

# Theatre, Media and National Integration in a Globalising World

“Theatre, Media and National Integration... is a brilliant and insightful commentary on the major historical tensions that mark an international political-economic and cultural order torn between globalism and nativism. It is the centrality of culture as an organising force in the context of internationalisation and postcolonial mis-governance that this collection addresses. It is a profound and perceptive annotation on the politics of culture in contemporary Nigeria. Thoughtful, rigorous and audacious in its analyses and theorisations, the volume suggests that in the midst of the infinite chaos and uncertainty brought about by a ruling elite that deploys divisive tactics of postcolonial governmentality and promotes nativist instincts among its citizens, the “Arts and Media are in the best position to provide the cultural dynamics and the public sphere to oil the integration of nations” and its diverse peoples.”

—Paul Ugor, PhD

Department of English, Illinois State University

# Theatre, Media and National Integration in a Globalising World

Edited by

Liwhu Betiang

and Esekong H. Andrew-Essien

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**To all workers in the Nigeria Integration Project  
& seekers of global peace**



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## FOREWORD

Herbert Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980) was the first to theorise the concept of the global village. In 1962, as learners in graduate school in the University of Toronto, Canada, we sat at his feet like Paul at Gamaliel's or Plato at Socrates'. In part of his pioneer search, which bloomed into the concept of the whole world as a single community served by electronic media and information technology, McLuhan saw four categories of people enmeshed in the impact of communication on the public sharing the "effects" of the new media technology. There were the "ear-oriented", the "eye-oriented", the "mouth-oriented", and the "nose-oriented".

The *ear-oriented* are those excellent listeners who draw their wisdom and sharpen their intellect from other deep-thinking social observers and activists in the socio-political sphere and share the knowledge of such wisdom. The *eye-oriented* are the masses who drink in, with excitement, the novelties of what television imparts with instant news, current photos, documentaries of events, and the eye-contact directness, as when an actor on stage engages with a member of the audience in warm in-house fellowship. The *mouth-oriented* are those who talk back and out as oratorical artists, public speakers, and rhetoricians. They have featured since the ancient oralities of Africa and Asia, the ancient Greeks, the Romans Cicero, and Tacitus, down to now embracing our own Maitama Sules, Malcolm X ("The Bullet or the Ballot?"), Martin Luther King Jr ("I have a dream"), Nnamdi Azikiwe ("My Odyssey"), Obafemi Awolowo ("Nigeria"). The *nose-oriented* are those who by disclosural speculative art and intelligence deconstruct and "smell out" hitherto unfathomed "secrets" of texts, sometimes by high-falutin' guesswork and extrapolation. Nose orientation – smelling out "secrets" of the unknown and unfamiliar – was at one stage characteristic of Shakespearean scholarship, with essays that speculated on how many children Lady Macbeth had after reading her boast that she "had given suck, and knew what it meant" to hug "the babe that milks me" (*Macbeth*, 1:7).

In the light of the enormous history of globalism from its infancy up to now, let me reveal to you that the book you have before you is a landmark achievement. I am, therefore, not writing the usual trite and trampled, badly spelt "words-before" to any book, which some wrongly call "forward", "forword", or "foreward"! I am writing a true "foreword", introducing to

you a note on the contents of a book I have not written nor contributed a chapter to. I provide the “halo” around the crown such a book as *Theatre, Media, and National Integration in a Globalising World* should be adorned with.

In its five sections encompassing sixteen chapters, this book is a milestone on the route of scholarly evolution and development in Nigerian humanistic studies, philosophies, and encyclopaedic knowledge storage in a cauldron of ideas. For a long time, theatre studies and the allied or branch disciplines emanating from serious staged and produced plays have been ignored, unrecognised, or downright demeaned. Everything was “literature” though in a constricted, narrow, channelled sense for we know “literature” is any bit of meaningful information – from routine letters, personal and official, and user's guides for commercial and medical products to poems, narratives, folktales, and oral stories of the land. Literature so consumed engagement as superior and the base of any meaningful scholarly endeavour that people in theatre got sucked down into the prejudice; they failed to see the rich field from which book chapters and conference papers could be extracted in the characters, scenic proliferations, design factors, and phases in costume, scenery, architecture of the playhouses, the configurations of audience space, technologies of the control room/studio, the sound systems and musical wealth of meaning and semiotic richness of theatre, and later the media of radio, tv, graphics, and film that got on board later. Indeed, it was as if English literature, or the literature-in-English syndrome, would never lose its shackles and free theatre as autonomous, to exert its own scholarly endeavours by inspiring theatre-oriented ideas through iconic theatre critics, theatre anthropologists, and theatre journalists.

*Theatre, Media, and National Integration* is the climactic harvest, the peak, of theatre scholarship. It is the second in the series. The third should come, and the fourth, and the fifth ad infinitum. It has come out of UNICAL, a second-generation Nigerian university setting. It is not like what used to be obtained in the earliest scholarly efforts in the humanities in parts of Nigeria, where journals and compilations like this would arise, serve the narrow end of earning the contributors their promotions, and then “die off”. If you look around, all you can see are the gravestones, unmarked, of the dead and forgotten journals and books of conference proceedings.

The contributors here are young, vibrant, and promising. With their editors and senior partners, they are establishing the consequence of ideas, for ideas have consequence, as in Iji's “constructive de-construction” conundrum and Andrew-Essien's “performative messages.” On the whole, the *University of Calabar Theatre and Media Series* has become a flagship, a commendable, true, genuine, and authoritative new dimension in theatre

scholarship. Thank God McLuhan gave us the notion of society as a single community served by electronic media and information technology. See how that notion is tackled, expounded, and assigned a role in nation-building processes through communication. The chapter titles/topics, even if a little long-winded, speak cogently of the need for Nigeria to “globalise” and thoughtfully tighten the armour they have donned for the internecine and hydra-headed war globalism has become, their “silver bullet” being integration.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Theatre and media scholarship, as one may say for all disciplines, is an ever-expanding field, with multiple breakthroughs and new discoveries in effective communication leading towards sustainable development. In our present age, in which the world has grown remarkably, from being a global village to a global room, added information and studies through workshops, seminars, and conferences will benefit the greater part of humanity when such ideas, knowledge, and experience are shared far beyond the immediate environment of such academic activities. Actualising this imperative is evident in this book.

After taking a careful but detailed panoramic view of global challenges and exigencies, the hardworking local organising committee of our second *International Conference on Theatre and Media* came up with the central theme and sub-themes that were welcomed by the entire department. From the conception to the reality of the conference, its success would not have been possible without the doggedness, commitment, focus, and pragmatism of the local organising committee chaired by the zestful Professor Edde Iji, equally efficient secretary, Dr Lilian Okoro, and all the active supportive members as well as all the sponsors of the conference. The support from the dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Offiong Ani, was especially accommodative. The conference would never have been held if the theatre-loving and supportive erstwhile Vice-chancellor Professor Zana I. Akpagu and his team did not provide immediate positive support in seed finance, logistics, and administrative clearance; the Department remains grateful.

To the highly spirited, indefatigable editorial team of Associate Professor Liwhu Betiang, Professor Esekong Hutton Andrew-Essien, and active guidance of Professor Edde Iji, which birthed this book from the labour room of the conference, I cannot appreciate you enough; and for taking us to this added height not forgetting our proud alumnus Chris Agibe for his support. God will endlessly bless you.

In an age of chronic commercialisation of virtually every product and service, a period in which most people, organisations, and bodies look more to the benefits of their immediate environment than outside, Cambridge Scholars Publishing in the United Kingdom agreed to publish this book; and by so doing, assisted us in globalising the content of our second *International Conference on Theatre and Media*. While earnestly appreciating our publisher

and their in-house editors and production team for this great feat, we look forward to more levels of collaboration.

Finally, because of the quality of the content of this book and its chronic relevance not only to theatre and media studies but humanity in its entirety, I do not hesitate to strongly recommend it to all lovers of good work and those acutely interested in expanding their horizons of knowledge and shared experiences.

**Prof Emmy Ikanaba Unuja Idegü,**  
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-I-

# INTRODUCTION: THEATRE & MEDIA AS CATALYSTS FOR INTEGRATION IN A GLOBALISING CONTEXT

LIWHU BETIANG  
& ESEKONG H. ANDREW-ESSIEN

While media digitisation and globalisation have brought about intensive and extensive discordant impacts on national and global geography and cultures through increased fluidities, imagined sameness, and abridged distances between peoples and nations of the world, there are alternate notions of increasing threats to local/national cultures and configurations as evident in prevalent increases in local/national fundamentalism and regionalisms. In the midst of these utopian and dystopian perspectives, the notion of a weakened state sovereignty and the emergence of new colonial/media empires is being challenged by counter arguments about the persistence of the state, like Clyde Barrow & Michelle Keck reminding Manfred Steger that “global non-state actors” still do not have the ability to exact taxes, allocate resources, or enforce state decisions (2018, 106–109; H-Net 2019).<sup>1</sup>

The “state” therefore still persists in this vortex, at least within the spatial definition, as can be perceived locally and globally in agitations for restructuring political and “economic” independence and self-determination especially in Nigeria, commonly acclaimed as the world’s biggest black nation of about 400 ethnic nationalities. While globalisation indeed connects the local/state with the global, state individuals and groups still try to defend their local borders in different ways, thus creating a conflict of opposing tendencies: “a greater global interconnection between individuals, local communities, and peoples versus a greater search for autonomy and political strength of these same individuals, local communities and peoples” (Cadeddu 2019, 1).<sup>2</sup> All of these happen as manifestations of the unending

search for new definitions of identity, which continually creates conflicts and the need for national and international redefinitions of national identity and integration. As Davide Cadeddu suggests, for every type of social history, there arises the need to create new legal [and other] structures “capable of satisfying their organization, economic development, cultural gratification and existential needs” (2019, 2). In other words, nationalist fundamentalism and fragmentations in the continual search for new identities and accommodation will remain a fact of social history.

In our increasingly globalising world, the “local” will remain in constant interaction with the “global” and vice versa, even though at differing frequencies because of the multiple digital divides; the Internet, the global information superhighway, continues to create marketplace opportunities for more privileged economies. Specifically, media globalisation has also thrown up issues of power games by restructuring the public sphere, media ownership, and consequent hegemonic flows. It has also engendered corporatisation and corporate governance, including interference in local democratic processes (Dantani, Wika & Maigari 2017)<sup>3</sup> as well as the creation of virtual counter-globalisation communities and cultures that constantly threaten local national sovereignties/integration and global peace. This increasing digital divide, virtual citizenship, and dependence on digital media technologies may be on the increase due to the prevalent COVID-19-induced standard of social distancing. However, the big question remains – what is the nature of global peace and integration if local national sovereignties are destabilised? The increasing international flux of digital flows, global markets, displaced immigrants, brain drain, modern-day slavery, transnational terrorism, ballooning national/international spending on internal security, and pandemics at the expense of public health, education and development provide part of the dystopian alternate picture that nations must confront or negotiate.

The arts and the media are in the best position to provide the cultural dynamics and the public sphere to oil the integration of nations, which agrees with the Director-General of International Theatre Institute (ITI) Tobias Biancone, who said “Everything that is happening as an exchange between performers and the members of an audience never vanishes from earth” (*Newsletter*, May 2020)<sup>4</sup> even with the threat and portents of the new normal of social isolationism. The link between culture and the media as a human-engineered industry has significant impact on national integration and overall development.<sup>5</sup> The conference and chapters in this book emanated from our continual bid to ensure that the humanistic arts of theatre and media are not just “a mirror held up to reality” in the Aristotelian sense “but a hammer with which to shape it”. This can be achieved through the

meaningful impact and transformation of undesirable national realities, and in the process point out how and who wields this hammer of change (Brecht, qtd in Bala 2018, 186).<sup>6</sup>

The *Second Calabar International Conference of Theatre & Media* in September 2019 interrogated this global development conundrum as it affects local integration, cultures, and development. Chinua Achebe rightly noted that “if the Berlin Conference sealed her fate, then the amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorates inextricably complicated Nigeria’s destiny” (2012, 2).<sup>7</sup> The conference articulated these issues and complications in diverse but connected themes and questions that bordered on re-engineering, restructuring, and national integration in Nigeria. Specific areas of inquiry included media globalisation and the public sphere in developing contexts; the role of theatre, dramaturgy, and Nigerian national integration; literary drama and ideology in the moulding of a national psyche; and national monuments, design, and architecture in the preservation and cultivation of the national spirit in Nigeria. Other thematic directions included Nigerian popular culture and sociolinguistics and the Nigerian national integration, contemporary festivals and dance as bonding harbingers of social communion, and carnivals and the carnivalesque in social/national engineering. The conference also explored how we can meaningfully deploy film and home video for the Nigerian image/identity construction and how tablets and smartphones, digital/new media, can be deployed as instruments for positive citizen media activism, conflict resolution, and popular empowerment of the masses as the “Fifth Estate of the realm”. Also interrogated was the significance of counter-globalisation and cultural fundamentalism in national integration as well as the pedagogy of theatre and media as instruments for the re-education of postcolonial spaces, sustainable local education policies, and epistemologies.

These conference foci show that beyond the threatened “national” sovereignty, the “local” still remains the theatre in which national integration can be meaningfully negotiated and engineered. In the same way, the national connects to the international in every way, fostered by a common environment or ecosystem, the global economy, and pandemics, many of which are driven by the superhighway of the media and their technocratic connective technologies.

The presentations that form the content and focus of this book echo and re-echo the multiple challenges that strain and threaten Nigeria’s nationhood with different emphases, hues, and tones. The writers also offer solutions from the perspectives of their concerns. Even though theatre and media scholarship and practice have been equally run down by the complexities of Nigeria’s problems, now complicated by the changing paradigm brought

about by COVID-19, which may re-configure the nature of community arts, digital divides, and forced migration towards digital virtuality, these arts still offer strong platforms upon which sustainable solutions could be negotiated or launched. Theatre and media are therefore portrayed as fundamental tools for the reconstruction of the local/global in the age of globalisation.

The book is divided into thematic sections, the first of which tries to conceptualise and theorise theatre, media, globalisation, and nationhood. The second section assesses the usage of theatre, media, artefacts, and monuments in the definition and quest for national identity in a world of fluidities. The third section is a commentary on social media as a counter-hegemonic propellant for national integration and mass participation in the public sphere. The fourth section looks at the use of performance arts: drama, theatre, carnivals, and festivals as tools for effecting national integration, while the fifth section extends the discourse on national integration using the participatory paradigm embodied in development communication.

Ahmed Yerima expatiates the thematic focus of “Theatre, Media, and National Integration in a Globalised World”, beginning with an analysis of Nigeria in the context of a failed society engulfed in a climate of fear and anger. In his words, Nigeria is “embedded within an unstructured form of spontaneous release of angst, uprisings, and deaths that create an unprecedented state of anarchy”. He concludes that under this chaotic situation, it becomes imperative for the nation to harmonise and reintegrate but wonders how reintegration could be successful in a situation where there are no concrete socio-political commonalities, a forced amalgamation of ethnicities and cultures, and the Western world interferes with the local under the cloak of globalisation. Yerima, however, negotiates a place for the instrumentality of theatre and media as tools for engineering national integration in a globalised world even within the prevailing troubled social reality.

Edde Iji laments the chronic multi-sectorial and multi-tiered decadence in Nigeria and proceeds to review a number of normative theories that could conceptually inform and propel actions towards regulating media operations, which would, in turn introduce good governance, stability, and national integration in the Nigerian nation. In his thematic focus, “From Normative Theories to Normative Theories: Constructive Deconstruction”, he perceives “a metaphor for media reform, media re-engineering for consolidation of moral and ethical re-armament and rejuvenation” such that “could coalesce toward abating crises of co-existential imperatives through the effective use of media of communication”.

In an attempt to understand and establish Nigeria's national identity, Holyns Hogan ascertains what he calls "Nollywood epic films" as Nigeria's national identity drivers and, by implication, a tool for promoting harmony. He highlights the anthropologic, linguistic, ethnographic, and cosmologic backgrounds of Nollywood epic movies and their usage in rebranding Nigeria's global image against alternative perceptions. Continuing the argument, Teddy Thaddeus Hanmakyugh's contribution, "Nollywood: Nigeria's Dream Factory for Globalised Image and Identity", strengthens Hogan's position that film is a potential tool for reconstruction, but cautions against its potential and tendency for abuse, for preponderant negative portrayals like rituals involving human sacrifices, prostitution, seduction, and materialism as aspects of the Nigerian culture as they could misrepresent the indigenous Nigerian cultural values.

Ofonime Inyang and Gideon Morison underline the value of Pan-African festivals in negotiating identity and cultural citizenship as bases for national identity, flashing back through Pan-African festivals from the mega Black Art Festivals in Dakar, 1966, through FESTAC in Lagos, 1977, to the Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) in Ghana 2019, all of which were showcases for African traditional dances, music, drama, and film as well as visual arts and crafts. But beyond showcasing these traditional art forms, the festivals operate on the ideology of reaffirming African national identities and positioning the participating nations, including Nigeria, on a better foundation for self-development. In much the same way, Joy Ofumaka asserts that national monuments and artefacts can equally re-enact and reinforce the much-needed "national spirit". Their physical architectural presences are constant reminders of a historical ancestral experience, a treasured past, and a "living heritage" with the potential to resurge nationalism and integration.

Mabel Evwierhoma promotes the idea of citizenship journalism activism facilitated by information and communication technology and driven by agents of globalisation as being complimentary to conventional journalistic approaches. She argues that the intensity and rapidity with which news is reported and analysed in the social media are capable of catalysing social change and national integration in Nigeria. She believes that "the dynamics of citizen journalism are required to influence the dynamics of nationhood especially in Nigeria where diversity of culture, belief systems, and ethnic makeup should be harnessed for national interest". This is because, according to her, "Citizen Journalism is activism that ensures the possibility of the Nigerian project". Cyril Onyemaechi Oleh extends this argument on social media as propellants of national integration in a globalised world. He draws our attention to how tablets and smartphones were instrumental to the

successes of #ArabSpring, #OccupyNigeria, and many other campaigns and argues that these media technologies could also be useful in positive citizen media activism towards integrating the diverse interests in Nigeria and providing a more democratic public sphere. Stanislaus Iyorza agrees that social media, as the “Fifth Estate of the realm”, has the potential to unify or integrate the Nigerian nation even though it is being misapplied such that it’s becoming a cog in the wheel of Nigeria’s integration drive. He advocates for massive media literacy, enlightenment campaigns, and training sessions for social media users, and for the erecting of firm security architecture to enforce standards that will discourage disintegrative false information peddling.

Odiri Solomon Ejeke initiates the discussion on theatre and the performative arts and their role in national integration. Ejeke maintains that as theatre and dramaturgy reflect society, they also promote harmonious living from political, social, and cultural perspectives. He argues that using the model of theatre, with its built-in conflict base and dramaturgical process which aims at a common goal of achieving a perfect production, Nigeria, also bedevilled by internal conflicts, can forge national integration and live in harmony. Esekong Andrew-Essien admits that theatre and media are potent tools for fostering national unity but posits that their efficacy could be better if the messages meant to promote reformation are properly created. He observes that the operational environment for creating and using performative messages in Nigeria is extremely complex but submits that using the evidence-based approach in message development, proper audience segmentation methods, and integrated multimedia message-sharing approaches could facilitate the production and profitable usage of visual, performative, and multimedia messages for development and integration.

Edisua Merab Yta advocates the use of story theatre to strengthen spousal emotional bonding, the foundation for a virile family, nation state and, by extension, the global community. This approach believes that “story theatre helps solve problems, achieve healing, and transcend unhealthy personal patterns of behaviour”, and that the problem of the Nigerian nation can best be addressed from the basic formative units of the family and marital couples as well as in other social environments such as prisons, hospitals, faith-based groups, and schools. The message is that if we harmonise the cradle, the nation will be healed. Joseph Abraham Ocholi extends this performative discourse in the direction of carnivals, festivals, and transnational pop cultures as the tools of nation branding and potential activators of national integration. The multicultural inclusivity, cultural sustainability, and global outreach provided by these cultural platforms

form solid bases for considering them as tools of national harmony and global bonding.

Edang Yolanda Ekpo Bassey advocates participatory communication as an approach to national integration because traditional one-way top-down communication media do not appear to be very effective in addressing the multiple differences of Nigeria as a multi ethno-lingual nation. She argues that participatory communication strategies, being more inclusive, are expected to address and possibly eliminate perceived communication barriers and better foster cultural synchronisation as well as forge sustainable national integration. Linking overpopulation to the failure of communication, Eric Jamo Dung & Enuwa Evelyn Obekpa assert that overpopulation, in spite of some of its advantages, has complexified the problem of national integration. If left unmanaged, it could birth other agents of threat to Nigeria's nationhood and integration. Again, the approach of development communication is emphasised as "the needle and thread of mending the cracks and divisions that overpopulation has plunged Nigeria into" as it offers a platform for dialogue where conflictual ethno-religious, social, and political differences could be managed.

In a roundtable discussion of the role of theatre and media in integrating the Nigerian nation,<sup>8</sup> key discussants were unanimous that Nigeria as a country is disintegrating and the institutions and conditions that facilitate integration and signify harmony are being eroded. Visible indicators include the absence of the rule of law, a free judiciary, and the freedom of the press, amongst others. It was considered paradoxical that Nigeria, which leads initiatives for regional conflict resolution in Africa, cannot resolve local socio-political disharmonies. With its baggage of socio-political injustice, Nigeria is considered unfit to feature in a seamless globalised world where standard best practices are upheld in all systems. Some identified features of national disintegration include repression by the Hausa-Fulani cabal that is so dominant in national leadership, local and individual interests overriding national interests in appointments and admissions into national institutions and offices, and nepotism and favouritism, which tend to suppress merit and proficiency in Nigeria.

While panellists agreed that national integration is a constitutional provision, they observed that there appears to be no "national dream", in the first place, to generate a sense of ownership and national consciousness among Nigerians. It was not clear if Nigerians could locate any issue of common national interest or collectively pursue any meaningful national value. Corruption, kidnappings, armed robberies, banditry, and an under-performing public service were identified as symptoms of the failing Nigerian system and not the core problems as there were more fundamental,

underlying challenges. The ethical and moral foundations were observed to be equally very weak.

However, some remediating actions were suggested to stem the proclivity to national disintegration. In line with the themed conference, theatre and media were identified as veritable channels to facilitate national integration as it was emphasised that the performative arts help citizens alleviate their stress, deploying theatre's ability to satirise situations while communicating strong messages to those in power. Furthermore, theatre, being the second-highest income earner and the second-highest employer of labour in Nigeria, is now better positioned to speak and be heard; the adoption of "agit-propaganda" theatre was suggested as a viable tool to facilitate the struggle for social justice. Theatre and media practitioners by training are galvanised to initiate action for change; and theatre and the media are positioned to open conversations on national development and raise national consciousness among Nigerians. Messages towards remodelling outmoded or ineffective policies could be communicated through these media.

On a more general level, active community, individual, and corporate participation are required in the political process. To engender this inclusive participation, the panel suggested that there should be wider inclusivity in appointments and admissions to state educational institutions. For instance, reference to place of origin and religion in national documents should be eliminated while the public school system and other institutions that were established to foster national unity should operate for the collective benefit of all ethnicities in Nigeria. Furthermore, faith-based organisations should lead the process of moral re-armament instead of perpetuating fragmentation for self-serving economic advantage and power plays. This "mind reorientation" is expected to propel actions that could foster integration, and "Project Nigeria" should be held above religious, ethnic, and other affinities.

On their part, political leaders should promote "Nigerianism" above political party or other alliances. Specifically, religion should be downplayed and left in the realm of the personal, instead of a national, affair. Nigerians should be guided by ethics and extant legal standards; and to deter misdemeanours and promote transparency particularly in public offices, Nigeria should return to the system of reward and punishment, and citizens should begin to take responsibility and bear the consequences of their actions. The traditional ethos of naming and shaming should be promoted as a deterrence, and the elite, including the religious elite, who serve as role models and mentors are expected to share positive values and



standards and promote true spirituality that would enhance national integration with all its beneficial backward and forward linkages.

In conclusion, it becomes obvious that taking Nigeria as a microcosm of the global, the thoughts expressed in this book identify many factors that can cement or fragment the nation state. But within the globalising dispensation, where states tend to lose their sovereignty due to the relentless flows of globalisation, these issues become common signposts not only for the Nigerian state but also new and emerging “social imaginaries” which, even as they “feign permanence”, are also “dynamic, and in constant change” (Yepez-Reyes 2019, 18);<sup>9</sup> and not forgetting the underbelly of embeds and fundamentalist seeds which hold promise for possible local, national, and global integration or disintegration.

## Notes

- 1 Clyde W. Barrow & Michelle Keck, “A Critical Rejoinder to Manfred B. Steger”, *Studies in Political Economy*, 99: 1 (2018): 106–09: DOI:10.1080/07078552.2018.1440981. Liwhu Betiang also shared preliminary discourse on this conference theme: *H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online*: ‘Theatre\_Media\_and\_National\_Integration\_in\_a\_Globalised\_World’, 1 May 2019.
- 2 David Cadeddu, “Editorial: State, Nationalism and Globalisation”, *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation*, 2 (2019), DOI: 10.12893/gjcpi.2019.2.7, <https://glocalismjournal.org>.
- 3 How the Internet has contributed to changing the face of electoral democracy in Nigeria is aptly articulated here by Umar Dantani, Peter Nungshak Wika & Abdullahi Muhammad Maigari, “Internet Revolutions, Democratic Globalisation and Elections Outcome in the Twenty-First Century: Echoes from Nigeria”, *Glocalism: Journal of Culture, Politics and Innovation* 3, (2017), DOI: 10.12893/gjcpi.2017.3.5, [www.glocalismjournal.net](http://www.glocalismjournal.net).
- 4 Tobias Biancone, Director-General of International Theatre Institute (ITI), “Online Festival? Online Conference? Online Lecture? Online Future? Or Rather Not?” *Online Newsletter*, May 2020; foreshadowing the social disruption in artistic production and consumption that COVID-19 protocol portends.
- 5 Like elsewhere, the culture and media industries are among the strongest sectors of growth in the Information Society, and both exert significant hegemonic influence on national integration. Cf. IB Bondebjerg, “European Media, Cultural Integration and Globalisation: Reflections on the ESF-programme Changing Media – Changing Europe”, *Nordic Review*, (2017), De Gruyter Open: DOI: 10.1515/nor-2017-0344.
- 6 Sruti Bala, “What\_is\_the\_Impact\_of\_Theatre\_and\_Performance?” Book Chapter 13, *Thinking through Theatre and Performance* (NP, NP, 2018), 178–99. Google. Accessed, 6 May 2020.

- 7 Chinua Achebe, *There was a Country* (London: Penguin, 2012), 2. Although subtitled “a personal history of Biafra”, Achebe had earlier engaged the persistent national problematic issues of Nigerian nationhood and integration in his collection of essays, *The Trouble with Nigeria*.
- 8 The key discussants at the roundtable which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2019 included Professors Kalu Uka (Chair), Mabel Ekwierhoma, Edde Iji, Effiong Johnson, Emmanuel Dandaura, Emmy Idegu, and Mr Jonah Eteng (Speaker of Cross River State House of Assembly); with Esekong Andrew-Essien as Rapporteur.
- 9 Veronica Yepez-Reyes, “Alter-globalisation Social Imaginaries: A Theoretical Review”, *imagonautas*, 13 (2019): 1–22.

**SECTION 1:**

**CONCEPTUALISING THEATRE, MEDIA,  
AND NATIONALITY**

## -II-

# THEATRE, MEDIA, AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

AHMED YERIMA

### **Keywords versus Current Social Realities**

The world we live in is fraught with dualities of meanings so the keywords and their definitions for this book will reflect such dualities. Although theatre and media serve as fundamental tools for finding solutions for the reconstruction of failed societies, such as the type we are presently living in, in Nigeria societies are endeavouring to find solutions to problems of development. A failed society is one enveloped in a climate of fear and anger, a society embedded within an unstructured form of spontaneous release of angst, uprisings, and deaths that create an unprecedented state of anarchy. National integration becomes the desired solution, a supposedly inclusionary goal towards the involvement of equal opportunities for every member of society.

In such an environment, the duality of national integration heightens because this duality provides the desired elements that trigger social realities that conflict in a failed society, and ironically it is the desired social reality that is expected and when attained will restore sanity in the given society. But can sanity be restored or maintained in an unsettled society? This is one of the questions I shall be discussing in this chapter. A “globalised world”, on the other hand, is the new cliché of the Western world. Even though it is supposed to connote development, growth, and modernity, it has gradually become, for most African countries, the unreachable, often unattainable level of development where issues of growth are supposed to be shared but never resolved. Gradually, developing world countries are finding that this cliché is a great deception, an enthronement of neo-colonialism in developing African countries, because they remain caught up in the still-unresolved independence of forced amalgamation of clusters of tribes with supposedly ethnic and cultural similarities. Sadly, as people develop and grow, they

discover that there are really no concrete socio-political commonalities. This chapter aims to find a place for theatre, media, and national integration in a globalised world even within this troubled social reality.

**Climate of hate and fear:** For me, a climate of fear descended on Nigeria after the civil war, which destroyed all hopes of having a united country. The military rule also contributed to it. The bloodbath of failed military coup-plotters, the oil boom period of squander-mania and megalomania, and the profound greed among the political class and the general populace were so powerfully present that Wole Soyinka notes in his book *Climate of Fear* that “the ‘climate of fear’, ‘climate of terror’ and so on will surface in the mind without much conscious effort” (2004, 1). The after-effect of the climate of fear that enveloped Nigeria highlighted the ethnic and cultural differences, the deconstruction of an earlier false belief in a united national identity, the emergence of fragile individual cultural belongingness, and the feeble grappling with the forces of national integration and development. The word “indigene” became more pronounced than the word “citizen”. Thus subjected, Nigeria was weakened and unable to grapple with the forces of development+ and had no power to negotiate her own modernity.

The utter disregard of the moral functions of theatre and the misuse of the media have led to the negative attention given to false realism, neglected practical ways of state problem-solving approaches, and no particular attention being paid to the positive aspects of the social narratives of the country, leading Nigeria slowly to the brink of self-implosion.

**Core discourse:** Theatre is innate in humankind. It allows human beings to observe the narratives of their existence and express their humanity. Most of all, it allows people to document life through the process of recalling emotions, celebrating, and retelling the demographics of their very essence. For the purpose of this discourse, I shall adopt Ron Harwood’s definition of theatre in his book, *All the World’s a Stage*.

theatre has the alarming power to embody problems that are fundamental to existence but which frequently defy solution because, historically, the theatre has been a medium more of emotion than of rationality, finding a language and a setting in which to express what otherwise must have remained hidden or suppressed (1984, 14).

Media, on the other hand, is the process of communication between society and the audience. It is used to exercise a powerful and persuasive influence on the wider society through the technology employed in the press, film, and radio. This is because of the extent of the reach, and a wider communication with a wider audience. It is also argued by James Curran in

*Culture, Society and the Media* (edited by Michael Gurevitch et al.) that mass media came into being due to

urbanization and industrialization, [which] had created a society that was volatile, unstable, rootless, alienated,

and inherently susceptible to manipulation... a view of the mass media as having only limited influence, grounded in empirical research within a liberal tradition, was pitted against an alternative conception of the mass media as powerful agencies. (1986, 11)

It is further argued that this empowered “media” as a socio-political tool is used for tampering, encouraging, and persuading the public for or against the will of the people or the will of government. It is in this duality or ambivalence of usage that the power of theatre and media lies. What is presently reflected in Nigeria is the obvious immorality of religious, political, and tribal bigotry. The question then is: does one stand with the political leaders, embrace government policies, and believe in their actions unequivocally, or go against them, again, unequivocally? While the media can altercate positions depending on who is reporting and who they are reporting for, theatre can portray different sides of a coin within its content but must present, no matter how open-ended, one thematic or ideological focus or position.

At present, Nigeria is going through socio-political transformations within a simple logic of existence that says that where there is no security, there will be no form of national integration, and where there is no national integration, there cannot be any political stability, health, and economic growth in that society. Ironically, although theatre and media thrive on the issues of a crisis-ridden society, they do not thrive in a crisis-ridden society. Theatre is a way of expressing the crisis society lives and endures. The theatre practitioners gather materials of incidences that have occurred or are about to occur or are occurring within society, collate them into a storyline and try to examine them and suggest alternative solutions.

On the other hand, the “media” [used as a collective] collates past and present happenings within society, reports such happenings, and allows society to draw conclusions that will help resolve such issues; in this regard, both theatre and media “conscientise” the general public. They communicate with the populace, providing information that will allow society to grow positively in the direction where the public can hold its place in world polity.

Nigeria, like most countries, is involved in the challenges between politics and policies. It is also constantly grappling with issues of good