faculty of Humanities  
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.  
Email: richard.iloma@ust.edu.ng

**Abstract**

Dramatic literature is a creative reflection of the activities and actions inherent in society. The playwright in his or her creative wisdom encapsulates the microcosm in the society into drama in order to discuss and analyze issues of concern. Most of these issues revolve around human improprieties that hinder peaceful coexistence. The playwright's intention to query moral ineptitude

and sanity in human society is always conveyed and explicated in his or her dramatic and creative exploits. It is on the foregoing assertion that this work is set to investigate the themes, character analysis and social criticism in Ejiofor's *Who then is Sane?* in order to assimilate the playwright's social vision. In dramatic literature, subject matters are mainly deduced from the thematic thrust and character analysis amongst other variables in literary works. The playwright's desire to ask the rhetorical question: Who then is sane? captures the biblical allusion that say "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Roman 3: 23). This human ineptitude constitutes lacuna to achieving moral and social cohesion in society. The human imperfections are propelling forces that spur the playwright to investigate and criticize human factors such as mental instability amongst others in the society in order to maintain sanity and moral decorum. In realizing the aim of the study, the work deployed the use of secondary data collection such as: Textbooks, scholarly journals, Bible and internet amongst others. The work employed genre and incongruity theories as critical shoulders in the analysis of this comic-satire. It is the modest recommendation of this work that playwrights should be encouraged to use the instrument of drama to query and criticize human inadequacies that hinder social harmony in the society.

**Keywords:** Analysis, Critical, Drama, Theme, Character, Characterization and Social Criticism

## **Introduction**

The role of the playwright, viz-a-viz the theatre to any society cannot be contestable. As explained by the Spanish playwright, Federico Garcia Lorca ((1961, p.69), the relationship between the theatre and society is inexhaustible. In his words:

A nation which does not help and does not encourage its theatre is, if not dead, dying just as the theatre which does not feel the social pulse, the historical pulse and catch the genuine colour of its landscape and its spirit with laughter or with tears has no right to call itself theatre

The above explains the playwright's preoccupation as one endowed with the responsibility of re-creating and reenacting social worldview and other related events in his or her dramatic literature. The purpose is to inform, educate and entertain the audience and create social harmony in society. In his attempt to explain the didactic and transformative roles of the playwright to society, Asigbo (2013, 9-10) maintains that 'it is only a fool that insists on learning from his own mistakes when indeed, he can learn from that of others". He believes that he does not have the luxury of time, hence, he chooses to learn from institutions such as theatre which he says is specifically designed to educate and conscientize the human society. He alludes that the Greeks were so convinced on the didactic values of the theatre that it was made mandatory for all citizens to watch plays at the Dionysian festivals. Asigbo notes that during this period in Greece, prisoners were often released and taken to the theatre while the government

subsidizes prices for those who cannot afford. Dramatic literature, therefore, becomes a veritable platform that mirrors human activities through the creative lens of a playwright. Corroborating the above view, Ohia (2017, p. 236) reveals that 'the playwright is a member of society who uses the data provided from the society to educate, inform and entertain the audience. The society, therefore, becomes the source in which the playwright mills his information". In a view to explain the nature and characteristics of drama, Abrams and Harpham present drama as "the form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the character, perform the indicated actions, and utter the written dialogue" (2009, p. 84). In furtherance of explicating the nature of drama in a literary work, Meyer (2005) posits thus:

Literature is equipped with arms, legs, tears, laughs, whispers, shows and gestures that are alive and immediate. Indeed, the word drama derives from the Greek word dram, meaning "to do" or "to perform". The text of many play-the script-may come to life fully only when the written words are fully transformed into a performance (p. 1246).

However, drama does not only mirror society for the intent of entertainment alone but presents and ridicules social problems towards seeking reformation. In furtherance of the importance of drama in the society, Jacobus (1989) asserts “drama is transporting, edifying, spiritually enriching, and blithely amusing depending on the circumstances and experience we choose (p. 18). No doubt, drama is richly endowed in imitation. It is through the act of imitation that the dramatist copies and re-enacts the activities in the society to the audience's delight. In his view, Ohia (2022) asserts that “through imitation; the dramatist interacts with the society. Therefore, drama becomes the mimetic encapsulation of the activities inherent in the society at a given period.” (p. 36). This is because human actions and inactions are reflections of the day-to-day happenings in the society. Corroborating the nature of drama in investigating and re-enacting human experiences before the audience, Jacobus posits that:

The primary ingredients of drama are characters, represented by players; action, described by gestures and movement; thought, implied by dialogue, words, and actions; spectacle, represented by scenery, music, and costume, and finally,

audiences, who respond to this complex mixture (1989, p. 1)

In dramaturgy, a playwright must as a matter of necessity creates believable characters that will portray the thematic thrust of the play. This is because characters convey the idea, thought and feelings to the target audience. When characterization is not effectively achieved, dramatic communication becomes a problem. This is why a playwright creates characters, situations and of course, dramatic environment that will enhance effective audience viewership/readership and participation. It is on the fore-going that this paper focuses on analyzing the themes, characters and social criticism deployed in Ejiofor's play text titled: *Who then is Sane?* In the course of this research, the paper will critically analyze the aforementioned issues.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The analysis of dramatic work under study requires a guiding theoretical framework. This is because theory helps in providing direction and focus in a research field. The play *Who then in Sane?* is a comic-satire that criticises moral ineptitude of man in his environment. In order to analyse the contents of the play, it is

imperative to employ appropriate theories. It is therefore in this direction that the work chose Daniel Chandler's genre and Immanuel Kant's Incongruity theories.

### **An Interrogation of Genre Theory**

The emphasis of genre theory is solely on the classification of critical works into types. For instance, in literary works, genre becomes a parameter for classification and identification. This, therefore, helps to classify literary works into drama, poetry and prose amongst others. It is therefore on the foregoing that Chandler (1997) asserts that:

Since classical times, literary works have been classified as belonging to general types, which were variously defined. In literature, the broadest division is between poetry, prose and drama within which there are further divisions, such as tragedy and comedy, within the category of drama. In the anatomy of criticism, the formalist literary theorist Northrop Frye (1957) presented certain universal genres and modes as the key to organizing the entire literary corpus (p. 1).

Notwithstanding the position of Chandler on the subject and context of genre theory as presented above, other scholars in various disciplines of human endeavours have critically discussed

and analysed the concept of genre theory. Genre creates consciousness and a sense of direction in the minds of writers. When writing, it is important for a writer to choose or rather identify his or her writing genre. In the works of Coe and Freedman, Sinding (1998, p. 41, 2003, p. 9) reveal that genre is categories of literary works as well as “a socially standard strategy, embodies in a typical form of discourse that has involved for responding to a recurring type of rhetorical situation”. It is on the above explanation that the play under examination – *Who then is Sane?* is subjected to critical literary classification for the purposes of analyzing its content field.

### **Interrogating Incongruity Theory**

The incongruity theory is a necessary phenomenon in the examination and analysis of dramatic works such as comedy. This is because comedy is drawn mainly from incongruous situations. Over the years, scholars such as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a German critic and philosopher amongst other scholars have employed the instrumentality of incongruity theory in their critical

works. Revealing the nature and characteristics of incongruity theory, Raskin (1985) asserts that:

Laughter arises from the view of two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, or as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them (as cited in Ritchie, 1999, p. 1).

In satirical inquiry, the focus is on lampooning human and social foibles that disobey social order. It is incongruous to go against the lay down rules and moral principles that govern human conduct in the society. Ohia (2022) informs that “the perception of incongruity theory is, based on the placement of incongruous situations that are in contrast with perception and expectation (p. 27). It is also important to note that juxtaposition of conflicting concepts; activities and situations are ready recipes for laughter. Ohia further states that laughter mostly arises from displacement or contradiction of values, ideas or priority in human conduct. This disorganization or rather a juxtaposition of two things or more in contrasting terms is in itself incongruous and thus elicits laughter” (p. 29). In his opinion, Straus (2014) opines that “the term

incongruity theory” refers to a giving of philosophical accounts of humour that posits the perception of incongruity as the sense of amusement (p. 4). Despite the opinions and contributions of various scholars on the theory of incongruity, this work dwells primarily on Immanuel Kant's theory of incongruity as a study guide. In his opinion, Kant maintained that humour arises from the concept of incongruity; such as the juxtaposition of ideas or two things in contradicting terms. He, therefore, reveals that incongruity theory operates from two levels. It is on this direction that Straus (2014) informs that:

First and most importantly, it explains why people react with laughter in a very wide range of situations. In other words, incongruity theory explains why humans find certain things funny. Secondly, it explains what makes a situation itself funny. This explanatory versatility is an attractive feature of incongruity theory (p.4).

The position above explains that humour occurs as a result of displacement or rather contradicting ideas or values in human action. When human conducts are placed in contradicting terms, laughter is ensured. In this context, Imo (2014) contends that “the concept of incongruity involves experiencing two or more conflicting mental or cognitive concepts at one time” (p. 93).

The work has been able to discuss and analyze relevant theories needed. The Daniel Chandler's genre theory was analyzed as a focus guide in the classification of *Who then is Sane?* into critical literary type. Also, Immanuel Kant's incongruity theory was discussed. This theory informs us that comedy feeds on incongruity. Therefore what comic-satire queries is the incongruous situation that disobeys moral and social conducts in the society. Also, Immanuel Kant's incongruity theory was discussed.

### **Synopsis of the Play:**

Set in Ogbum 'n' Abali community, the play is a parody of the Nigerian nation where corrupt practices and other social vices weigh sway, yet nobody agrees to be corrupt. The playwright uses the WAZOBI Construction Company as a metaphor to represent Nigeria as a nation and its socio-economic activities. As the dramatic action unfolds, it is revealed that the Federal Government awards the building of the National Psychiatric Hospital to the WAZOBI Construction Company. The hospital is sited at Oroabali daily market square which serves as the economic centre

of the people. However, the people of Oroabali reject the construction of the hospital in their community. They consider the building of the psychiatric hospital in their community as an affront and insult. However, the intention of the Government in establishing a national psychiatric hospital is to attend to the mental health of the people. It is revealed that the activities of the WAZOBI Construction Company unravel high levels of mental instability, corruption and other antithetical behaviours that characterize the Nigerian nation in bad lights. The play reveals that all the workers in the company are corrupt and; hence, engaged in one form of corrupt practice or the other. This is made manifest in the character of the Minister of health who serves as a police detective that monitors the activities of the workers in the company. He reveals that by his investigation, everybody is infected with corrupt tendencies. To this end, he summarises that “the irony of it all is that, nobody ever accepts that he is mad, in a country where graves now throw up their rotting contents.

### **Thematic Analysis in the Play**

Literary works are best appreciated and assimilated on

their thematic thrust. Theme helps the readers or viewers of works of art to understand the writer's thoughts, ideas, perceptive and style. Agogbuo (2019) asserts that "the theme is the message which the playwright wants to send across to his audience. It can be seen as a statement or an assertion about the subject of a work and the comprehensive impact of an entire work" (Pp. 167-168). Having established the above, it is time to analyse themes such as corruption and pretence in the play.

**Corruption:** The play anchors its thematic thrust on corruption. Corrupt practices in the society are the essence of social criticism in the play. Corruption has been regarded as a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian Society. The Wazobi Construction Company represents the macrocosm of the Nigerian nation where corruption remains the occurring decimal. Commenting on the foreword of the play, Shaka states thus:

The play, *Who then is Sane?* is an allegory on the cankerworm of corruption which has eaten deep into the common fabric of the Nigerian nation, and needs psychiatric attention. The management of the company, from the Chairman, through Mrs. Owu, who is the Manager, to Vera Kome (Manager's

secretary), to the first two foremen of the company; everyone of them is corrupt. Only Akor Orji-Wali, the authorial voice, resists the corrupt advances of Mrs. Owu (Ejiofor, 2010, p. x).

As it is revealed in the play, almost all the characters have one form of corrupt tendencies or another. What this denotes is that nobody is free from corrupt activities in the society. This singular act of corrupt practice has hindered rapid socio-economic growth in Nigerian society, thus the need to ridicule the anomalies. This is evident in the dialogue below:

**Mr. Genewari:** Well... Madam (looking around cautiously again). I got the contractor to divert the supply of nails to your private warehouse as planned ma...

**Mrs. West:** Beautiful! (Moves in retrospection). I was beginning to worry you know? Well at last it pays off after all... I'll get him to sign a few official documents here to the effect that he supplied those nails to Wazobi Construction Company. (Ejiofor, 2010, p, 36)

The above statement exposes the corrupt activities that surround the management of Wazobi Construction Company. It is obvious that Mr. Genewari and Mrs. West have dubious characters. Their attitude of embezzling the company's property is a testimonial. It

is on this score that the play satirizes the issue of corruption in the society. The statement Who then is sane? is a catchment phrase that captures the true nature of man as a corrupt being. Going by the play's scenario, it is revealed that in every occupational engagement of man; there exist strands of corrupt tendencies.

**Pretence:** The play, *Who then is Sane?* x-rays the pretentious lifestyle of some people in the society. The issue of living a fake life or rather pretending to be what you are not constitutes social criticism in the play. It is important to mention that almost all the characters in the play exhibit double personality traits. It is the double standard in action and deeds that the satirical impulse is built upon. The pretentious lifestyle in the play cuts across characters such as Nduka Orji-Wali, Mr. Akor Orji-Wali, who (a secret agent of the federal government) pretends to be a beggar in order to spy on the activities of the Wazobi Construction Company. However, Nduka Orji-Wali is caught when he picked a wad of currency, the Minister dropped to tempt him. Recall that Nduka Orji-Wali denied the knowledge of picking the money. However, he admitted seeing the said money after the Minister's revelation.

The implication here is that Nduka Orji-Wali is not truthful to himself and the society.

The play exposes persons with questionable character (pretence amongst others). In today's society, many people wear 'mask' of pretence that until a thorough investigation is done, nobody would truly identify who they are. In the play, one is tempted to believe that corruption is the major cause of underdevelopment in Nigeria; yet nobody agrees to be involved in corrupt practices. It is therefore on this premise that the playwright deems it imperative to bring the idea of building a National Psychiatric Hospital as a condition to check the mental state of citizens in the society. This singular situation will go a long way in identifying those with mental cases and possible solutions given to them. Again, in a society where everybody pretends, it takes thorough investigation to reveal the true personality of such persons.

### **Character/Characterisation in *Who then is Sane?***

Characterisation is a technique in drama that helps to delineate character traits. This is because, through characterization, the

qualities of such characters are appreciated. To understand a character; it is important to note the following: what the character says to himself or herself, what other persons say about the character, and how the character dresses amongst other features. Based on the above premise, this work will limit its analysis of some characters in the play such as Beggar (Nduka Orji-Wali), Madman and Madwoman, Mr. Akor Orji-Wali, Mrs. Owu, Chief Wenenda Orji-Wali, Market Women and the Minister (Mr. Onuoha/Deputy Inspector General of Police).

**Beggar:** The beggar is a secret agent of the Federal Government used to spy into the activities of Wazobi Construction Company. The character of a beggar is played by Mr. Nduka Orji-Wali. He pretends to be a beggar in order to carry on with his national assignment as secret agent of the government. He stays at a corner of the company's site to find out who is involved in corrupt practices in the Wozobi Company. His duty as it were is to arrest any corrupt offender. However, in an ironical twist, Beggar (Nduka Orji-Wali) falls victim as a corrupt citizen contrary to expectations of everybody. This is because he dubiously picked a wad of

currency the Minister dropped as bait to catch him. This is made known when he pretends before the Minister that he is an upright man. In this regard, the Minister, exposes his nefarious act before the members of Ogbum n' Abali community and Wazobi Construction Company. Mr. Nduka Orji-Wali is a corrupt man who claims or rather pretends to be sane. The pretentious and mania activities of characters like Nduka Orji-Wali are the reasons for the rhetorical question, who then is sane?

**Madman and Madwoman:** These are psychiatric suspects that need treatment. They are symbolic figures the playwright uses to draw attention to his motif. The play is enveloped in comparison between mania behaviour and the actual corrupt practices in the society. Madness is a serious medical ill-health that needs psychiatric attention. In a society where people behave abnormal, yet; nobody agrees to be insane, illustrates a great sense of mental and moral decomposition. This situation is likened to the endemic corruption that characterised the Nigerian society. It is therefore on the forgoing that characters of 'madman and woman' are created in the play. For the mad woman, she suffers sexual exploitation and

oppression in the hands of Nduka Orji-Wali. Mad people in the society are regarded as social inconveniences, yet some people go secretly to exploit them sexually. This is evident in the amorous relationships between Nduka Orji-Wali and the madwoman. The use of madness as a symbol of corruption in the play helped in the advancement of the plot of the play. From the beginning to the end of the play, madness occupies the thematic thrust of the play. What this portends is that nobody is free from psychiatric cases and therefore needs mental treatments.

**Mr. Akor Orji-Wali:** He is the authorial voice that conveys the intention of the playwright to the audience. The play is a wake-up call for moral rejuvenation in society. Despite the several lobbying and an attempt to bribe Mr. Akor Orji-Wali by Mrs. Owu, he refuses on account that he is fighting for the poor labourers working in the Wazobi Construction Company. Mr. Akor Orji-Wali is a foreman in the company whose interest of the masses supersedes his personal interests. He is an architect by profession. Also, he is the biological son of Chief Aguba-Orji-Wali and Mrs. Owu. The play reveals that Mr. Akor Orji-Wali is the only child that

Mrs. Owu had for Chief Aguba Orji-Wali during the period of their relationship as a student. However, both of them did not marry as husband and wife. When Chief Aguba Orji-Wali visits the Wazobi Company, he sees his son, Akor Orji-Wali and asks him why he has not returned home for a while. He says “yes my son. How are you? Why have you kept away from home these three days?” (Ejiofor, 2010, p. 47). When it is finally revealed to Mr. Akor Orji-Wali that he is the biological son of Mrs. Owu who had relationship with Chief Aguba Orji-Wali, he interrogates his mother to find out why she left his father. He says “But... but... why did you run away from my father? Why didn't you stay to take care of me”. Mrs. Owu replies “I wouldn't. Our families were not in talking terms, and neither family would listen to us. I was young.... There was none to advise me. I am an orphan (sobs) (Ejiofor, 2010, p. 90).

**Chief Wenenda Orji-Wali:** He is the paramount ruler of the Ogbum n' Abali community. He is an intermediary between the Federal Government and the community. He is a corrupt man who embezzled some bags of rice given to his people by the government. He was given two thousand bags of rice to his people

as part of the essential commodity needs of his district. Instead of delivering the goods to his people, he diverted some for his personal use. This is indicated in the dialogue of the Minister thus:

According to my records, you have only a little over two hundred families in this community. If you give a bag of rice to each of these families, you probably allocated two hundred and fifty bags at the most. What happened to the remaining thousand seven hundred and fifty bags? (Ejiofor, 2010, p. 90)

This shocking revelation made Chief Wenenda Orji-Wali to coil in shame as he was unable to deny the allegations. It is on the light of the above that Chief Wenenda Orji-Wali is seen as corrupt and is treated as such.

**Market Women:** The market women are members of the community who buys and sells goods and services. Most of what the market women sell is agricultural produce such as tomatoes, and bananas amongst others. Despite being hopeful of selling off their products in the market, the women frown at the manner in which the government decides to build psychiatric hospitals in the marketplace. The idea of building of National Psychiatric Hospital

in the marketplace constitutes a socio-economic threat to the market women and other well-meaning citizens of Ogbum n'Abali community. This is because the economic stability and survival of the people are dependent on the Nkwo Oroabali market. Therefore, any attempt to build any structure such as a National Psychiatric Hospital at the market site will be inimical to the socioeconomic advancement of the people. It is on this note that the people of Ogbum n' Abali; especially the market women frown at the building project.

**Minister:** As a Government, the interest of the Minister is to ensure that government's projects are well supervised. It is on this premise that the Minister whose name is Mr. Onuoha, the Deputy Inspector General of Police embarks on a voyage of ensuring that proper things are being done; especially in the construction of the National Psychiatric Hospital. The Minister acted in dual personality. First, he assumes the status of a Minister of the Federal Government of Nigeria whose aim is to ensure that corruption and its attendant consequences are eradicated in the society. Secondly, as a Police officer; his cardinal objective is to protect lives and

property. The play showcases a parade of corrupt practices by different characters. Almost everybody in the play is tinted with corruption; except Mr. Akor Orji-Wali who is the authorial voice. This situation spurs the Deputy Inspector General of Police (Mr. Onuoha) to pretend as a Minister of Federal Government in order to identify and arrest corrupt persons. In a bid to test the truthfulness of a Beggar (Mr. Nduka, who is the secret agent of government), the Minister drops a wad of currency before a Beggar with the sole intention to tempt him. However, the Beggar falls into the bait by picking the money with the hope that the Minister will not see him. Ironically the Minister noticed his dubious action. In the end, the Minister tells the Beggar that he is corrupt like others in the society. This is evident when the Minister tells the Beggar (Mr. Nduka Orji-Wali) thus:

I hold a different opinion Mr. Wali I'll tell you why. When I came in here earlier, you were sitting in that corner under the guise of a beggar. I know you were not and I found it a suitable opportunity to test your integrity. I dropped the wad of currency on purpose Mr. Wali. It was not an oversight and I know that you have it in your Agbada right now. Can you hand it over to me please. (Ejiofor, 2010, p 92).

The Beggar became surprised at this revelation and consequently shows remorse and produces the wad of notes on him and hands it over to the Minister. This singular situation projects the Minister as a Police detective and an administrator.

### **Social Criticism in the Play:**

The play, *Who then is Sane?* is a satirical drama aimed at ridiculing the socio-economic issues that characterized the Nigerian nation. These issues include economic sabotage, fraud, sexual exploitation, pretentious nature of man among others. The Nigerian nation is faced with several social foibles that deter socio-economic transformation. This is because almost every individual in the society has one form of defect or another. Shaka explains that:

The play, *Who then is sane?* is an allegory on the cankerworm of corruption which has eaten deep into the common fabric of the Nigeria nation, which needs psychiatric attention. The allegory is played out in the form of a fable surrounding the building of a National Psychiatric Hospital which is vehemently rejected by members of the community of Ogbum n' Abali, representing the prototypical Nigerian community or nation, reject the offer of the federal government to build a psychiatric

hospital to cure the people of the various levels and types of madness plaguing the nation. (as cited in Ejiofor, 2013, p. x).

In Nigerian society, corruption is a major hindrance to economic advancement for the government and citizens. It has affected the emotional and social psyche both individually and collectively. However, no single individual would agree to take responsibility of being corrupt, yet people blame the socio-economic stagnation in Nigeria on corruption. It is on the above premise that it becomes necessary for a psychiatric examination of individuals to find out who is corrupt; thus the building of the National Psychiatric Hospital in Obgun n'Abali community.

Corruption in the play is likened to madness and its attendant anomalies. The play, therefore, uses madness as a symbolic representation of corruption in Nigeria. Mad people in the society are always, rejected, oppressed, and even humiliated, yet those who claim they are sane do more worst things than the mad people. This is seen in the character of Akor Orji-Wali who goes secretly to sleep with a mad woman, yet pretends he does not engage in such immoral sexual exploitation. Nduka exposes the unholy attitude of Akor Orji-Wali thus “of course, Chinyere's

nocturnal romance will now come to an end. I've always wondered, who made love to that mad woman every night before my departure from the village three years ago (Ejiofor, 2010, p. 5).

Surprising, it is important to note that Mr. Akor Orji-Wali is not the only person caught in the web of corruption in the play. Vera Kome, Chief Weneda Orji-Wali, Nduka, Mr. Genewari amongst other characters in the play is found culpable of corrupt tendencies. When the Minister (Mr. Onuoha/Deputy Inspector General of Police) comes to interact with the people of Ogbun n'Abali, to find out their grievances about the building of the National Psychiatric Hospital on their land, he found out that virtually everybody that worked in the Wazobi Construction Company is found wanting. In the play, Nduka Wali-Orji pretends to be a madman who stays at the gate of the company as a spy for the Federal government falls into a trap when he picks a wad of currency that the Minister dropped on purpose. Yet Nduka claims to be sane but he is reminded by the Minister of his corrupt practices.

The play presents incongruities and other social vices that deter national development. It is on this note that the play criticises

the attitudes of some public servants who are entrusted to manage public property under their watch. Instead of saving these properties, they rather divert them for personal use. The illicit business that transpired between Mrs. West (the company manager) and Mr. Genewari (the company foreman) is revealed by a Beggar (Mr. Nduka Orji-Wali, the secret agent of federal government). Beggar exposes:

Easy. Calm down Mrs. West. I'll tell you everything. Well you asked for it Mrs. West. Here it comes. In collaboration with Mrs. Owu, you robed the Wazobi construction company of N500.000.00 worth of nails meant for this construction work ... You had the contractor's supply diverted into your private warehouse. (Ejiofor, 2010, p. 83).

In Nigerian society, for instance, corrupt practices have been adjudged as cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of the nation. In order to find out the causes of corruption and its remedies, it becomes imperative to establish an agency or anti-craft institutions such as the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) and Independent Crime Practices Commission (ICPC) amongst others. These agencies are legally

backed by law to discharge their responsibilities. In the wisdom of the playwright, the use of the National Psychiatric Hospital will go a long way in sanitizing the society. This is because; according to the play, every member of the society has one form of madness or another. Therefore, to adequately find out the root of madness (corruption), psychiatric examination becomes a necessity. The play caricatures those who claim they are sane; yet upon thorough examination, they are found corrupt. The title *Who then is Sane?* may be a reaction to the biblical allusion that says “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). What this biblical account tells us is that no one is free from sin despite our religiosity and moral inclination.

### **Conclusion:**

There is no gainsaying the fact that reconstruction and re-enactment of social action and other sundry activities in the society occupy the playwright's social vision. The playwright is saddled with the obligation of recreating human action and inaction into drama. In this direction, he or she may not seek entertainment

alone, but drives to educate and inform the reading or the viewing audience. However, in Ejiofor's *Who then is Sane?*, the drive is to expose moral and social decadences that hinder harmonious peaceful relationships in the society. The playwright, through artistic and creative lens mirrors and criticizes the ills of the society such as corrupt practices and pretentious nature of man. Man by his nature is an imperfect being and thus cannot be exonerated from insanity. Ironically, the imperfection of human beings is sometimes covered in pretense. It is until this 'mask' is unraveled, the real nature and activities of man are made manifest. This human inadequacy is portrayed in some characters in the play. It is claimed that almost all the characters in the play are psychiatric 'suspects', hence, the need to establish National Psychiatric Hospital for proper diagnosis and possible treatment. The play is a comic drama that ridicules mental instability and moral incongruity in the society. This is made manifest through the conveyance of the themes and characters in the play. It is, therefore, the strong position of this paper that critical analysis of themes and character delineation in the play will go a long way in

criticizing human and social foibles that reduced human coexistence to psychiatric hub. It is on this note that the playwright seeks social decorum and tranquility in his dramatic literature.

## **Recommendation**

Having painstakingly carried out research of this magnitude; it becomes imperative therefore, to put forward modest recommendations for the purposes of clarity and proper understanding of the researchers' point of view.

- ❖ A playwright should be encouraged to use the instrument of drama to query and criticise human inadequacies that hinder social harmony in the society.
- ❖ Corrupt practices, pretence and sundry moral decomposition as exemplified in Ejiofor's *Who then is Sane?* should be discontinued in the society to allow and promote sanity and sanctity in human conduct.
- ❖ Dramatists should be protected by law to carry out their creative and artistic duties in the society without molestation, intimidation and victimization.
- ❖ It is the modest recommendation of this paper that the

playwright should create believable characters that will convey their thoughts, ideas and feelings to the members of the society.

- ❖ This work recommends that intellectual property right/law should be promoted and encouraged to protect works of art from piracy and other sundry corrupt practices.
- ❖ It is strongly recommended that people should avoid immoral behaviours that will tint their image in bad lights
- ❖ Government should be encouraged to create policies that will benefit its citizens. This is because, anti-people oriented programmes and policies will always generate dissatisfaction in the minds of the people.

## REFERENCES

Abrams, M. A., & Harpham, G.G. (2009). *A glossary of literary terms*. Michael Rosenberg.

Agogbuo, L. C. (2019). A study of African oral narratives in select Nigerian mythical plays. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Port Harcourt.

Alex C. A (2013). Fighting from the trenches: Nigerian playwrights and the task of nation building. Awka, Valid Publishing Company.

Chandler, D. An introduction to genre theory. Retrieved on 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 from visual-memory.co.uk/Danile/Documents/intgenre/chandler-genre-theory.

Coe, R. M., & Freeman, A. (n.d). Genre theory: Australian and North American approaches. Retrieved on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2019 from <http://www2.cortland.edu/dot>

Ejiofor, A. (1010). Who then is Sane? Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt Press Ltd.

Imo, E. E. (2014). Critical analysis of the works of selected Nigerian stand-up comedians. An unpublished Ph.D Thesis in the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt.

Jacobus, L. A. (1989). *The bedford introduction to drama*. St. Martin's Press.

Lorgia, F.G (1961) "Authority of the Theatre" Playwrights on Playwriting. Ed Cole . New York Hill and Wang

Ohia, C. G., and Iloma, N. G. (2017). The playwright and social prophesy: An artistic kaleidoscope of Henry Bell-Gam's The hidden treasure. *Ikogho (A multi-disciplinary Journal)*. Vol. 17 (3 & 4) pp. 234-240.

Ritchie, G. (1999). Developing the incongruity-resolution theory. Retrieved on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 from [www.citeseerxist.psu.edu](http://www.citeseerxist.psu.edu).

Straus, I. J. (2014). Incongruity theory and the explanatory limits of reason. Retrieved on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2023 from [www.scholarworks.uvm.edu](http://www.scholarworks.uvm.edu).