

Psychic and Social Paralysis of a Rising Generation: A Study of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi*

^{1*}Norbert Oyibo Eze, ²Peter Ogohi Salifu

^{1,2}Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria Nsukka

DOI: 10.55559/sjahss.v1i04.19

Received: 01.04.2022 | Accepted: 05.04.2022 | Published: 15.04.2022

Electronic reference (Cite this article):

Oyibo Eze, N., & Salifu, P. O. (2022). *Psychic and Social Paralysis of a Rising Generation: A Study of John Osborne's Look Back in Anger and Esiaba Irobi's Nwokedi*. *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(04), 206–214. <https://doi.org/10.55559/sjahss.v1i04.19>

Copyright Notice:

© 2022 The Author(s). This is an open access article published by Sprin Publisher under the Creative Commons' Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the response of youths or the rising generation, to the socio-economic and political factors that ceaselessly widen the gap between the elite and the ordinary people, especially the youth and which tend to force the youth to resort to violence as a means of making their point or calling attention to the neglected leaders of tomorrow. While *Look Back in Anger* represents the anger period, a notable era in English Drama, Irobi's play in English; *Nwokedi*, appears to suggest that the Nigerian youth seem to grope in a more devastating condition in a post-colonial Nigeria, where poor leadership has created all manner of socio-economic and political tension. The youthful generation in both plays embodied in the characters, Jimmy and Nwokedi, respectively violently demonstrate their resentment against the ruling class ideology and the social order it promotes. Their resolve points strongly to a revolution that a positive change may only quell. The paper submits that youths should, along with their agitations for a better society, give no holiday to developing new ideas and visions on which their ambitions will thrive. Leaders on all fronts are also cautioned to realize the destructive effects of bad leadership and avert uprisings from an angry citizenry by living up to their mandates.

Keywords: Youth, Rising Generation, Anger, Psychic and social paralysis

Introduction

The approbation of the youths, the 'rising generation' as leaders of tomorrow, has become today almost like a mirage, as there are 'prevailing political and socio-economic circumstances' that inhibit the due functioning of youths in the society (Mou and Mou 58). In a country like Nigeria, such inhibition arises from a plethora of factors such as unemployment, corruption, political exclusion, and inter alia. Josephine Nwagwu observes that today, the full integration and mobilization of youths in Nigeria for economic development is constrained by substandard education and inefficient government policies, which directly and adversely affect the employability of youths (38). Also, the issue of unemployment is worsened by the upsurge of faceless workers tagged 'ghost workers' on payrolls, "which increases wage bill and block the

employment of young people" (38). Nwagwu adds that "corruption and mismanagement of public funds by those in authority has caused dislocation in the nation's socio-economic development" (38). The negative impact of this situation has punctured the docility of youths and launched an awakening, which appears to exacerbate daily as we constantly witness an upsurge of youthful voices against all manner of bad leadership as well as agitations for young involvement in socio-economic and political processes.

Jimmy in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Nwokedi in Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi* is posited as archetypal characters who lead movements towards registering the reservations of youths, not just against an old order, merely delineated by age, but against any ruling system which plunder the 'rising generation' and push it into a situation of hopelessness, leading to paralysis of the psyche and social standing. As Norbert Oyibo Eze recapitulates, Jimmy in *Look Back in Anger* "is chiefly angry because his generation is being frustrated and denied the right and possibility of decent living. Despite their education, the youths are "consigned to squalid existence," as shown in Jimmy Porter's "cramped apartment" (172). Similarly, Chike Okoye states that "Nwokedi (Jnr) in *Nwokedi* could be seen as the archetypal symbolic metonymy of a disenfranchised, unemployed, and restive youth; who are portrayed as the losers in a corrupt society" (6). Thus, these characters from different cultural backgrounds show the universality of the youths' anguish and resentment against any social formation that negates their dreams. The subsequent analysis of these two plays shows how Jimmy and Nwokedi approach the plights of the youths in the respective cultures of the world of the plays and how any material world that is towing such a path may need to take heed and reposition itself through a right turn to avoid social upheavals and catastrophes engulfing our world as a result of the neglect of the youths or wrong socio-political orientation.

Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and the Example of Anger in English Drama

Look Back in Anger tells of the life of Jimmy Porter, a twenty-five years old vibrant and intelligent college graduate who is disillusioned because of the circumstances around his life. Despite his education, he works in a candy stall with his poorly educated friend, Cliff Lewis, who also shares a flat with him. Jimmy is married to Alison Porter, who, unlike Jimmy, comes from a middle-class family and thus, is of a higher social class. The squabbles that characterize their marriage, including verbal and physical abuses, are a product of Jimmy's hatred for the middle-class and the social status they represent. This also extends to Helena Charles, Alison's friend, who later visits Jimmy's household.

Meanwhile, Alison gets pregnant, confides only in Cliff, and defies his advice to inform Jimmy. Helena's visit exacerbates the scuffle between Jimmy and Alison. She sends Alison's father a telegram, inviting him to come over and rescue his daughter. In response, Alison's father, Colonel Redfern, arrives to take Alison home. Alison also capitalizes on this to go home and have her baby, unknown to Jimmy. Helena, who is almost set to leave but would stay for a day longer, enters her entanglement around with Jimmy. She reveals that Alison is expecting a baby. They engage in a physical fight but end up in a passionate kiss that ignites a love affair. Alison returns after several months and reveals that she has lost her baby. Helena admits her atrocious and immoral deeds, reconciles with Alison, and bids an indifferent Jimmy farewell. Alison and Jimmy also reconcile and attempt to revive their relationship by playing their old-time game of bears and squirrels.

Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* is a notable example of English drama of the Anger period. Eze notes that Osborne, alongside other writers of this period such as Delany, Pinter, Tom Stoppard, Ann Jellicoe Wesker, Bolt, Simpson, and John Whiting, championed a literary tradition that "began to shun the theatrical sensibilities of the upper and middle – classes, something already happening in the theatrical universe of continental Europe" (167).

Particularly, *Look Back in Anger* approached class criticism in a scintillating style. As Eze sublimely describes, Osborne's play "lashed out against the prejudices and morality of the bourgeoisie" (167). and "pours venom on the smoldering Victorian middle—a class whose social

conventions hold the youths and the poor perpetually downtrodden, preventing them from realizing their dreams and aspirations" (169). Therefore, the effects of the apparent class divide and the aftermath of war on the 'post-war young men' were the bane of the Anger exuded by Jimmy.

Jimmy's young age of about twenty-five and the energy he vents into challenging social stratification are symbolic of the intentional positioning of the youth at the receiving end of such an unfair social structure. Jimmy hints at his readiness for confrontation thus;

Jimmy: One day, when I'm no longer spending my days running a sweet stall, I may write a book about us all. It's all here. (*Slapping his forehead.*) Written in flames a mile high. And it won't be recollected in tranquility either, picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth. It'll be recollected in fire and blood. My blood (54).

Jimmy's angry disposition makes Helena think that Jimmy was 'born out of his time.' His revolutionary proclivity makes her think of him as one who does not know what he is doing;

Helena: There's no place for people like that any longer – in sex, politics, or anything. That's why he's so futile. Sometimes, when I listen to him, I feel he thinks he's still in the middle of the French revolution, and that's where he ought to be; of course, he doesn't know where he is or where he's going. He'll never do anything, and he'll never amount to anything (90).

Helena and Alison both belong to the middle class. Helena's opinion in the above echoes the thoughts of the typical middle class about the low class, a gap Jimmy is resilient about bridging. As rightly argued by Lacey, and Tecimer, the setting of Osborne's play and its 'realist-naturalist' description is a conscious metonymic or even synecdochical effort at juxtaposing the life and living conditions of the bourgeois with that of the ordinary country people while also giving a peep into the post-war socio-political and socio-economic realities of all social classes (Eze 171). Jimmy's resentment with irresponsible or, as he tags it, 'invisible politicians' is shown in his thoughts about Nigel, Alison's brother who, according to him (Jimmy), has a vague and hazy knowledge of life and human beings. Jimmy's forecast about Nigel is that:

He'll end up in the Cabinet one day... But somewhere at the back of that mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations. Nigel is just about as vague as you can get without being invisible. And invisible politicians aren't much use to anyone – not even to their supporters! (20).

Nigel represents such politicians who are irresponsible to their constituents and contribute to societal backwardness and economic squalor.

Jimmy's resentment of the middle-class and disdain for class divides is depicted in his treatment of Alison, who represents the opulent middle class. Alison likens the 'jungle' treatment she receives from Jimmy and Hugh as her worst nightmare and a societal class "war" (43). Jimmy's resentment is extended to people and institutions who by any means lend direct or indirect support to social stratification based on class. This is seen in his anger with the church and Bishop Bromley. As he would do, Jimmy expects everyone to speak up against oppression and never accept it as normal. He speaks to Cliff about Alison, who appears to acclimatize herself to the situation rather than protest when exposed to the stench from the pipe he smokes. For him, Alison "is a great one for getting used to things. If she were to die, and wake up in paradise – after the first five minutes, she'd have got used to it" (16). Further, he

has this to say about Nigel and Alison for their sycophancy and complacency, “Nigel and Alison. They are what they sound like: sycophantic, phlegmatic, and pusillanimous” (21).

Jimmy decries the stagnation or truncation of prospects for the youths. He retorts, “we never seem to get any further, do we?... Our youth is slipping away” (15). He considers the lives of an impoverished youth as death and not living at all:

Jimmy: Why don't we have a little game? Let's pretend that we're human beings and that we're actually alive. Just for a while. What do you say? Let's pretend we are human (15).

Pretending to be human beings here could represent alternatives that youths may have employed as a form of escapism or distraction from their harsh social, political, and economic reality. The quest for such escapism may influence the prevalence of drug abuse. Annabel Boys, John Marsden, and John Strang report that in their survey on drug use among young people, 96.7% of respondents admit to using drugs for relaxation, 96.4% use drugs to fulfill the need to be intoxicated, 95.9% use drugs to stay awake at night for the purpose of socializing, and 86.8% use drugs to “alleviate depressed mood” (457).

In a separate study, it is corroborated that regardless of extant drug laws and preventive policies, drug abuse is prevalent among Nigerian youths for the purposes of relieving stress and deriving pleasure (Jatau, Sha'aban, Gulma, Shitu, Khalid, Isa, Wada, and Mustapha 1). The consequences of this sort of intoxication from drug abuse are enormous, including the degeneration of mental and public health, growth of angst and malaise leading to social nuisance, unrest, terrorism, violence, and social vices such as rape and murder. This implies that an economy that ensures the inclusion of youths inactive and functional socio-economic and political process and makes provisions for a standard system of education, a conducive environment for business and innovations, as well as gainful employment, would be curbing most of its social vices and youth-led crises. In this regard, Nigeria is still in dire need of positive change.

Jimmy represents true advocacy for positive change that would bring about a political system that is mindful of the progress of her youths and citizenry at large, as well as a socio-economic system that would be characterized by fairness, equal opportunities, and equitable distribution of resources, thereby, bridging the gap of fortune between the middle and the low classes. He holds strongly that “there is going to be a changeover. a new board of directors, who are going to see that the dividends are always attractive and that they go to the right people” (56).

The Youths and their Anger in Irobi's *Nwokedi*

In *Nwokedi*, Nwokedi Snr is saddened by his political failure, orchestrated by his son, Nwokedi. He summons his counterparts and places them on oath before proceeding to take legal action. While he is away, his political in-law and friend, Senator Arikpo, scampers into his house for safety, following a hot pursuit by the Ugep youths. The youths are angry that he has flouted their ban to run for a second tenure as a senator. Arikpo meets only Mrs. Nwokedi since her son, Nwokedi, is away for his National Youth Service. Arikpo expresses grief to Mrs. Nwokedi over the rash treatment meted on him by the youths, which has caused him further sorrow in addition to the death of his wife, Ezinna, and children whom he had purported to have been engulfed in an earlier fire accident that razed down his house.

Nwokedi had been sanctioned with an extension in the duration of his national youth service by six months for mobilizing other youths in the revolutionary movement against political leaders. He has, over time, shown this trait of rebellion against an evil system, especially in his encounter with cultists back in school and with military officers while on camp for orientation as a youth corps member.

Nwokedi returns home to perform his sacred duty at the Ekpe festival of ritual sacrifice. He meets Senator Arikpo and learns about the stories he had told about the death of Ezinna, his beloved sister. Nwokedi's hatred for Arikpo's political irresponsibility and keen suspicion that Arikpo murdered his sister, Ezinna, and her children for rituals, made him strongly threaten to kill Arikpo. Senator Arikpo eventually owns up to the murder of his wife and children. Nwokedi liaises with his age grade, the Ekumeku, and at the time of the sacrifice, Arikpo is taken to the stake in place of a ram. He is beheaded alongside Nwokedi Snr., who attempts to intervene.

In *Nwokedi*, Irobi redefines heroism and presents a hero as one who can stand for the low class and the youths, damning domestic interest and familial relationships. Like Jimmy in *Look Back in Anger*, Nwokedi is a young and vibrant fellow. He is not the conventional Aristotelian hero of a high class, wielding royal blood, and meets his fall between grasping or grappling with dictates of fate, ego protection, and hubris. Instead, he is a 'good rebel' who protests against a squalid status quo and guns for a progressive cause. Nwokedi defines this sort of rebel thus:

A rebel is a man who says "no!" The man who says, "it is enough!" Who refuses to conform to a rotten authority, threatens the establishment, shakes up the creaky system (*fists clenched*). I am a rebel; the future is my cause (31).

Nwokedi's clenched fist signals the cumbersomeness of any agitation against a "rotten authority." Perhaps, it also resonates with the failure of dialogue, as noted earlier, and the obvious shift towards violence as an alternative for fighting a just course.

Although written almost four decades apart, Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* and Irobi's *Nwokedi* have a common theme. While *Look Back in Anger* is looked upon as a dramatic trademark for the anger period, a significant era in English Drama, Irobi's play in English, *Nwokedi*, appears unequivocally to be a dramatic representation of another anger period, disconcerting postcolonial Nigeria. Eze explains that Irobi's immediate socio-political environment may have informed the writing of *Nwokedi*. He notes that Irobi's generation was characterized by "coups and counter-coups... the pains of austerity measures and the agonies of joblessness, in spite of good university education" (27). It is lamentable that in Nigeria today, even good university education is threatened by the gross neglect of the sector in all ramifications. This neglect is the bane of the frequent face-offs between the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and the Federal Government. The most recent strike action halts academic activities across public universities in the country. However, this necessary struggle leaves the youths (students) at the more significant disadvantage of delay and loss of time. Consequently, the equipping of youths as 'leaders of tomorrow' takes place under relatively substandard conditions, employability is questionable, and the 'agony of joblessness' is intensified.

The anger expressed violently in the two plays is a result of a crumbling socio-economic and political system bedevilled by unemployment and political irresponsibility. This situation thus creates a welling desire in the youthful generation to enforce change through violence and even bloodletting since "he who makes peaceful revolution impossible, makes violent revolution inevitable." Senator Arikpo and Mrs. Nwokedi attest to the bloodiness of humour that characterizes the disposition of the youths in expressing their grievances:

Arikpo:	These	Young men are dangerous
Mrs. Nwokedi:		I know
Arikpo:		Murder marches in their minds with militant feet.
Mrs. Nwokedi:		They are murderous
Arikpo:		Violence roils in their hearts like mosquito coils.
Mrs. Nwokedi:		They are unemployed
Arikpo:		They are the Devil's Brigade.
Mrs. Nwokedi:		The Devil finds work for idle hands (8).

In the above, Mrs. Nwokedi did not fail to emphasize that their angry disposition is a result of unemployment and, by implication, all other woeful short-falls of the political class. These social scourges, unemployment, fake political promises, and political marginalization culminate into a gradual reduction of sensibility and enthronement of anger. A high rate of unemployment amongst youths is like rolling dice of six sides; one side for probable goodness, and the five others which are more likely to surface are social and moral decadence, wanton viciousness, idleness/lewdness, lack of regard for human life, and retaliation, theft, kidnapping for ransom, cyber fraud, etc.

The flags of youthful aggression against social and political anomaly are such as brandished by the Ekumeku; Nwokedi's age grade. This imagery of anger is seen in the opening of *Nwokedi*, a scene Abba describes as a 'weird scene with image tainted with blood' that heralds the 'appearance of the rough beast', Nwokedi (187). The anger in the tableau derives from both psychological and social degeneration, especially of a generation whose chances of prosperity are mortgaged in an ineffective polity, looted treasury, and staggering economy, resulting in a situation where "a tethered goat crops cassava leaves; from a wilting stem" (1). This anomaly is perpetrated by another generation who considers the youths, in the words of Senator Arikpo, as only "a disco-going, hemp-smoking, beer-guzzling generation...louts, jobless vagabonds" and "a brigade of unemployed devils" (15). This group sees the agitations by youths for a better society as utter idealism.

The irascibility shown in the tableau in the opening scene of *Nwokedi* points to the inevitable chaos that would be brought about by the systemic and institutional inadequacies as well as marginalization that adversely affects the rising youthful generation who believe they can do better. Such marginalization is perpetrated by sit-tight politicians represented in *Nwokedi* by Nwokedi SNR and Arikpo, who may have sworn oaths of allegiance or declared unwavering support to themselves in the quest to impoverish the masses, damning whether or not, they are qualified to rule. In *Nwokedi*, such an evil alliance is seen in the association of Nwokedi SNR. and five others who swear that they had supported Nwokedi Snr during the election:

Five men, sitting sedately in some upholstered chairs and garbed in assorted traditional attires reflecting the opulence of politicians, take turns to swing an evil-looking juju effigy around their heads. Nwokedi SNR., administering the oath, swings a censer of incense around the room. Finally, the sixth man, spruced in a layer's suit, also takes the oath. Nwokedi SNR. Retrieves the effigy from him and places it on the centre table (1).

The alliance of these men points significantly to political caucuses and grand patrons of bad leadership who have institutionalized 'godfatherism' and would go any length to enthrone political leaders who may be mediocre, only as long as they would be paid allegiance and have their interests protected. Thus, electoral processes and results in such a case may negate the choice and voice of the people. Would it be possible then to make leaders accountable to their people if they were not duly elected?

In Nigeria, youthful reactions decrying bad governance have already been seen in youth-led revolutionary actions such as #OccupyNigeria and the recent #Endsars protest, and more uprisings seem looming. The recurring motifs of bad leadership, corruption, political responsiveness, judicial malpractices, embezzlement and greed, power drunkenness, police brutality, and economic exploitation are daily widening the gap between the poor and the rich. Like Jimmy in Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*, Nwokedi in Irobi's *Nwokedi* unreservedly expresses his resentment against politicians and public office holders who are a misfit for the positions they impetuously hold on to. In *Nwokedi*'s absence, his mother, Mrs. Nwokedi, intimates to Senator Arikpo how Nwokedi never minded disowning Nwokedi Snr., his father and sounding uncouth in discrediting his father's selfish political ambition. Nwokedi's anger

is against a range of failed political promises and the tendency of politicians to renew their fake promises at the dawn of an election year. He notes how his father, Nwokedi SNR, had promised amenities such as electric light, pipe-borne water, tarred roads, and jobs without fulfilling any of them. Nwokedi reprobates his father to signal the way he thinks about every other politician akin to his father. He represents an angry generation of youths whose hopes have gone bleak as a result of political greed. In an instance, he speaks bitterly to Senator Arikpo:

My generation gave you the future to hold in trust for us. You turned it into a handkerchief and used it to wipe the mucus of greed dripping from your wretched nostrils. After that, you rumped it, crumpled our future, and squeezed it into your pocket. But your pocket was full of holes. So our future fell out to the ground. And with your leprous feet, you quarried it into dust. Arikpo, that is why this matchet must spill your blood today (73).

In this instance, it is drawn out that the revolution represented by bloodletting in the play is a direct consequence of gross intentional neglect, greed, and wastefulness to the detriment of the youths, who are forced into depression. Among other things, their despair arises from joblessness and the squalid status quo. As a result, several youths are unable to accomplish desired feats such as living a decent life, fulfilling the social obligation of marriage in due time, and enjoying the feeling of accomplishment. The theme of joblessness among youths is further communicated in the scenario depicting the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). The NYSC as a scheme is attended by graduates whose next quest would be to scout for gainful employment. Ridiculously, this song introduces the youth corpsers:

SOLO: We are the future leaders of this land (DC)

CHORUS: Of this land...

SOLO: Come and serve your nation, be a youth corper

CHORUS: And be jobless all the time (23).

Nwokedi's confrontation with the Regimental Sergeant-Major (RSM) at the youth corper's parade is a subtle pointer to imminent revolts to communicate the need for positive change. Nwokedi charges other youths thus;

This is our moment. When we must gather our strength and energies into the demands of a revolution, this is the moment when what makes us young men and women must muster us to the last and supreme sacrifice. The supreme action. The greatest decision. This is the moment of revolt. We must cross the threshold now. All of us! (28).

Just as Alison describes Jimmy in *Look Back in Anger*, Nwokedi appears to be ruthless and even to a higher degree than Jimmy in his war against all the forces that institutionalize class divides, poverty, and the impoverishment of youths. This, perhaps, is why he likens the personalities and deeds of corrupt, sit-tight politicians to waves that pass with tides and time. For Nwokedi, those who stand in the way or against the tide of the angry youths in their movement for positive change may die with the 'passing evil year' (75).

The danger in such ruthlessness is the possibility of a collapse of law and order, irredeemable chaos, damages, and even loss of life. On this basis, Irobi's drama is often criticized for its inclination to violence. For Diala Isidore, Irobi endorses 'terrorism as a political weapon' (61). Abba opines that Irobi's character, Nwokedi, both in his absence or presence, is the personification of horror and that his violent apprehension of political leaders for the impoverishment of society stretches him "far beyond Fanonian permutation and plunges headlong into the realm of madness, becoming a mirror image of the very savagery he seeks to

crush” (187). However, it is believed that the exaggeration of violence in *Nwokedi* is not a glamorization of goriness, but a peek into the unfortunate end of perpetual greed, wickedness, lust for power and bad leadership, with a cautionary motive. At the climax of the violent approach to ‘political cleansing’ in the play, Senator Arikpo perceives the danger and reveals his lessons and discoveries:

Now I know that power is like a white horse. When you are on top, you think the ride will never end. But with time, time that trips tyrants, the horse gallops to a sudden halt. And heaves, and you, the rider, summersault. And spread on the handsome earth. Your head is anointed with dust. A broken name in your hands... (88-89).

Arikpo’s discovery explicates the indeterminacy of life, the temporariness of power, and the clarion call for the judicious use of all opportunities for the common good. Eventually, the influence lasts only for a short time. Nwokedi notes how some leaders are not mindful of this truth. Such leaders, according to him, “have never constituted authority except to exploit and dehumanize their fellow human beings” (72). In this light, Arikpo’s discovery illustrates that the mansions of goodwill and good men that a man builds while he has the power may be his eventual succour when he loses control. However, suppose a man only creates enmity by planting injustice, wickedness, poverty, and an angry generation while his power lasts. In that case, he is then building a wall of thorns or preparing a furnace, which will engulf him when the chips are down. Such a man will burn greatly and face utter destruction. This is the fate of Nwokedi Snr and Senator Arikpo, whose ruthless beheadings signify the death of ‘an evil year’. Irobi’s violent revolutionary projection in *Nwokedi* is thus a strong warning to all stakeholders to redirect their steps and keep good governance as a watchword, to avert degeneration into the sort of bloody revolution depicted in the fictional but somewhat prophetic drama.

Complementarily, the youths are encouraged to see their good visions and ideas as gateways to a better tomorrow and realize, as echoed in the popular maxim, that ‘ideas rule the world’. This is the underlying message in Nwokedi’s admonition:

When they arrive, tell them that it is infinitely foolish to point guns at ideas...
And remember, my generation, at the outskirts of our vision, lies the carcass of our nation (30).

Conclusion

Jimmy and Nwokedi in both plays are alike in their resolution against class divide and socio-political underperformance, especially as it affects or paralyzes the prospects of the youths. They embody a bold refusal of the rising generation to shake “the leprous hand that contaminates our daily lives” (Nwokedi 18). Like twenty-five years old Jimmy, many Nigerian graduates are disillusioned by a lack of gainful employment. Like Nwokedi, such Nigerian youths have completed University education and undergone the mandatory national youth service but now wallow in an unfriendly polity, lacking good jobs and capital to venture into other businesses. The effect of this situation on the youths includes dissatisfaction, social inferiority complex, and consequently, depression. Both plays are born out of a burning desire of a younger generation in their respective climes to vent their resentment against an exploitative ‘old order’, whose trademark is bad leadership and all its fruits.

At all levels, the perpetrators of evil and those whose shovels perpetually widen the economic gap between the rich and the poor are cautioned by these fictional dramas to take a new posture or face a revolution that would sweep them off their feet. The youth who are at the receiving end of economic anomalies are also tasked to wake up to their duties of birthing ground-breaking ideas and visions that would contribute to the economically viable society they seek.

References:

- Abba, Abba A. "Reinventing the Primordial: Human Blood Ritual and the Lure of Power in Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi*." *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*. 64:3, (2017): 183-194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20512856.2017.1402470>
- Boys, Annabel, Marsden, John and Strang, John. "Understanding Reasons for Drug Use Amongst Young People: A Functional Perspective" *Health Education Research, Theory and Practice* Vol. 16, No. 4 (2001): 457-469. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/16.4.457>
- Eze, Norbert Oyibo. *ENG 362 English Drama*. Ed. Olu Obafemi. Lagos: National Open University of Nigeria, 2013.
- Eze, N. O. (January 01, 2000). Meaning and significance in Esiaba Irobi's 'Nwokedi' and 'Hangmen also die'. *Okike : an African Journal of New Writing*, 44, 24-45.
- Irobi, Esiaba. *Nwokedi*. Enugu: ABIC Books & Equip. Ltd., 1991.
- Isidore, Diala, "Violent Obsessions: Esiaba Irobi's Drama and the Discourse of Terrorism" *Modern Drama* 44:1 (2006): 60–75. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mdr.2006.0046>
- Jatau, Abubakar I., Sha'aban, Abubakar, Gulma, Kabiru A., Shitu, Zayyanu, Khalid, Garba M., Isa, Abubakar, Wada, Abubakar S., and Mustapha, Mohammed. "The Burden of Drug Abuse in Nigeria: A Scoping Review of Epidemiological Studies and Drug Laws" *Public Health Reviews* Vol. 42. (2021): 1- 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/phrs.2021.1603960>
- Mou, Seseer P and Mou, Dan. "The youths and Leadership in Emerging Democracies" *Journal of Good Governance and Sustainable Development in Africa* 4.1 (2021): 56-67.
- Nwagwu, Josephine U. "Socio-economic Constraints Affecting Youth Involvement in National Economic Development." *Journal of Technology and Education in Nigeria* 9.1 (2004): 38-46. <https://doi.org/10.4314/joten.v9i1.35657>
- Okoye, Chike. "Manichaeon Probable Possibilities: Restiveness in Esiaba Irobi's *Nwokedi*." *Creative Artist* 10.2 (2016): 1-11.
- Osborne, John. *Look Back in Anger*. London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1957.