

New Aesthetic
Dimensions

in African
Drama and
Theatre

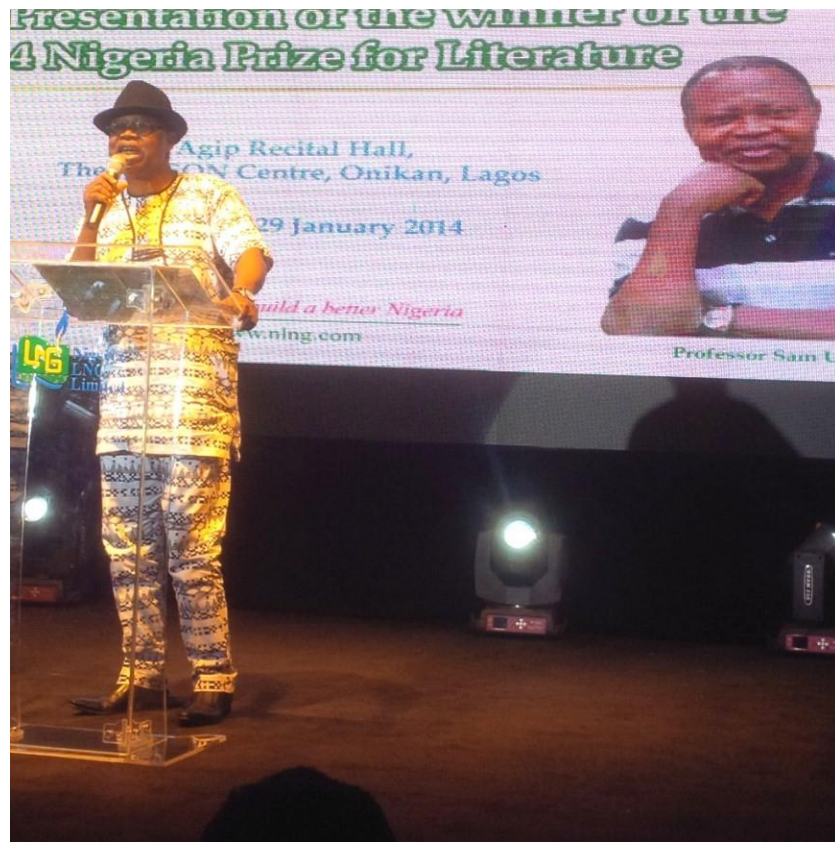
A Festschrift in Honour of Prof Sam Ukala

Editors

Martins Uze E. Tugbokorowei
Chukwuma Anyanwu

**New Aesthetic Dimensions in African
Drama and Theatre**

A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Sam Ukala



Sam Ukala making his acceptance speech on the occasion of being presented as Winner, 2014 Nigeria Prize for Literature, Lagos

**New Aesthetic Dimensions in African
Drama and Theatre**

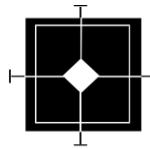
A Festschrift in Honour of Prof. Sam Ukala

Editors

Martins Uze E. Tugbokorwei

and

Chukwuma Anyanwu



**Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA)
Delta State Chapter**

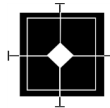
Published by
BWright Integrated Publishers Ltd
for
Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA)
Delta State Chapter

© Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter

First Published 2018

No part of this publication may be reproduced or stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical without the written permission of the editors and ANA Delta State Chapter.

ISBN 978-978-53135-2-7



Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA)
Delta State Chapter

Contents

<i>List of Plates</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	<i>xxx</i>

PART ONE: PERFORMANCE AESTHETICS

1. All Hands as Stage Hands: Revisiting Sam Ukala's Theatre and Stage Business <i>Chukwuma Anyanwu</i>	3
2. Light as Scenery: Historical Development of Technology in Contemporary Nigerian Theatre Design <i>Abiola Kashimawo Oshodi</i>	14
3. Sam Ukala's Folkist Directorial Aesthetics: The Example of <i>Iredi War</i> <i>Tekena Gasper Mark</i>	25
4. Communication Art and the Directorial Praxis of Sam Ukala <i>Nicholas Efe Akpore</i>	39
5. Prof. Sam Ukala as a Director: An Interview <i>Austine Amanze Akpuda</i>	52

PART TWO: LITERATURE, THEORY AND CRITICISM

6. Transmuting Folklore for Dramaturgic Relevance in Contemporary Nigeria: An Assessment of Sam Ukala's Dramaturgic Foray <i>Martins Uze E. Tugbokorowei</i>	71
7. Presenting History Through Folkist Drama: An Analysis of Sam Ukala's <i>Iredi War</i> <i>Elo Ibagere</i>	86

8.	Folktale as Panacea of the Oral Tradition: An Example of Sam Ukala's <i>Akpakaland</i> <i>Lilian Chidinma Agogbuo</i>	100
9.	Charting a New Direction in Nigerian Playwriting through Folkism: A Study of Sam Ukala's <i>Akpakaland</i> and <i>Placenta of Death</i> <i>Godwin Onuche and Peter Ogohi Salifu</i>	113
10.	Sisters at Arms: Female Misogyny and Competition in Sam Ukala's Selected Plays <i>Enajite Eseoghene Ojaruega</i>	131
11.	Social Decadence and Moral Imperative in Sam Ukala's <i>In My Hermitage</i> <i>Sunny Awhefeada</i>	143
12.	Sexual Imageries in Select Works of Sam Ukala <i>Aghogho Lucky Imiti</i>	160
13.	Literalising Indigenous Story-Telling Narrative: Textual Reading of Sam Ukala's Folkism as an Aesthetic Theory <i>Oghenevize M. Umukoro</i>	171
14.	Sam Ukala's Perspective of Cultural Collision and Tragic Vision in <i>Iredi War</i> <i>Bassey Nsa Ekpe</i>	191
15.	Sam Ukala's Drama and the Trend of Conformity: A Study of <i>The Slave Wife</i> and <i>Akpakaland</i> <i>Uche-Chinemere Nwaozuzu</i>	204
16.	Art and the Exemplification of People's Power in Sam Ukala's Theatre: <i>Akpakaland</i> and <i>The Placenta of Death</i> <i>Idaevbor Bello</i>	218
17.	Dramatic Aesthetics in Sam Ukala's <i>Iredi War</i> <i>Oluseyi Abiodun Ogungbesan</i>	239

18.	Historical Realities: A Study of Sam Ukala's <i>Iredi War</i> <i>Anthonia E. Ezeugo</i>	250
19.	Language as Stimulus: Rhetorical Rendering in Sam Ukala's <i>Skeletons</i> <i>Benedicta Adeola Ehanire</i>	264
20.	Oppression, Gender and Resistance in Selected Plays of Sam Ukala <i>Cindy Anene Ezeugwu</i>	276
21.	Indigenous Patterns of Women Oppression and Liminality in Sam Ukala's <i>Akpakaland</i> and <i>The Slave Wife</i> <i>Chikerenwa Kingsley Ihekweme and Augustina Ashionye Obah</i>	291
22.	Viable Business or Death Trap?: Sam Ukala's <i>Fumes of Fuel</i> <i>Ruth Etuwe Epochi-Olise</i>	307
23.	Sam Ukala's <i>The Last Heroes</i> : A Sad Commentary on University Education in Nigeria <i>Greene Okome</i>	331
24.	Sam Ukala as a Complete Man of the Theatre <i>Taofeek Olatunbosun</i>	335
25.	Reading the Mind of the Playwright: Personality Fragmentation in Sam Ukala's <i>Iredi War</i> <i>Henry Obakore Unuajohwofia</i>	346
PART THREE: CULTURAL AESTHETICS AND CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE		
26.	Eco-Centred Performance Poetry Among the Gbagyi of Abuja: Issues at Stake <i>Mabel Evwierhoma</i>	361

27. Attitude of Students to the Study of Urhobo in Delta State Tertiary Institutions <i>Eyankuairé Moses Darah</i>	381
28. Urhobowood: Home videos and the Poetics of Cultural Documentation <i>Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah</i>	401
29. Professional and Educational Theatre: Where is The Meeting Point? <i>Godfrey Oghuan Ebohon</i>	419
30. Publicity in Educational Theatre: Social Media Use as a Novel Approach <i>Eseovwe Emakunu and Seigha Jammy Guanah</i>	430
31. Traditional Music Theatre in Contemporary Contexts: Perspectives From Aniocha Igbo of Nigeria <i>Josephine Mokwunyei</i>	446
32. A Study on Trauma Aesthetics in Mahmood Ali-Balogun's <i>Tango With Me</i> <i>Lauretta Nkiruka Ike</i>	458
33. The Poet as a Town Crier: G' Ebinyo Ogbowei's Socialist Engagement with the Public in the <i>Town Crier's Song</i> <i>Stephen E. Kekeghe</i>	475
34. From <i>Marxist</i> Ukala to <i>Postmodern</i> Adeoye and the Politics of Experimental Theatre in Nigeria <i>Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah</i>	489
35. The Politics of Dispossession and the Redemptive Praxis in G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's <i>Marsh Boy and Other Poems</i> <i>Peter Emuejevoke Omoko</i>	504
36. Attainment of the Goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): A Historical Appraisal <i>Chukwuemeka Ojione Ojieh</i>	519

37. The Dynamics of Folk Culture in the Aesthetics of Yoruba Ifá and Chinese I-Ching <i>Bífátifé Olúfémí Adeseye</i>	535
PART FOUR: REMINISCENCES AND TRIBUTES	
38. A Tribute to Prof. Samuel Ukala @ 70 <i>Austin Ovigüe Asagba</i>	555
39. A Golden Harvest (for Prof. S. Ukala) <i>Ruvia Idiase</i>	558
40. Prof. Sam Ukala: A Man With a Heart of Gold (A Tribute) <i>Alaska Ekele</i>	559
41. Who Will Educate Us? and You Are Immortal <i>Taiye Amatesiro</i>	561
42. Research and Experimentation in the African Alternative Theatre Tradition: The Growth and Contributions of Sam Ukala to Global Cultural Studies <i>C. Ailende Ativie</i>	564
43. A Masquerade with Beautiful Dance Steps <i>Chukuka Chuks Ebouku</i>	589
44. Thirty-Six and a Half Souls in Search of a Mentor <i>Sammy Omotese</i>	592
45. Ukala and the Muse at a Glance <i>Chukwuma Anyanwu</i>	596
46. Sam Ukala in the House of Writers <i>Denja Abdulahi</i>	597
47. The Life and Times of Prof. Samuel Ukala at 70 as a Theatre Arts Legend <i>Gladys Chukwudumebi Nwosah</i>	600
Index	615

List of Plates

Plate 1:	Sam Ukala playing the lead role in “Whiteness is Barrenness”, written and directed by him, 1976	2
Plate 2:	Sam Ukala directing his “Harvest of Ghosts”, Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Lancashire, UK, 1998.	2
Plate 3:	Plate 3: Sam Ukala, directing <i>Harvest of Ghosts</i> , at Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Lancashire, UK, 1998	2
Plate 4:	Plate 4: Sam Ukala, SONTA Fellow 2006 being decorated at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2016	70
Plate 5:	Plate 5: Sam Ukala about to receive the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL) Fellowship Award, 2016	70
Plate 6:	Plate 6: Group photograph of ANA – Delta members and the National Executive led by the National President, Prof. Olu Obafemi at the inauguration of the Delta State chapter of ANA, Delta State University, Abraka, 2002	360
Plate 7:	Plate 7: Sam Ukala (right) chatting with Prof. Ebun Clark and Prof. Olu Obafemi (front row). SONTA Conference, University of Ilorin, 1991	360
Plate 8:	Plate 8: Sam Ukala leaving the church through the aisle with Grace, his newly wedded wife, 1976	554
Plate 9:	Plate 9: Sam and Grace Ukala with their children and grand-children, 2016	554

Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge with utmost appreciation all those who have been part of this festschrift project. A lot of persons, organizations and groups have been very supportive right from the very beginning when the idea was conceived up to the time of giving birth to it. It is not possible to mention all who have assisted in the actualization of this project in one way or the other, but we must try within our limitations to single out some of such persons, organizations or groups for salutation. Firstly, we thank immensely the celebrant himself, Prof. Sam Ukala (the Eagle, the Iroko, the Big Masquerade) who embraced the idea when it was proposed to him and took it on as a loving father would a beloved child. Prof. Ukala's siblings and children also enthusiastically boarded the train immediately it left the station and have been consistent pillars of support. They deserve our special commendation. Of particular note, we thank the broader committee, *The Prof. Sam Ukala @ 70 Committee* ably chaired by Prof. Austine E. Anigala (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Delta State University, Abraka) for seeing to the fulfillment of this celebration. The Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University is not left out in our gratitude. We thank the immediate past Ag. Head of Department, Dr. Godfrey Enita and the entire staff of the Department for being co-drivers of this train. We must also thank the student body of the Department, Association of Theatre Arts Students (ATAS) led by Benjamin Idewor for enthusiastically joining to celebrate their father. The Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter, deserve special mention as the foetal stirrings of this project started from there. ANA-Delta conceived the idea and nurtured it to delivery principally on account of the editors being prominent members of the chapter (Martins Tugbokorowei – Chairman; Chukwuma Anyanwu – PRO). We must not fail to acknowledge the support received from the national leadership of ANA and Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA), our friends, colleagues, Prof. Ukala's friends and admirers, and of course the

contributors of essays and tributes to this project. Without such contributions, this festschrift would not have come to fruition. Thank you all, and may God continue to shower you with his blessings and mercy.

Foreword

I consider it extreme honour to be invited to provide a fitting testament to buoy for deserved attention an important work on an equally important and formidable individual to commemorate his scholarship and sterling service to the academy, that has spanned over three very productive decades. For me, it is a special gain because of the opportunity this invitation affords me to have an-almost-lost presence in this landmark outing of a book.

Over the years, Professor Sam Ukala has distinguished himself as a world class scholar in theatre studies and practice. The volume and quality of his contributions to these special fields of study are quite engaging. Perhaps his defining theatrical experiment, **Folkism**, opened up a new vista and direction for the African stage. This ground breaking dramatic theory has remained a flourishing extant critical tool in the hands of students, teachers, producers and researchers in African dramatic and theatre aesthetics. Professor Ukala is Fellow of the Society of Nigerian Theatre Artists (SONTA), National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP), Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) and the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL), which suggest the depth and tenor of his academic, creative and professional character and proficiency. Ukala has helped to plant departments of theatre arts in two major Nigerian universities (Bendel State University, later Edo State University – now AmbroseAlli University, Ekpoma; and Delta State University, Abraka). These efforts greatly contributed to the expansion and growth of the theatre profession in Nigeria on one hand, and the production of theatre artists and personnel on the other hand. It is a known fact that some of the great names in the Nigerian theatre/movie industry today are products of his direct tutelage. Some of these are:

1. Ayodeji Richard Makun, alias AY, a multi-award-winning actor, comedian, radio and television presenter,

- writer and producer of the TV series, **AY's Crib**, and the film, *30 Days in Atlanta*. He is the CEO, Corporate World Entertainment;
2. Bovi Ugboma, a comedian, director, producer, actor, writer and producer of, and actor in, **Extended Family**, a television sitcom; and
 3. Justice Nuagbe, alias Ushbebe, a comedian, radio and television presenter, creator and producer of the TV show, **The Chronicles of Ushbebe**, broadcast on several channels in Nigeria and Europe.

All these comedians are household names in Africa.

My privileged association with Prof. Ukala revealed him to me as a very dynamic, productive and foresightful scholar and administrator who has a deep reservoir of knowledge to draw from in navigating social and human issues. Added to these professional qualities, he is affable, purposeful, articulate, charismatic and disciplined with profound creativity and industry. His sense of responsibility is impeccable, given his high quality delivery on vast administrative and scholarly assignments he has had to deal with. I must add quickly that this is not an assessment of this colossus, but my modest and sincere impression of an unassuming individual who has given veritable platforms to many young minds to find their bearing in theatre scholarship and practice.

As a creative artist/writer, Prof. Ukala is very versatile and multi-talented. His creative enterprise is not only limited to the field of theatre arts but cuts across all the major genres of literature signposting him as a total creative artist. The main preoccupation of his creative *oeuvre* in play creation is underscored by experimentation in fresh aesthetic forms for African theatre. His thematic concern interrogates social inequalities, injustice and deprivation of human liberty. Ukala's drama advocates human dignity, economic empowerment, restoration of our cultural values, social ethos, and national integration. His creative works have won many outstanding literary awards but perhaps the apogee of his creative enterprise was attained when he won the **2014 prestigious Nigeria Prize for Literature** with his play, *Iredi War*. To date,

Ukala is a recipient of over thirty awards of excellence from local, national and international bodies. These achievements coupled with his scholarly erudition and vast professional exposure in Theatre Arts and Drama position him as a valuable asset in any knowledge-driven environment.

It is against this background that the honouring and celebrative spirit behind this festschrift can be understood, as Ukala retires from active university service this year at the age of seventy. In main, the book is an effort galvanised by two former students of Prof. Ukala at the post-graduate level, who are also his colleagues in the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University. Organised in four sections on Performance Aesthetics; Literature, Theory and Criticism; Cultural Aesthetics and Contemporary Discourse; and Reminiscences and Tributes, *New Aesthetic Dimensions in African Drama and Theatre* is an interesting tapestry for understanding emerging and recurring issues in African Drama and Theatre. With Forty-Seven essays in one volume exploring engaging issues and discourses in theatre studies and the humanities generally with Sam Ukala as the nucleus, the book would serve as a researcher and student's companion on not only Sam Ukala's Drama and Theatre but also on the new gains of African Drama and Theatre in the last two decades. The strength of this work can be located in its analytical depth and engaging scholarship.

Drs. Martins Uze E. Tugbikorowei and Chukwuma B. Anyanwu must be commended for embarking on this project, which is an eloquent indication that they remember and value the fountain that has watered their emergence as scholars and practitioners, and to equally give honour to whom it is due. The effort is also a significant statement that human capital investment is a more enduring legacy and should engage our attention more. Indeed, this well-researched assembly of essays is a rich harvest for Sam Ukala as birthday present and a good return for his worthy investments in humanity.

The book presents ample evidence of a painstaking work and patronised by seasoned, emerging and young scholars. It is my sincere delight and overflowing pleasure to foreword this

irresistible work, in content and outlook, to the reading public,
researchers and students in the humanities.

Professor Sunday Enessi Ododo, *fsonta, MNAL*
SDG Postgraduate School
UCC, Ghana
1st March, 2018.

Introduction

Professor Samuel Chinedum Ukala, more and better known and addressed as Sam Ukala, is not an unknown name in the Nigerian, nay, African theatrical and dramatic experience. Indeed, universally speaking, the theatre world has heard, known and is familiar with the name Sam Ukala, the folkist theoretical exponent. He does not therefore require fresh introduction. All we are doing here therefore, is to update the reader on the new creative heights and academic laurels which have wreathed in decoration, the aesthetic neck of this mogul in the theatre. His creative oeuvre has fathered at least two critical works: *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala* (Ogude, Steve, et al, Eds. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999); and *Sam Ukala: His Work at 60*, (Austin Ovigie, Asagba, Ed. Ibadan: Kraft. 2008). These two works have the necessary biographical details of Sam Ukala and we can only further the work from where they stopped.

Sam Ukala cut his academic teeth as a university don when he was engaged as a Lecturer II in the then Bendel State University, Ekpoma, at the Department of Languages and Literature shortly after completing his doctoral thesis and was awaiting defence. He was offered that rank on the basis of his publications. He assumed duty on 5th August, 1985. In March 1986, he was invited for oral defence of his PhD, which he did successfully. Still under two years as a Lecturer II and not having completed the mandatory three years before the next promotion exercise, the University advertised internally and externally vacancies to be filled by qualified staff. Ukala, knowing that he was not due since he was less than three years in his then subsisting appointment, did not bother to apply. However, after being advised by the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences, Professor B. I. C. Ijomah, who was convinced that, going by Ukala's credentials and publications, he was eminently qualified and should not allow the opportunity to pass him by, the young lecturer applied for the position of Lecturer I. As fate would have it, Ukala emerged the best of the 52 candidates

that vied for the post. The Dean proudly said to him, “You see, people who haven’t got what you have got would have become your boss and ruled over you.” The Vice Chancellor of the University then was Professor Philip Kuale. Thus, on October 1st 1987, Dr. Sam Ukala became Lecturer I, doubling his academic stride towards the chair which he gained eight years later, becoming a full Professor after barely nine years in the classroom.

18th April, 2018, marks a milestone in Ukala’s journey in life. On that date, he attains the age of the biblical three score years and ten, also his date of retirement from the services of Delta State University, Abraka. And that is after spending thirty-three (33) years, planting, nurturing, and watering thousands of academic minds in the garden of the Ivory Tower. This book is one of the products of such young tendrils that he tended and nurtured.

Even as this piece is not necessarily biographical, it is instructive to remind us that our celebrant has plied his academic and artistic trades across international borders. On account of the academic and artistic heights he has attained, Ukala has won numerous awards and has been conferred with several fellowships, of which a limited sampling would be given. He won the British Council Prize for Best All-Round Student in the Department of English, University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1976. In recognition of his outstanding achievement in the field of drama and theatre arts, the International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England awarded him the 21st Century Award for Achievement in 2001. Ukala was awarded the Fellowship of the Society of Nigeria Theatre Artists (SONTA) in 2006 as a testament to his giant stature in theatre arts scholarship and practice. In 2007, Ukala won the Delta Role Model Award in acknowledgement of his creative writing, film production and teaching skills. Ukala was awarded a Fellowship by the National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners (NANTAP) in recognition of his immense contribution to the development of the theatre profession in 2013. He won the highest literary prize in Nigeria, the NLNG sponsored Nigeria Prize for Literature in 2014 with his play *Iredi War*. In the year 2016, he was inducted into the prestigious league of Fellows of the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL), the highest conclave

for academics in the humanities in Nigeria. The Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) is not left out as it also conferred on Ukala its Fellowship in 2017. Indeed, Ukala can be said to be one scholar and theatre artist that has seen it all and enjoys a tremendous amount of goodwill. It is not surprising, therefore, that when the Call for Papers went out, there was an enthusiastic response. From the wide array of entries received, the essays in this festschrift have been selected.

PART ONE contains essays on performance aesthetics. We have **Chukwuma Anyanwu** who in his chapter discusses the place of stage business in the play production process. He then dovetails into how Sam Ukala deploys these in his drama and theatre performance endeavours. The chapter is a beautiful exposé on the application of stage business in performance with particular reference to Sam Ukala. **Abiola Kashimawo Oshodi**'s chapter is focused on the application of light as scenery. The chapter discusses the evolution of lighting within the Nigerian theatrical scene and uses some productions in which lighting technology played significant role in scenic effect and mood expression as paradigm. **Tekena Gasper Mark**'s chapter is on Sam Ukala's directorial aesthetics. Mark uses Ukala's play *Iredi War* as the focus of analysis and adopts the case study and content analysis research approaches of the qualitative research method. Mark posits that a lot of Nigerian directors are yet to familiarize themselves with the folkist directorial aesthetics, and therefore calls on them to study Ukala's folkist directing style, as explored in this chapter, arguing that such would provide them with the necessary guide required to interpret folkist plays on stage. For **Nicholas Efe Akpore**, Ukala's expert knowledge as a theatre director engages his attention. Communication is the ability to carry one's audience along, he tells us and directing is the essence, if it communicates, so that the audience decodes the message with ease. He submits that Ukala's folkism is a directorial concept which makes the message to be understood by the audience/viewer/listener and that this objective is well articulated through the deployment of folkism as a directorial concept. To conclude this segment, we have **Austine Amanze Akpuda** who conducts an

illuminating interview with Ukala on his concept of play directing. The interview traces Ukala's introduction to the art of directing, what informs his directing choices, his relationship with his collaborators, his directorial techniques, and the general outcomes of his directing endeavours.

PART TWO is made up of essays on Literature, Theory and Criticism. This segment starts with the chapter by **Martins Uze E. Tugbokorowei** who takes a dramaturgic foray into the relevance of Ukala's folklorist narrative essence in terms of its contemporariness in African theatre and drama. It is beautifully written and lucidly examines Ukala's works, using the folkist template and he does this rather well. Folk narratives function to entertain, instruct and educate and they are authentically African. Next is the chapter by **Elo Ibagere** which presents an Analysis of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*. Ibagere investigates Sam Ukala's *Iredi War* to determine whether it bears the hallmarks of folkism as a literary concept. Beyond that, the issue of faithfulness to historical records is also looked at. The chapter contends that Sam Ukala's *Iredi war* is a good example of folkist drama as it displays elements of folkism. In this chapter, Ibagere equally posits that the play contributes to a better understanding of the history of Owa by clarifying the facts of the event focused upon. **Lilian Chidinma Agogbuo** in her chapter discusses Ukala's *Akpakaland* from the perspective of modern African narrative tradition which draws its force from the folkloric technique of story-telling. She traces the beginning of modern African drama from its oral tradition and makes us understand that Ukala's *Akpakaland* is a success story of this narrative technique of African drama. **Godwin Onuche** and **Peter Ogohi Salifu** in their chapter advocate that Nigerian playwrights adopt indigenous playwriting models particularly as espoused by Sam Ukala in his theory of Folkism. Onuche and Salifu contend that plays written within the Nigerian context but which do not have sufficient indigenous elements tend to be boring. They use some of Ukala plays to show the path to playwriting that could lead to better audience reception of such plays. **Enajite Eseoghene Ojaruega** in her chapter examines Sam Ukala's depiction of female interactions and relationships in some

of his plays. Ojaruega evaluates some contexts that generate intra-gender conflicts in Ukala's plays and argues that patriarchal structures, polygyny in particular, engender unhealthy rivalry and hostile relationships among women and pit them against one another in their bid to gain recognition and retain their relevance within such settings. Ojaruega posits that Ukala makes the case for redressing some of these negative factors by dramatizing them. **Sunny Awhefeada** brings to bear his expertise as a critic and scholar of note in his chapter. He critically looks at an aspect of Ukala's writing that is usually glossed over by scholars, his poetry. Awhefeada takes the reader through Ukala's volume of poetry, *In my Hermitage*, where he portrays Ukala as a poet who is quite knowledgeable in his craft; who confronts social-realism but is somewhat shy of politics. Through the eyes of the Hermit as the persona in the collection, the poet engages his reader, sometimes through the point of view of a child when the Hermit transforms into one, sometimes as an adult who is aware of his environment, proffering solutions to problems where need be. Following Awhefeada's chapter is that by **Aghogho Lucky Imiti** who in his chapter discusses sexual imageries in select plays of Sam Ukala. Imiti presents a critical analysis of the plays and reveals that at various levels, Ukala employs the image of sex to describe certain actions that are meant for the "mind's eye", all geared towards achieving the aim of enthroning good governance and justice in the polity. **Oghenevize M. Umukoro** discusses Ukala's folkism theory as an aesthetic theory of the African story telling narrative. He submits that the theory is the most authentic response to Western aesthetic theories of literary drama. He says that Ukala's folkism is the most authoritative African voice that counters Aristotle's poetics. He makes this submission with recourse to Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Ukala's *Akpakaland*, *Iredi war* and his own *Princess Elona*. These he reveals are truly plays in the folkist tradition. He makes a case for folkist drama as the alternative African folk literary theatre tradition that can stand side by side with Western aesthetic theories. **Bassey Nsa Ekpe's** chapter takes a critical look at Sam Ukala's tragic vision with recourse to his award winning play, *Iredi War*. She draws from the

cultural dichotomy which exists between the oppressor/European, represented by Crewe-Read on the one hand and the oppressed/African, represented by Owa people, on the other hand. The actual gap, she tells us, is so wide that nothing but tragedy could fill it and this indeed, was the case. **Uche-Chinemere Nwaozuzu**'s chapter makes a foray into the structural and thematic designs in Sam Ukala's plays by highlighting strands of conformity with traditional motifs found in indigenous African drama. Nwaozuzu observes that elements of conformity are deliberately used by Ukala to orchestrate his unique vision of performance aesthetics which is deeply rooted in elements of traditional African performance **Idaevbor Bello** in his chapter takes a comprehensive view of Ukala's works through the examination of scholarly works by other writers on Ukala. He does this by looking at *Akpakaland* and *The placenta of death*, which he sees as representing class struggle between the lower/poor masses as the oppressed and the upper/ruling classes as the oppressors. He submits that the future of the oppressed class lies in their unity against the ruling class as shown in the two plays. Only then can the poor get justice. The chapter by **Oluseyi Abiodun Ogungbesan** examines the dramatic aesthetics in Sam Ukala's play *Iredi War* within the folkist tradition. Ogungbesan's study is foregrounded against the principles of Folkism, with the view to studying and highlighting the African traditional story telling system imbedded in *Iredi War*. The chapter touches on the multi dramatic aesthetics in the play *Iredi War* especially from the African traditional example of the total theatre technique as used by the playwright. **Anthonia E. Ezeugo**'s chapter asks and attempts to answer the question: what is the place of history as a source material in the crafting of dramatic pieces? Ezeugo contends that even when historical facts inspire a dramatic work, the playwright is not bound to be slavish to the linear progression of the history. Ezeugo then dovetails to a discussion of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War* to test her thesis. **Benedicta Adeola Ehanire** in her chapter investigates an aspect of Ukala's oeuvre that seems not to receive the attention it deserves. Ehanire examines the stories in *Skeletons* against the backdrop of the author's rhetorical use of

language to stimulate the reader's interest and engender persuasiveness with regard to his treatment of the stories. Ehanire avers that Ukala deploys aesthetics in such a way as to induce empathy, humour and sarcasm, even when presenting serious, challenging and life-threatening situations. **Cindy Anene Ezeugwu** in her chapter which is focused on oppression, gender and resistance, uses *The Slave Wife*, *Akpakaland* and *Break a Boil* as paradigms. Among the many questions which Ezeugwu tries to answer in this chapter are: how far has Ukala been able to move from the stereotypical characterization in the depiction of female characters? To what extent are these women able representatives of the ideal contemporary Nigerian woman? How effectively have these women articulated the true vision and aspiration of modern women who are persistently clamouring for a better, freer, fairer and less corrupt society and how successfully do these women combine the noble traditional feminine attributes with the positive feminist ideals of the present times? The duo of **Chikerenwa Kingsley Ihekwe** and **Augustina Ashionye Obah** take on the issue of gender equality in two plays, *Akpakaland* and *The Slave Wife*. However, they look at the issue of gender from the angle of women being the agents of their own downfall as the better placed among them oppress the less privileged. They draw their examples from folktales thus narrowing into Ukala's folkist concept and trace how women fight against themselves, more often than not over men or in the bid to be liked by men. Feminism is acutely shown to be perpetrated by women against themselves and this is amply illustrated by the example of the two plays. Using the greed model approach, **Ruth Etuwe Epochi-Olise** traces the trajectory of the discovery of oil and its attendant disastrous consequences in the Niger Delta. The chapter uses Ukala's *Fumes of Fuel* to examine issues bordering on oil bunkering/theft in Nigeria, the havoc in terms of loss of life, loss of revenue to the government, relocation of oil companies operating in the region as well as the environmental degradation that it has caused. Epochi-Olise asks the question: is it a viable business or a death trap? **Greene Okome** in his chapter evaluates Ukala's *The Last Heroes* which he says sadly reflects the deterioration in Nigeria's tertiary

institutions. **Taofeek Olatunbosun** in his contribution looks at Sam Ukala as a complete man of the theatre. Olatunbosun does this by discussing the various aspects of production and how they can shape the writing of a play. Using *Iredi War*, Olatunbosun argues that Ukala is at home with these different aspects of theatre production and shows how Ukala deftly weaves them into the crafting of *Iredi War*, saying that this would impact positively in a production of the play. Closing this segment is the chapter by **Henry Obakore Unuajohwofia** which is located within the matrix of the psychoanalytic worlds of Freud, Jung, Frye and Lacan. Unuajohwofia uses the personality fragmentation method of the psychoanalytic theory to argue that in themes, characterisation and techniques, *Iredi War* by Sam Ukala can be used as a gauge to measure the mind of the playwright in regards to the events of the play. Unuajohwofia argues that the characters in *Iredi War* are developed by the playwright to advance certain values that express his fragmented self, his fears and hopes.

PART THREE brings together essays on Cultural Aesthetics and Contemporary Discourse. **Mabel Ewrierhoma** begins this segment by taking us through the eco-performance poetry of the Gbagyi people who are the original inhabitants of Abuja. Like the Niger Delta people whose literature focuses on environmental degradation, the Gbagyi preoccupy themselves with issues of their farm lands which they are gradually losing to Nigeria's new capital, Abuja. Faced with displacement, they take recourse to poetry performance about the ecosystem. However, their scope is limited by language and it is therefore advocated that they should endeavour to infuse English language into their poetic performance to enable them reach a wider audience. The next chapter is by **Eyankuare Moses Darah** who empirically examines the attitude of Urhobo students to the study of Urhobo language in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Using two higher institutions, Delta state University, Abraka, and College of Education, Warri, Darah bemoans the fate of Urhobo language and extends it to other indigenous minority languages in Nigeria. He wants government to step in, in order to prevent the Urhobo language from going into extinction. He also suggests job creation for graduates of

indigenous Nigerian languages with emphasis on Urhobo to encourage the study of such languages and to preserve their continued existence. **Stephen O. Okpadah** in the first of two chapters in this book takes a look at indigenous film as a way to document and preserve the cultural essence of the people. Basing his views on Urhobo movies, he notes the necessity for indigenous movie culture as a means to preserve the people's cultural heritage. He however, glosses over the negative criticisms which trailed the adoption of Nollywood as Nigeria's movie land and advocates the adoption of more woods such as Urhobowood, Ijawwood, Igbowood, etc. which takes one back to the old controversy of a suitable name. **Godfrey Oghuan Ebehon** in his chapter looks at the characteristics that denote the professional and educational theatres and strives to draw the connecting lines in such a manner that would be beneficial to both forms of theatre. This chapter is analytical in nature: looking at professional and educational theatres and dissecting their points of convergence. The chapter further highlights the features of theatre as a concept and concludes by recommending among others, that the discipline demands responsible commitment as it requires working toward a creative goal. The duo of **Eseovwe Emakunu** and **Seigha Jammy Guanah** in their chapter suggest alternative methods for publicizing educational theatre productions away from the conventional use of posters, handbills and word of mouth. They advocate the use of social media and all they entail as these have wider coverage and cut across demographic variables. With social media, they argue, more people would be involved and the community beyond the campus would be captured thus making the union of town and gown fruitful. **Josephine Mokuwunyei** in her chapter studies the place of music in the theatre and the performance modes and significance of musical theatre. She investigates *egwu* as theatre and traces the connections between *egwu* and play or theatre as performance of music and dance. Mokuwunyei looks at the ritual origins of drama through to the literary phase and the contexts of the performance of *egwu*. In the next chapter, **Lauretta Nkiruka Ike** takes us through the traumatic experience of Lola and Uzo whose much anticipated wedding night becomes a night of terror

for them as a consequence of an insecure society. Tracing the theories of trauma from Sigmund Freud and other professionals, she reveals the unfortunate effects of trauma through an examination of Ali Balogun's 2011 movie, *Tango with me*. It is a piece that challenges the reader's knowledge of psychology and related disciplines. **Stephen Kekeghe** in his contribution examines the poet as a town crier. Kekeghe uses G. 'Ebinyo Ogbowei's socialist engagement with the public in the *Town Crier's Song* to interrogate the endemic oppressive regimes in Nigeria. The poetry, he says, condemns repressive governments and the docility of the masses who ought to rise against their oppressors. He observes that post-colonial poetry is poetry of protest and revolution, condemning the misrule and urging the people to rise up in protest. In his second coming, **Stephen Okpadah** shows a good grasp of the works of Sam Ukala and Abdul Rasheed Adeoye and treats both against the backdrop of modern Nigerian theatre which he says adopts a radical approach by incorporating Marxist aesthetics. Tracing the Nigerian theatrical experience from Rotimi through Clark, to Sowande, Adeoye and Ukala, he posits that Ukala's Folkism has elements of Marxism while Adeoye's neo-alienation is rooted in Brecht's epic theatre. But must all African creative ideas be associated with the West? Or, are we saying that the West is first with all manners of creative authority? The chapter by **Peter E. Omoko** looks at the poetry of G. 'Ebinyo Ogbowei as a revolutionary voice which preaches the gospel of redemption for the people. He wants the people to rise in protest against their oppression and not to be docile and silent. Using the collection, *Mash Boy and Other Poems*, Omoko shows a good grasp of other noteworthy writers in Nigeria of which Ogbowei is a major figure on Niger Delta concerns. The poetry indicts the government at all levels and the multinational oil companies, whose activities Omoko argues constitute the central problem in the region which has geographical and political templates of structure. It is a piece which illustrates how literature (poetry) can be used to serve the interest of the people. In a development focused discourse, **Chukwuemeka O. Ojieh** takes a historical excursion into the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and submits that

the project has not been able to meet its 2015 objectives to make Africa a developed continent. Most of its goals were not achieved though some measure of success was recorded. **Bifátifé Olúfémí Adeseye** concludes this segment with his chapter which draws parallels between the aesthetics of Yoruba Ifá and Chinese I-Ching as divination methods. Adeseye traces the historical paths of these two cultural phenomena, how each has developed and tries to justify their relevance in the contemporary computer age. Adeseye presents his discussion in easy understandable manner that the reader would want to delve more into the mysteries of these items of intangible cultural heritage.

PART FOUR, the final segment of this festschrift, is devoted to softer and more celebratory writings, which contain reminiscences and tributes. The arrowhead of this segment is a longtime friend and academic colleague of the celebrant, **Austin Asagba** who in his piece pays tribute to a consummate artist that has excelled in different aspects of the theatre. Asagba traces their affinity and the similarity in research interests that they both share and postulates that Sam Ukala is an intellectual of no mean repute, wishing him well in his post retirement endeavours. **Ruvia Idase** in his short poem entitled, “A Golden Harvest” eulogizes the man, Sam Ukala and outlines his qualities as a man who has produced many academic seeds and that many of these seeds have also produced and increased the yield. Thus, Sam Ukala is seen as an academic grandfather to many. **Alaska Ekele** in his own short piece pays glowing tribute to a father-figure, a man he describes as having a heart of gold; a man of the people, apologies to Chinua Achebe. **Taiye Amatesiro** graces this festschrift with two poems celebrating Sam Ukala, first as a teacher who has impacted greatly on the lives of all with whom he has made contact; a teacher not just in the classroom sense, but in the school of life. In “Who Will Educate Us?” Amatesiro lays out the qualities and achievements of Ukala as a teacher and asks how that role will continue now that he is bowing out of the university system. In “You Are Immortal”, Amatesiro avers that given the achievements of Ukala, he remains immortal in the minds of all that he has affected in his journey through life. **C. Ailende Ativie**, views Ukala from the angles of

teacher, artist, scholar, theorist and mentor, a man of many parts who is good in all of them. He brings Ukala to us from his insider knowledge of the man, whose student he (Ativie) was when Ukala was just cutting his academic teeth as a lecturer at Bendel State University, Ekpoma. Ativie's treatise bifurcates between reminiscence/tribute and academic dissection of Ukala's works. Ativie writes with authority and knowledge that he knows the man, Ukala and his works rather well. The write-up is so graphically presented that one feels the presence of Ukala come alive from the pages. **Chukuka C. Ebouku** writes a befitting tribute in a poetic rendition to a man whom he regards as a "masquerade with beautiful dance steps." The poem eulogizes Ukala and highlights his many attributes as a friend and father to many. **Sammy Omotese** in "Thirty-Six and a Half Souls" pays glowing and generous tribute to a deserving mentor, teacher, and guardian. He says in no uncertain terms that the thirty-six states of the federal republic of Nigeria and Abuja, the federal capital territory, need a person in the mould and calibre of Professor Sam Ukala to lead them. **Chukwuma Anyanwu** in his poetic rendition pieces together the titles of Ukala's works to present a veritable discourse of the Nigerian dilemma in which the abnormal is now taken as normal. It shows the thematic engagement of Ukala's works through the years. **Denja Abdulahi** in his tribute chronicles Sam Ukala's journey and contributions to the development of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). Abdulahi posits that given Ukala's antecedents in ANA's activities, he has earned himself a well-deserved place in the pantheon of ANA elders. This segment, and the book, end very fittingly with a tribute from none other than a sibling of the celebrant, **Gladys C. Nwosah**. In her piece on "The Life and Times of Professor Sam Ukala at 70", she takes us back memory lane as she reminisces on Prof. Ukala's early days; his journey in life and what guided him to become the man he is today. This is a testimony from within; coming from Prof. Ukala's own blood as she narrates how the boy metamorphosed into a man among men. This tribute is refreshingly fresh.

This collection of essays and tributes, no doubt, has enriched the corpus of knowledge not only on the man, Sam Ukala but also on different aspects of theatre and performance studies; on theory and criticism as well as on cultural discourse and its contemporary relevance. Welcome to this rich vineyard. Harvest, fill your barn and eat to your satisfaction.

Martins Uze E. Tugbokorwei
and **Chukwuma Anyanwu**
Abraka, 2018.

Notes on Contributors

Lilian Chidinma AGOGBUO is of the Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo. She can be reached on e-mail: Ugoem2001@yahoo.com/ chi_la2001@yahoo.com

Nicholas Efe AKPORE is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. He can be reached on nicholasefe@yahoo.com.

Alaska EKELE is the publisher and editor-in-chief of *Ndakwa Vanguard* Newspapers. He was a former national Assistant General Secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), and the pioneer Chairman, South-South Writers Union. E-mail: ndokwavanguard@yahoo.co.uk

C. Ailende ATIVIE is a Lecturer with the Department of Political Science/General Studies Unit, Novena University, Ogume, Delta State Nigeria. Email: collinsativie@yahoo.com

Sunny AWHEFEADA is an Associate Professor and immediate past Head, Department of English and Literary Studies, as well as the University Orator, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, Nigeria. Email: sawefeada@yahoo.com

Bassey Nsa EKPE (Mrs.) lectures at the Department of Performing Arts, Akwa Ibom State University, Obio Akpa, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. E-mail: mailbassey@gmail.com

Idaevbor BELLO wrote from the Department of English and Literature, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. idaevbor.bello@unib

Eyankuair Moses DARAH is of the Department of Languages and Linguistics, Delta State University, Abraka. darahmoses@delsu.edu.ng

Chukuka Chuks EBOUKU is a graduate of Theatre Arts Department, Delta State University, Abraka. He is also a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter.

Eseovwe EMAKUNU and **Seigha Jammy GUANAH** are both Doctoral Candidates of the Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benin City, Nigeria. Emakunu can be reached on ehimareese@gmail.com; while Guanah can be accessed on: jammyguanah@yahoo.com

Mabel EVWIERHOMA is a Professor from the Department of Theatre Arts and former Dean of Arts of the University of Abuja, Nigeria. mabtobrhoma2002@yahoo.com

Ruvia IDIASE is an administrator and a renowned poet, novelist and publisher. He was a former Assistant Secretary, Association of Nigerian Authors, (ANA), Delta State Chapter.

Chikerenwa Kingsley IHEKWEME is a Lecturer, with the Department of Theatre and Media Studies, Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State. ihechikere.nwa@gmail.com, while **Augustina Ashionye OBAH** is a Doctoral Candidate, Department of Theatre and Film Studies University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State. tinades08@yahoo.com

Lauretta Nkiruka IKE holds a Masters degree in performing arts from the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Nigeria. spylaura.ike@gmail.com

Stephen E. KEKEGHE lectures at the Department of English, College of Education, Warri. He recently defended his doctoral thesis from the University of Ibadan.

Stephen Ogheneruro OKPADAH holds a Masters degree from the Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. okpadahstephen@gmail.com

Chukwuemeka Ojione OJIEH is of the Department of History and International Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Dr. Ojieh is also the current Head of Department.

Peter Emuejevoke OMOKO lectures at the Department of English, Delta State College of Physical Education, Mosogar. peteoms@gmail.com

Sammy OMOTESE wrote from Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.

Aghogho Lucky IMITI is a PhD Student of the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka): imitilucky@gmail.com

Gladys Chukwudumebi NWOSAH is an accomplished Engineer, Reverend and a Doctor, as well as the International President of Christ Cares International Mission. gladysnwosah@yahoo.com

Martins Uze E. TUGBOKOROWEI is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. Dr. Tugbokorowei is also the incumbent Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors, (ANA) Delta State Chapter. tugbokorowei@delsu.edu.ng

Chukwuma ANYANWU was formerly of the Department of Mass Communication, Delta State University, Abraka before transferring to the Department of Theatre Arts of the same University. Dr. Anyanwu is a Senior Lecturer, an accomplished writer, novelist, poet and playwright. He has held various posts as a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter.

Oghenevize M. UMUKORO is the current Head of Department of Theatre Arts, College of Education, Warri, where he lectures. He recently defended his PhD Thesis at the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka.

Bifátifé Olúfémí ADESEYE, is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Theatre and Media Arts, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. Dr. Adeseye is also the Head of Department
touchbifatife@gmail.com; bifatife.adeseye@fuoye.edu.ng

Austin Ovigie ASAGBA is a Professor in the Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, University of Benin, Benin City. He was formerly Head of Department of Theatre Arts and Mass Communication, and one time Dean of the faculty of Arts of same university.

Taiye AMATESIRO, is a poet, playwright and freelance journalist.

Godfrey Oghuan EBOHON is of the School of Secondary Education (Language Programmes) English Department, Federal College of Education, Kontagora, Niger State: ebohonta@yahoo.com

Benedicta Adeola EHANIRE wrote from the Department of English and Literature, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City: ogbazoo2000@yahoo.com

Anthonia E. EZEUGO. Dr. Ezeugo wrote from Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam Campus, English Department, Faculty of Arts. ezeugoanthonia@gmail.com

Cindy Anene EZEUGWU is of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Elo IBAGERE is of the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. eloibagere@gmail.com

Josephine MOKWUNYEI is a Professor and Head of Department of Theatre Arts, University of Benin: josephinemokwunyei@gmail.com

Uche-Chinemere NWAUZUZU. Dr. Nwaozuzu is of the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Oluseyi Abiodun OGUNGBESAN is a lecturer with the Department of Theatre and Media Studies, Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria. oluseyioGUNGBESAN15@gmail.com

Enajite Eseoghene OJARUEGA. Dr. Ojaruega is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka.

Taofeek OLATUNBOSUN lectures in the Department of Languages, College of Humanities, Mountain Top University. He was a former National Public Relations Officer (South) of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). jostadele@gmail.com

Godwin ONUCHE and **Peter Ogohi SALIFU** are both of the Department of Theatre Arts, Kogi State University, Anyigba. They can be reached on Godwinonuche10@gmail.com. and salifu.peter@yahoo.com respectively.

Abiola Kashimawo OSHODI, is an Assistant Lecturer with the Department of Creative Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Lagos. Nigeria kashody12@gmail; comkashimawo-abiola@unilag.edu.ng

Gaspar Mark TEKENA lectures at the Department of Theatre and Film Studies, University of Port Harcourt: tekenamark@yahoo.co.ukortekena.mark@uniport.edu.ng

Henry Obakore UNUAJOHWOFIA is apost-graduate student, of the Department of English, Delta State University, Abraka. hunuajohwofia@gmail.com

Greene I. OKOME is a Senior Lecturer with the Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. He is also the treasurer of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Delta State Chapter. ighogreene@yahoo.com

Ruth Etuwe EPOCHI-OLISE lectures at the Department of Theatre Arts, College of Education, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. epochiruth@yahoo.com

Austine Amanze AKPUDA lectures at the Department of English and Literature, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria. Akpuda is well known in literary and academic circles as a poet, critic and scholar.

Denja ABDULAHI is a Director with the National Council for Arts and Culture. He has been a prominent player in the literary and culture sectors in Nigeria. Abdulahi is a well-known writer who has been part of the National Executive of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) for years. He is currently the National President of ANA.

PART ONE



Performance Aesthetics



Plate 1: Sam Ukala playing the lead role in “Whiteness is Barrenness”, written and directed by him, 1976.



Plate 2: Sam Ukala directing his “Harvest of Ghosts”, Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Lancashire, UK, 1998.



Plate 3: Sam Ukala, directing *Harvest of Ghosts*, at Horse and Bamboo Theatre, Lancashire, UK, 1998.

One



All Hands as Stage Hands: Revisiting Sam Ukala's Theatre and Stage Business

Chukwuma Anyanwu

Introduction

The theatre in all its forms is an experience. This experience has different levels of meaning for all the participants depending on their individual and or, collective attitude to it. Thus, some plays have value for individuals as literature and for some as drama via performance, yet others treasure both genres. Inevitably, the theatre with reference to performance is a transitory art. However, even with photographs and written reviews designed to achieve some measure of permanence to this transitory art, certain areas/units of the experience are still lost. George R. Kernodle posits that:

The performance is not complete without a written review, a permanent record, description, or evaluation to fix the memory and evoke for the future some image of a transitory art. The essence of the theatre is the reaction of the whole audience but, that is unfocused, unclear, and very quick to fade in a general glow. A printed play or a photograph can recall the performance but only a good review can supplement the playgoer's own analysis, confirm or modify his opinions, stimulate further thinking about the play, and open up new points of view (631).

Kernodle goes further to say that the review "causes anxiety" among cast and crew. "The members of the cast and the other people connected with the play wait for it anxiously, praying that it will be favourable, each hoping that he will be mentioned, perhaps,

praised” (631). Kernodle is correct when he describes the anxiety with which actors and other stakeholders wait for the written review. Indeed, with the review in hand, within the first flush of its appearance, the general response is to scan the page(s) in search of one’s name, hoping the mention is good. It is after this satisfaction of seeing one’s name that the actual reading of the review is done.

In spite of how thorough, positive, scathing or otherwise, the review may be, there is still a certain unit of participants which never gets a mention. It may be that everybody who participated in the production experience has got his/her due credit in the programme brochure, yet, these by another name are generally ignored. With the actors praised, criticized and hounded for autographs; the set designer commended, the lighting technician, and even the costumier/makeup artist, props and stage manager up to the box office personnel given their rightful dues; nobody remembers to appreciate the stage hands. Whereas the business of the theatre or theatre business cannot succeed without them, one wonders why this neglect?

It is for this reason that this chapter is undertaken with particular emphasis on Sam Ukala’s selected plays and a few others in performance in the bid to appreciate the relevance of this group of playmakers in the theatre. The writer uses the sociological (survey) research method through a purposive interview of selected samples to actualize this exercise.

Definition of Concepts

Theatre requires no introduction. However, Joseph Agofure Idogho, citing *The Encyclopedia Wikipedia*, defines theatre as “a collaborative form of fine art that uses live performers to present the experience of a real or imagined event before a live audience in a specific place” (123). Even though theatre is a collaborative art, it is quite possible for a person to actually have his own “theatre” following a particular style. Thus, we have Soyinka’s, Rotimi’s or Osofisan’s theatre. Following this line of reasoning, Ukala’s theatre would then be that particular brand of theatre which has a decidedly Ukala uniqueness in style. And we have this in the Folkist tradition, evolved from the Folkism theory as propounded

by Ukala himself. Folkism is seen as: “The tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the Folk (the people in general...), and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale,” (Ukala 6).

Now, that we have identified Sam Ukala’s theatre, let us turn to the loose term, “stage hands”. Who is a stage hand and or, what are stage hands as applied to the theatre? In his little book on technical terms, Ken Eni defines stage hand(s) as, “any person employed on the stage,” (59). Not satisfied with the definition, the writer embarked on an interview with two seasoned theatre directors, both of the Theatre Arts Department, Delta State University, Abraka, Drs. O. S. Ejeke and Godfrey Enita. According to O. S. Ejeke,

a stage hand is anybody that assists in arranging and rearranging the set, and who is not directly involved in the acting. His duties are to ensure that the stage is properly set for the next action/scene; be on standby to ensure that everything needed for successful production is in place (Personal Communication).

On his part, Godfrey Enita, says that he is not comfortable with stage hands but recognizes them as expendable if possible. He says that stage hands are those employed to assist in getting the stage/scene ready for action. But, he prefers to use actors for the role or job of stagehands. To him,

Stagehands are usually not available during rehearsals hence they have the tendency to cause confusion and distract actors. However, I give my stagehands minor roles, so I block them and make them part of the production especially in a large cast performance like Sam Ukala’s *Iredi War*. They need coordination to avoid upsetting actors during performance (Personal Communication).

From the above definitions, we see that stagehands are essentially part and parcel of the performance. For some, they are involved from the beginning, for others, they should be involved only during performance. Now, what about stage business, theatre

business, or is it the business of the theatre? What is the business of the theatre? Is it the same as theatre business? Is it stage business? The answers to the above questions are not as simple as they may appear. In an interactive session with Dr. G. I. Okome, the Business Manager of Theatre Arts Department, Delta State University, Abraka, he makes it clear that theatre business and or the business of the theatre, is not altogether different from stage business. According to him, theatre business encompasses all the business of the theatre. Asked to elaborate, he says that the business manager is in charge of the commercial aspect of the theatre, comprising production, house management, box office, etc. His role ends at the auditorium, (Personal Communication). From Okome's definition, the commercial aspect of the stage business is what the theatre manager is concerned about.

Be that as it may, the definition of stage and or, theatre business by Menegbe is quite elaborate, and should be cited in its entirety for its insightful explanation of the subject.

Actors and actresses execute stage business during production. Stage business is a theatre terminology, which specifically refers to things actors and actresses do with their body in the stage during the course of production. Generally, theatre arts can be referred to as stage business both literally and figuratively. In a literal sense, all the things we do in theatre culminate on the stage. The stage is the point of consummation, the venue for the actualization of all theatrical intents and purposes, plans and actions come to fruition on the stage. It is the central point around which all the arts of the theatre revolve and it is revolved (sic). Figuratively speaking, theatre business can be referred to as the theatre. Indeed, the stage is a worthy totem of theatre arts. (228)

Menegbe posits that his definition of theatre business and or stage business embraces the screen, because, according to him, they are all theatre. Yet, some people prefer to separate theatre business from stage business. For Enita, "stage business are actions that may not necessarily be incorporated in the script by the playwright, but the director thinks they would assist actors to achieve maximum interpretation of their roles" (Personal communication).

He also says it helps to build confidence in the actor and enables him to concentrate on the business at hand. For S. O. Ejeke, theatre business is what happens in the theatre, the acting, dancing, including what happens on stage beyond the acting; all the activities from the selection of the script/play, to performance constitute theatre business.

Since business is an activity, theatre business then encompasses all aspects of the theatre experience, set, lighting, costume, makeup, props, etc. whatever goes into a performance and is part of the theatre experience, is theatre business. Theatre business is therefore, as composite as the theatre itself.

Ukala's Theatre and Stage Business

Samuel Chinedum Ukala, better known simply as Sam Ukala, needs no new introduction in the Nigerian theatre landscape. To his many appellations as a Professor of Drama and Theatre Arts, as an award winning playwright, theatre director, critic and theorist of international stature, one can only add that he, in 2014, added to his plethora of achievements, the highest prize for literature in Nigeria by winning the much coveted Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas (NLNG) sponsored Nigeria Prize for Literature. His theatre is recognized universally through his popular Folkism theory which he propounded to address the vexed issue of African theatre and classification, which before then was seen and regarded as a "beast of no gender" (Ukala 2007).

This segment of the chapter will now address his use of and employment of stage hands in his stage business. Unlike the other units of a performance whose jobs begin right from the pre-production/preparation stage and run through the production and post-production stages, the job of those strictly designated and employed as stagehands begin more often than not on the eve of dress and technical night and end with the performance. This is when they are strictly engaged as stagehands because more often than not, directors consciously and unconsciously engage actors as stagehands as Ukala does in most of his productions.

The job of a stagehand is time bound to a performance. This is because when a scene ends, and as actors go backstage to change

and reapply makeup where necessary stage hands use the opportunity to change and replace properties, get the next scene ready and ensure that actors' props are in the right place, among other concerns needed for a successful production. It is the speed and precision with which the stagehands do these things that affect the running time of a performance. Stagehands work with and are responsible to the stage manager. The stage manager:

appoints duties to the stagehands with regards to striking and changing the set. Since they do this in partial darkness, they must have rehearsed enough to place every item of furniture in its exact position. Nothing can unsettle actors as being confronted with situations unfamiliar to them from the rehearsals. For many of them are too conscious of their lines to improvise and that is where experience comes in. (Anyanwu116)

It must be reiterated that the use of stagehands in a production is not directly related to the size of the cast, rather it is a product of the nature of the play itself. For instance, in most plays of the folkloric tradition of Ukala, *The Slave Wife* for example, Femi Osofisan's *Yungba Yungba and the Dance Contest* and some plays of Wole Soyinka like *The Road*, do not need stagehands in its strict sense. This is because the nature of the plays creates room for mobility of actors and because the scenes are more or less fluid, the actors transit from role to role in front of the audience. *The Road* is quite illustrative here because the Motor Touts in it function in all manners and make the use of stagehands superfluous. Ukala's plays like *Iredi War*, *Break a Boil*, *The Slave Wife*, etc. make minimal use of stagehands because of their fluidity and folkloric style. The freedom of movement creates room for items needed by actors to be provided even by Members of the Audience (MOA). The implication of this is that such stagehands have roles in the play and must have perfected such role(s) during the rehearsal period.

Other non-folkist plays also may not need stagehands as such. A play like Chukwuma Anyanwu's *Boundless Love*, for example, does not need stagehands once it opens. This is due to the plot structure which enables the characters to narrate their

experiences to their colleagues and to the audience via the play within the play technique. They rearrange the set, change costumes as applicable. Thus, the rearrangement or removal of a particular costume or prop signals the end of the scene within a running play.

It makes for ease of scene change and saves time, a treasured commodity during performance. This is particularly true in the stage adaptation of Amos Tutuola's novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* by Bode Sowande. In *My life in the Bush of Ghosts* production at the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre in 1990, the actors, as ghosts, were everywhere including the auditorium, regaling the audience with their stories and doing the job of stagehands where necessary. This was unlike the experience with Sola Aborishade's *Naira Republic* April 1989, which posed problems for the technical crew, the actors, the stagehands, etc. because the stage was a revolving one, the first and last of its kind in my over a decade of interaction with the University of Ibadan Theatre Arts Department, even till now.

The necessity to involve stagehands early in a production is worth its price in gold, especially as it saves time. Godfrey Enita, who had the privilege to direct Ukala's *Iredi War*, for the Ika community, shortly after it won the NLNG prize, in an interactive chat with this writer, confirms that the characters are many and play several roles from Policemen to Soldiers, MOA, etc. and as such many of them had to be involved in the production in minor roles as Towns people and therefore, assisted with scene changes.

It is perhaps in recognition of the need to make all hands as stagehands that Ukala in virtually all his plays involves the audience. It makes them not to be alienated from the performance because they are part of the main. Even his definition of stage drama is instructive for he defines stage drama from the African perspective as:

A play written or improvised for performance on stage or one being performed or already performed on stage and "stage" in Black Africa, means any performance area – an elevated platform at a corner of a theatre building, facing the audience,

or an arena surrounded by spectators on the street, in a compound or market place or village square (3).

With the above definition of the stage in Black Africa, one clearly sees a difference between the Western concept of stage and that of the African. It is for this same reason that the literary drama in the Western concept is more amenable to the use of stagehands in a production than its African folkloric counterpart. As already noted, the Western drama, especially that written for the proscenium stage makes the audience an intruder, a guest, an uninvited one at that, who “peeps” into people’s privacy, unlike the African total/folkloric theatre where the audience shares equal rights with the characters on stage.

Again, Ukala tells us about his use of the audience as implied here.

We must add *you* (emphasis included), as one of the stakeholders who must “educate” themselves and contribute to the development of the entertainment industry, for it is for the audience that entertainment is created. And the audience is even more important for stage drama. In connection with my topic, therefore, professionals in the entertainment industry, the audience, the organized private sector, and the government (our proprietor and facilitator), are invited to deliberate on trends, opportunities and strategies for reviving and repositioning our comatose stage drama (Ukala 2).

For Ukala, therefore, no element of the theatre is more important than the audience for whom the drama is created. Indeed, the audience is the *raison d’être* for the theatre. It is important, therefore, to involve them to enable them continue their patronage of the profession without which the show would not go on.

Functions of Stagehands

Before discussing the functions of stagehands which have been largely outlined in the body of this work, it is important to discuss at what point they should be involved or engaged in the course of a production. This is because whether directly or indirectly, every play in performance needs to have stagehands in the various

capacities. As noted earlier, some plays by their nature use actors as stagehands. But where this is not the case, directors and especially stage managers must see to it that stagehands come into a production, at least, a week before performance. This will enable them to be acquainted with the peculiar demands of the performance. It will also help them to know the story, understand cues and entrances of the actors, time the striking of set, and identify actors that would require the most assistance. The presence of stagehands at rehearsals is significant because they are dealing with live performance where there is no room for repeat action. Their early involvement saves lot of stress for all concerned. Live drama is “life” and entertains no errors.

This writer recalls when he was serving in the Edo State Arts Council as a Youth Corp member in the early 1990s. He got involved with a colleague who was serving with the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), Benin, and together they created a live television programme, “Weekend Delight”, which featured drama sketches, quiz, scrabble, etc. The camera men assigned to the programme were required to watch the rehearsals at least once before recording, but they were not doing this, so, whenever they came on set, there was enough drama on their part as they struggled to follow the change of scene: adjusting the positions of their cameras and repositioning the lights as appropriate. Their anxiety and excitement to meet up with the actors’ movements were things to behold, all because they missed rehearsal(s).

Thus, it is advisable that where stagehands are not directly involved in a performance, that is, where they have no specific roles assigned to them other than back stage business, it is imperative that they see the rehearsal of the play at least a week to the dress and technical night. Now, we should look at the functions of stagehands. It has been reiterated that the job of stagehands is time bound and is conducted in partial darkness. The success or failure of a performance could result from their commitment or lack of it. They see to the success of a performance by doing the following:

- (a) Ensure scene changes to precision.

- (b) Ensure that props are in their right places and guide the actors in using them.
- (c) Serve as chorus and supply songs especially for scene change where applicable.
- (d) Where there is need for prompting (though no director worth the name allows this), they do the prompting; they also place cue sheets in the wings and backstage at the appropriate positions to aid entries and exits of actors, all based on the directives of the stage manager.
- (e) Be on standby for any eventuality or directive from the director or stage manager.

Given that clumsiness with the backstage business, which is where the stagehands mainly operate, can affect the overall performance, it is important that they should be involved in a production at the same time other members are being hired or involved. This, perhaps, accounts for why some dramatists and directors, especially those in the folkloric mode like Sam Ukala, make them part of the cast. It is convenient and saves time. There are no small roles in the theatre as our lecturers told us and as we are also telling our students. Attention to detail is a unique attribute of a successful director. Hence all hands, either stagehands or otherwise, must be on deck during a performance. As Menegbe would have us believe, “stage business is theatre business and theatre business revolves on the stage, the point of consummation of all theatrical intents and purposes.” (228)

Conclusion

It has been portrayed here that stage business is theatre business and theatre business embraces all the stakeholders, the audience not exempted. Thus, in this business, all hands are stagehands, including the director. The success of this should, therefore, not be left in the hands that are referred to or designated as “stagehands” in the strict theatre terminology. It is submitted here, then, that whosoever is involved in a production is a stagehand. However, those who are officially designated as stagehands, who never get mentioned in the written reviews or get pats and commendations

from the audience when the other members of the collaborative effort are getting theirs, should not give up. Soon, everybody gets his due. The central thing is that there is no discrimination in the flow of joy which accompanies a successful performance. It is as infectious as the depression which a failed production or scathing review gives. In Ukala's theatre, more often than not, all hands are stagehands, because as the Igbo say in a proverb, "the child that grinds pepper during cooking is also a member of the catering unit".

Works Cited

- Anyanwu, Chukwuma B. "Stage Management". Adedokun, Remi Ademola. (Ed.) *Arts Administration in Contemporary Nigeria*. Lagos: CBAAC. 2001. 113-120. Print.
- Ejeke, O. S. (Interview). Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. 26th May, 2016.
- Eni, Ken. *A Hand Book of Technical Terms Related to the Theatre*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, Ltd. 2008. Print.
- Enita, Godfrey (Interview). Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, 26th May, 2016.
- Idogho, Joseph Agofure. "Drama/Theatre in Education and Theatre as an Academic Discipline: A Question of Nomenclature, Techniques and Effects". *The Creative Artist*, Vol. 8, No. 2. 2014, 119-143. Print.
- Kernodle, George R. *Invitation to the Theatre*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World. 1967. Print.
- Menegbe, A. A. "Stage Business and the Business of National Development," Ukala, Sam. (Ed.) *African Arts and National Development*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, Ltd. 2006. 227-236 Print.
- Okome, G. I. (Interview). Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. 26th May, 2016.
- Ukala, Sam. "Preface" to *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, Ltd., 2014.
- Ukala, Sam. "Reviving Stage Drama in Post-Amnesty Delta State in the Face of Global Economic Meltdown," A paper presented at the 2nd Annual Delta Entertainment Summit, Asaba. 2010.
- Ukala, Sam. *African Theatre: Beast of No Gender?* 13th Inaugural Lecture, Delta State University, Abraka. 2007.

Two



Light as Scenery: Historical Development of Technology in Contemporary Nigerian Theatre Design

Abiola Kashimawo Oshodi

Introduction

Technology according to Rocci Luppicini; is “the organization of knowledge for the achievement of practical purposes as well as any tool or technique of doing or making, by which capability is extended” (2). This idea of “practical purpose” is evident in the theatre since it also entails the construction of covered theatre structures, including the acting area to be lit for audience visibility. The concept of seeing Light as scenery is as a result of 20th century technological developments in stage lighting design which took it beyond its basic function of illumination and veered into the use of light to create special effects, establish location, create mood and to use it for atmospheric purposes. Although to Wolf and Craig, “light begins to be a scenic element the moment the light source is visible to the audience... light can not only be projected on actors and dancers, but it can also serve as a character itself” (394-395). According to Baugh;

... light in theatrical performance has gone beyond its function of illumination, of creating atmosphere and even dramatic revelation, and has taken on a material quality in its own right, and in a variety of ways, has become a collaborator in the creation of performance (119).

Seeing lighting beyond illumination, “Robert Edmond Jones (1872-1996), Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966), and Adolphe Appia (1862-1928) envisioned using light as a central production

scheme in their work. However the technology available in their time could not support their imagination. Critical points in the development of light as scenery could be linked to the Czech Josef Svoboda (1920-2002), as he is considered the “first to develop on a large scale, a way to suspend electrostatically charged particles in the air to act as reflectors of light... his highly imaginative use and manipulation of projection surfaces was inspiration” (Wolf and Block 394), although, “projected and filmic images were extensively used by Erwin Piscator at the Berlin *Volkshu* in the mid- 1920s, most frequently to provide images of revolution and actuality...” (Baugh 119). Baugh attests to Svoboda’s link to light as scenery, stating:

The power and flexibility of post-war spotlights and the optical developments that paved the way for scenic projection, coupled with increasingly sophisticated lighting control, enabled Svoboda to conceive of the space of production as a distinctive construct within the architectural theatre space; a construct of space defining light born out of darkness, an abstract special composition shaped by light (135-136).

In order to achieve light as scenery in contemporary theatre, its actuality is in the use of colours, gobos, and projectors and projection screens. Historically, Stage lighting design and technology has grown with the evolvement and complexities of the theatre, as it grew from bare space in the beginning to what is practiced in contemporary times.

Stage Lighting in Nigeria

As historically expressed that theatre practices started with festivals and masquerade performances, it suggests that such performances would have taken place in open-air found spaces and specific arenas that could accommodate such performances. Discussing from the Nigerian perspective, Molinta Enendu opines that:

The traditional African performances trace their origin and development to myth, rituals, worships and festivals. The performances by masked and unmasked dancers and

performers in shrines, groves, marketplaces, public squares for ritual and social functions related to life, death, rebirths, etc. are associated with the welfare of the community (22-23).

With the traditional performance space, there was no need for any artificial form of lighting at the beginning as the natural sources of light: sunlight or moonlight provided illumination. Later, native lamps were incorporated to aid the visibility of the spectators. The complexities of lighting began with the colonial influences to theatrical performances, taken into buildings and covered structures that required artificial lighting. This marked the beginning of “modern” theatre practice in Nigeria. Although theatre critics/scholars and analysts have considered the completion of the Glover Hall as a mark for modern theatre in Nigeria, others suggest the infusion of electricity and electric light bulbs, while some others attribute the popular travelling theatre phase as a mark of modern theatre in Nigeria. For Enendu,

The beginning of the modern Nigeria theatre practice ... used indoor spaces, the school hall, village hall, multi-purpose civic centres, for their production. At this time, technical theatre practice witnessed a lot of quackery especially in selected areas... There was a total absence of well organised technical theatre unit (3).

Ebun Clark’s expositions on Ogunde acknowledges his contribution to the development of stage lighting technology in Nigeria, as she states that he “made use of such modern theatre equipment as lighting, scenery, and sound amplification” (4), which was due to his quest for perfection and innovativeness (Oni 96). Joel Adedeji also explains his other improvements in the theatre as he opines that:

Instead of performing to the masses in market-squares and open-air theatres, he took to the school-halls and town halls where he rigged up stage platforms, using the Western proscenium style of mise-en-scene and techniques of stage presentation (48).

Hubert Ogunde’s zealotry for stage lighting technology was recorded as the major reason for his trip to Britain for six

months in 1947. This was for him to “visit some theatres and also to watch performances in the London West End... [and this] no doubt, must have influenced the staging aesthetics of his theatre” (Oni 97). With his style of theatricality adopted from Western theatre, Ogunde was able to maximise his lighting equipment and his use of colours for scenery. Oni states that:

... they employed a minimum of sets and props and therefore depended on stereotyped lighting for the portrayal of mood and atmosphere in their plays. Red colour gels were used for war scenes, green for forest scenes and blue for the romantic and love scenes. Ghost scenes were portrayed with the use of ultraviolet tubes or blacklights. (110)

Oni further explains how Ogunde’s productions used colourful lights, stating:

... the opening glee created an opportunity for Ogunde to display his theatricality, thereby providing entertainment for the audience. It was during these sequences that Ogunde, the impresario, would emerge on stage under very colourful lights. Red appeared to be a favourite colour of his, and it was employed for the music and dance sequences to dazzle the audience... it was also used to accentuate the beauty of his female dancers... who were usually light skinned, as they danced to the pulsating and vibrating music (98).

This era of the Popular Travelling theatre brought new dimension to the stage lighting technology of Nigerian theatre, although the evolution of the university theatre is what have been said to have brought about sophisticated techniques in Nigerian stage lighting design. Biodun Jeyifo, cited by Duro Oni, agrees with the above as follows:

The influence of the university-based theatre artists and companies, with their more formally polished principles and techniques of stage lighting and costume design, has also seeped to other companies of the Travelling Theatre movement through the companies which have had sustained interaction with the university-based theatres (Oni 99).

Despite the different points of view on the influences of the popular Travelling theatre, and the University-based theatre, on stage lighting design and technology, most theatre artists have established that the university-based theatre brought scholarship to the practice of stage lighting design in Nigeria, hence endorsing those who pass through them as technical theatre practitioners. Enendu affirms the above statement saying:

The first generation of technical theatre practitioners was hatched in this theatre. Dexter Lyndersay, often regarded as the founding father of technical theatre practice in Nigeria was the teacher. His outstanding students and apprentices included Sumbo Marinho, Domba Asomba, Segun Akimbola and Duro Oni. The first batch and the pioneering generation of Nigeria technical theatre practitioners were bred and truly nurtured in this theatre. Dexter K. W. Lyndersay, a Trinidadian and the first technical director of the Ibadan School of Drama (1966-1967) ... made immense contributions to the development of technical theatre practice in Nigeria (23).

Hence, Dexter Lyndersay, as the pioneering father of the teaching of stage lighting design, brought another improvement to stage lighting design and technology in Nigeria. Dexter Lyndersay's over twenty years of stay in Nigeria had its impact on major universities across Nigeria with his influence seen in "the purchase of stage lighting equipment in numerous institutions and establishments in Nigeria" (Oni, 106).

Bringing more sophisticated techniques to stage lighting, Lyndersay was able to go beyond the basics of lighting a production for illumination, although Oni recounts his "aesthetic considerations... involved a thorough appreciation and understanding of the primary role of stage lighting..." (106), and in Lyndersay's words as quoted by Oni:

Apart from illumination for visibility, it should indicate the time of the day or night in a realistic scene; the required mood and logical movement from one lighting condition to the next as well as the necessity to follow the main action (subtly, by emphasizing lighting or, obviously, by follow-spot) within one scene (107).

Lyndersay's contributions to modern stage lighting and technology, from his over two hundred and fifty productions in Nigeria, consultations in the purchase and teaching of hi-tech lighting equipment for university-based theatres flowed to the 1970s.

The era of Festac '77 birthed the building of the National Arts Theatre in Iganmu, Lagos marking another height and the beginning of revolutionised technical theatre practice in Nigeria which is still a part of the current stage lighting trends or slightly improved in current theatre practices. Oni asserts that:

This period in the evolutionary study of stage lighting design is the one in which the Nigerian theatre design team started to work as a collaborative team and members began to integrate their works... A critical evaluation of the stage lighting design from the post FESTAC '77 period necessarily calls for a detailed study and analysis of the National Theatre in Iganmu, Lagos (113).

Enendu also supports the above stating:

The National Theatre Iganmu, Lagos, as one of the most magnificent edifices in Africa with its sophisticated technical theatre equipment and mechanical and electro-mechanical devices was completed to host FESTAC '77 (the World Black Festival of Arts and Culture, January 15 – February 12, 1977). Some state owned theatres/cultural centres were also built within this "great theatre age in Nigeria" (24).

Oni highlights the technological advancements fixed into the Main Hall of the National Theatre, stating its fittings lists:

The original memory lighting board with a 99-cue memory installed at the Main Bowl did not function for more than a few years. The theatre was however installed with a generous supply of spot lights, Fresnels and flood lights. The lighting system also included the Strand pattern 263/4 with a row of colour wheels attached to the front runners of the instruments (115).

Eight years after the commissioning of the National Theatre, the Muson Centre followed suit with installations of hi-tech technological stage lighting equipment, which Duro Oni considered to have “given adequate attention to lighting ... with lighting operated by remote control from the control room, establishment of the location, mood, time, and atmosphere of the production can be achieved” (118). Oni also elucidates on the lighting equipment installed in two halls of the Muson Centre:

75-channel Arri type F11 memory control board, Arri type Reflection type Reflection back- up unit, Stage dimmer racks of 24 x 10A dimmers, 28 nos. Profile Spotlights, 1.2kw variable 15-28 degree and 4 nos. Profile spotlights 1.2kw variable 22-40 degree. Others include 26 nos. Prism Convex spotlights variable 6- 48 degree, 12 nos. Parcans 1kw James Thomas type and 8.16 nos. Floodlights 500W James Thomas type (118).

The incorporation of high form technology has now become a trend in current technical theatre practice in Nigerian theatre and stage lighting design as well. This Enendu asserts stating:

Within this 21st century, technical theatre practice in Nigeria is considered truly and fully grown with the capacity, in terms of equipment, know-how, personnel, ideas and creative ingenuity, to meet the technical and artistic challenges of her stage, film and even theatre related productions and events. With the increase in the supportive roles of technical theatre and theatrical design to stage and film productions, directors, theatre managers and patrons make more demands for new production ideas from the growing theatre technology (24).

Although, with the high involvement of stage lighting technology in Nigeria, the situation has not been rosy as the enthusiasm that greeted the embrace of technology in the early years of Nigerian theatre seem to have waned. Kenneth Eni recounts that:

... the Nigerian theatre lost the financial subsistence to be able to sustain hydraulically and electronically controlled auditorium of the 70s exemplified by the performance spaces

built at the University of Lagos and the Oduduwa Hall of the University of Ife, Now Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife and the University of Ibadan Arts Theatre, the climax of which is the National Theatre, Iganmu Lagos. Thus, there was a stunting in mechanization growth of the theatre which now gave rise to the current efforts at adaptability of performances into existing theatre structures, however ineffective these structures are for production, making use of the few equipment that are available (160).

Thus Oni agrees with the above, stating that:

The performance of high-tech lighting equipment, however, has not been a success story in Nigeria especially with regard to the use of computerized memory dimmer boards. The initial one installed at the National Theatre Main Hall in early 1976 stopped functioning after only a few years. Similarly, the memory board installed at the Muson Centre Shell Hall has not functioned since inception. On the other hand, the manual 120 channel Strand Three set board at the University of Lagos and the 24-channel manual board in the Agip Hall of the Muson Centre have continued to function (114).

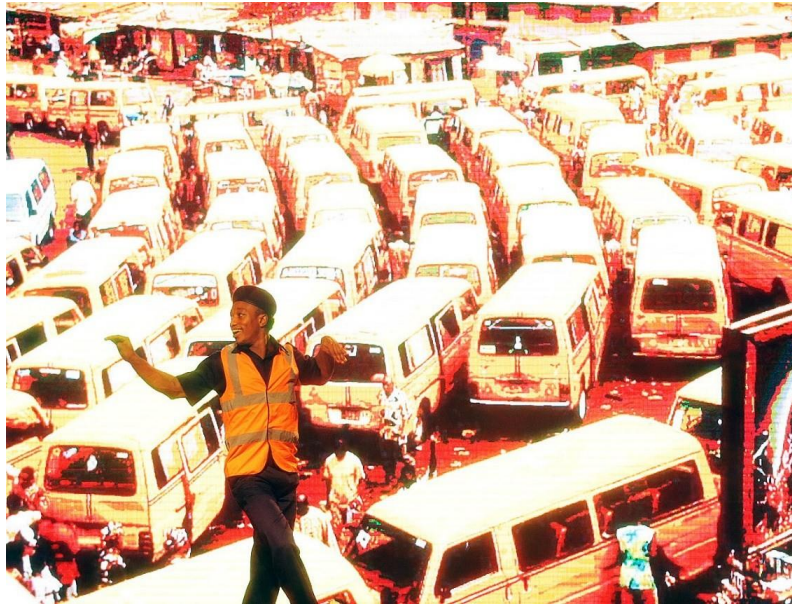
Even though Critics have not found Nigeria technologically ready for stage lighting design, independent lighting designers and companies have adopted stage lighting technology to aid theatrical productions in Nigeria. From Duro Oni who is known for his introduction of Computer Aided Designs (CAD) to Nigerian lighting design technology, for which Nwadike commends him as “one of the few professionals that were able to effectively flow with the tide of technological changes that characterise the technology, mechanical, analogue, preset and digital multimedia instrumentation and design concepts” (31), to the CEO of Zmirage, Teju Kareem, Enessi Ododo and in academia, theatre technicians include; Duro Oni, Molinta Enendu, Adegbite Adeshina, etc. with their literatures reviewed during the course of this research.

One of such contemporary independent theatres to be established with such complexities is the Arena of Terra Kulture by Bolanle Austen Peters. According to its host website:

22 *New Aesthetic Dimensions in African Drama and Theatre*

The 400 sitter space is equipped with state of the art lighting, sound, stage and audio visual LED screen comparable to what obtains in theatres all over the world...The new arena is decorated with sophisticated artistic facilities to compliment stage performances, while bringing out full potentials of artistes. The stage, with a screen large enough for any standard presentation, is positioned in a way that every member of the audience is carried along. The lightings are bright and apt as well.

Still on Terra Kulture, Warami states that; it is “the first privately owned technology equipped modern arts theatre in the whole of Nigeria and has already broken records...” with the establishment of multimedia in place of traditional set. The use of projection and multimedia, which is referred to as “light as scenery”, has become an alternative to bulky scenery and realistic setting in Nigeria. This is adopted in the production of *Saro*, *Wakaa*, *Gula* and other performances, staged in the arena with an array of vibrant light hues to heighten the mood of the performance. Examples can be seen in the pictures of *Saro: the Musical* below.





Figures 1 and 2: *Saro: The Musical* at Terra Kulture

Conclusion

In recent times, the use of multimedia and light as scenery has become an alternative to maximising other functions of stage lighting technology, but it is still yet to be fully harnessed. The development of Nigerian theatre technology has therefore grown over the years with room for improvement. It would be necessary, however, for proper training on current trends in stage lighting to be conducted. This would expose lighting designers and practitioners to the usefulness of the various components of lighting technology and their application in Nigerian theatre practice. This way, stage lighting technology and application can aspire to be on the same wave length as we have it in the western world.

Works Cited

- Adedeji, Joel. "The Aesthetics of Ogunde Theatre." Ekwuazi, Hyginus. *Nigerian Theatre: Dynamics of a Movement*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications Limited, 1998 (56-75). Print.
- Adelugba, Dapo and Olu Obafemi. "Nigeria." Martin, Banham. *A History of Theatre in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004 (138-158). Print.

- Baugh, Christopher. *Theatre, Performance and Technology: The Development and Transformation of Scenography*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.
- Craig Wolf and Dick Block. *Scene Design and Stage Lighting*. Boston: Cengage Learning, 2014. Print.
- Enendu, Molinta. "Development and Challenges of Technical Theatre Practice in Nigeria." *Peak Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 2 (2014): 21-26. Print.
- Eni, Kenneth. "Aesthetic Considerations in Contemporary Nigerian Theatre Design and Technology." *Online International Journal of Arts and Humanities* (2013): (157-165). Web.
- Gillette, Michael. *Theatrical Design and Production*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000. Print.
- Luppicini, Rocci. "A Systems Definition of Educational Technology in Society." *Educational Technology & Society* 2005 (103-109). Print.
- Nwadiwe, Charles. "Duro Oni and Multimedia Approach to Stage Production." *Fireworks for a Lighting Aesthician: Essays and Tributes in Honour Duro Oni*. 2012 (29-38). Print.
- Oni, Duro. "Lighting Up the Arena." *African Quarterly on the Arts* (n.d.): (107-115), web.
- _____. *Stage Lighting Design: The Nigerian Perspective*. Lagos: Concept Publication Limited, 2004. Print.
- Saro 2*. By Bolanale Austen- Peters. Perf. Terra Kulture. Muson Centre, Lagos. December 2014.
- Terra Kulture. *Terra Kulture Arena*. 2016. Web. 20 October 2017.
- Wrami, Urowayino. "Bolanale Austen Peters Unveils „New Look“ Terra Kulture Arena." 08 April 2017. *Vanguard*. Web. 20 October, 2017.

Three



Sam Ukala's Folkist Directorial Aesthetics: The Example of *Iredi War*

Tekena Gasper Mark

Introduction

Nigerian theatre has witnessed a lot of transformations and has continued to evolve with time. These transformations have also affected the art of play directing which, simply put, is the creative and artistic interpretation of a play by a director before an audience in a specific place and time. In Africa, controversies have risen amongst scholars regarding the place of the director in African traditional theatre (performances in existence before the coming of the Europeans to Africa). While some scholars believe that the director exists in traditional African performances, others are of the opinion that he does not exist, premised on the belief that African traditional performances do not qualify as theatre. By theatre, we mean a performance which entails a series of actions by actors for the ultimate benefit of the audience (Cohen 21). For Eric Bentley, "all the many definitions of theatre can be reduced to: A performs B for C" (qtd. in Brockett and Ball 6). Adeoye observes that while theatre scholars such as Nzewi, Adedeji, Amankulor, Akinwale, Ejeke, Bakare, Ogundeji, Bell-Gam, Johnson, Musa and others support the notion that the theatre director is eminently present in the traditional African theatre, Finnegan, Echeruo, Gbilekaa and so on radically disagree (85).

The origin of the art of directing in Nigerian theatre can be traced to the pre-colonial traditional performances of Nigerians, especially as exemplified in the Alarinjo traditional Yoruba traveling theatre, where the Ologbin Ologbojo managed the troupe by supervising the creation of stories and the execution of their

performances, in which he also acted (Adedeji 223-224). This development continued until the time of Hubert Ogunde, who is regarded as the father of professional theatre practice in Nigeria (Clark 295). As a director and playwright, and the founder of the Music Research Party (his theatre company), he wrote and directed all his plays. In this regard, Musa observes that late Hubert Ogunde travelled far and wide and produced, acted and directed many theatrical pieces; both scripted and improvised (53-54). Other directors who followed Ogunde's footsteps are E.K. Ogunmola, Duro Ladipo, Moses Olaiya (Baba Sala), Bello Salami and many others. And since then the Nigerian theatre, especially in the area of directing has continued to witness a lot of transformations, which have resulted in directing and performance theories by Nigerian scholars, all aimed at reaffirming and entrenching the place of the Nigerian and indeed African theatre on the world stage.

Furthermore, Nigerian playwrights have been criticized because of the difficult and highly imaginative language of their plays, which are modeled after European dramatic traditions. Consequently, irrespective of the fact that they draw their themes from the history and culture of Nigerians, these plays seem strange to the Nigerian audience, who cannot identify with them (Ukala 285), even when they are beautifully directed by the most gifted directors. And since theories are meant to give theoretical backing to the practice of any field of study; it becomes pertinent to examine Sam Ukala's folkist directorial aesthetics, which is based on his theory of "Folkism". This theory, highly steeped in African oral tradition, advocates the composition and performance of plays based on African folk tradition, so as to overcome the difficulty in terms of language, and the bombastic nature of plays modeled after the European theatre. Hence, it would not only enable playwrights to compose folk scripts, it would also assist directors in the realization of these scripts on stage.

Directing: A Conceptual Overview

Directing involves the ability of a director to creatively and interpretatively unify the efforts of the different theatre

collaborators in a performance, to create a unified aesthetic experience, which is a scintillating play interpretation on stage before an audience in a particular place and time. Robert Wills conceives directing as the process of transforming a director's personal vision into a public performance (3). This implies that the artistic director's job is to use all the resources of the theatre at his disposal to create or produce his personal vision or idea, as imbedded in a script or developed from it, on stage through the manipulation of sounds and pictures before an audience. For Effiong Johnson, directing is an intellectually tasking, creative theatrical stage activity, which involves the management of the artistic personnel and creative devices of the theatre towards a deliberate moulding of a perceived vision into its most sublime form (57). Inih Ebong supports Johnson's position when he asserts that directing is:

A behind-the-scene activity between the director and his team to create in the „private“ seclusion of the theatre, away from the curious and prying eyes of the public, the three-dimensional beauty that is seen on stage in production. (27)

Modern directing began in 1866, with the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen who was known for staging realistic productions. Johnson, citing Cohen and Chinoy, observes that:

May 1, 1874 has come to have a special place in the history of the director, for on that date, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen brought his unknown troupe to Berlin to display the unique accomplishments of a director's theatre. The Duke of Saxe-Meiningen utilized innovations ... intensive rehearsals, discipline, integrated acting and historically accurate sets and costumes to create realistic stage pictures. But the Duke went significantly beyond his predecessors in that he attempted a reconciliation between the usually compelling illusions of the painted set and the moving actor ... He interpreted the text through the medium of all the theatrical arts ... he blended the theatrical arts into symphony of visual and aura minutiae. (54-55)

The Duke presided over his company, the Meiningen Players, and assumed the position of the director, bearing the sole responsibility of organizing, directing and coordinating the entire production team towards an established objective. And since then the art of directing has continued to witness a lot of dramatic innovations, and this is evident in the numerous number of directing and performance theories available in today's theatre.

Folkism: A Theoretical Review

The word "Folkism" is derived from the word "folktale", which simply means a story about the traditions of a people passed from one generation to another through speech or word of mouth. As observed by Krama, "the popular or folk theatre as a genre of African theatre developed from secular rites and draws heavily from oral tradition and festivals" (11). The theory of "Folkism" was developed by Sam Ukala, a Nigerian playwright, poet, short story writer, actor, theatre director, and a film producer. In his opinion, many Nigerian plays, irrespective of the fact that they draw their subject matter from the history, culture, concerns, and aspirations of Nigerians, are made inaccessible to the audience because of difficult diction and highly imaginative yet alienating distortions of their source material, and usual abstraction of characters, or complexity and strangeness of structure. Consequently, the audience cannot understand the plays; hence, they become void of relevance, defy identification and lose popularity (Ukala 285). Responding to this challenge, Ukala came up with the theory of "Folkism", which is the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk (the African people in general) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing folktale (Ukala 285). More so, folktale narratives are simple to understand and this advantage makes it appeal to a wider audience because it is composed of elements which are very common to the African peoples and which they easily and readily identify with. In addition, Ukala adds that folktale and the literary play are narratives realized in performance; both are largely secular, unlike most African ritual and festival performances, and

also temporal, mimetic, interpretative and synthetic in their integration of speech, music, dance, mime, ritual, etc. (285). Also central to the folkist theatre are the elements of storytelling and audience involvement in the enactment of the play's action, which Ukala combines with the European dramatic conventions.

Sam Ukala's study of the conventions of African folktale performance formed the basis for his dramatic aesthetics, which he calls "The Laws of Aesthetic Response" (50-51). These laws are eight in number and were inspired by the conventional responses of the narrator and the audience to folktale performances as found by researchers such as J.P. Clark, Efua Sutherland, Ruth Finnegan and Dan Ben-Amos in different parts of black Africa (qtd. In Enita 51).

Law 1: The Law of Opening – the opening of an African folktale performance is expected to arouse the audience and to introduce the subject matter and characters of the story. It also offers the audience an opportunity to encourage or stop a prospective performer, depending on the person's rating as a performer.

Law 2: The Law of Joint Performance -the traditional African audience co-performs with the story teller by singing along with him, asking questions and making comments for clarity, and playing roles in the enactment of the story or tale. According to Ukala, this law is made possible because in traditional African theatre, the audience have a pre-knowledge of most of the stories as well as its interlocutory skill (the skill to interject as and when appropriate) acquired through learning the relevant principles and through practice (Enita 52).

Law 3: The Law of Creativity, Free Enactment and Responsibility – this law has three main elements, which are creativity, free enactment and responsibility, and deals basically with the performer's response to the story he is performing. The element of „Creativity“ is seen in the fact that in African folktale performance, the performer not only fleshes out the bone-structure of the tale, he also adapts new experiences to the tale, which may enhance its contemporariness and relevance to a particular socio-cultural milieu. In the element of „Free Enactment“ the folktale

performer may break off from narrating, discretionally, to engage in role-play and may also encourage and engage the members of the audience in a demonstrative impersonation of certain characters in the tale. While in the element of „Responsibility“ the performer is usually responsible for whatever may occur in the performance process. He therefore must be discreet and always alert to respond to every situation (Enita 53).

Law 4: The Law of the Urge to Judge – this law is seen in the fact that the African audience responds to the performer’s abilities against conventional standards of performance. They also judge the characters *vis-à-vis* societal ethics. They make comments in appropriate audible words if the performer is doing well or not by their own evaluation (Enita 55).

Law 5: The Law of Protest Against Suspense – the traditional African audience does not like to be kept in suspense; so it asks questions which could defuse suspense.

Law 6: The Law of the Expression of the Emotions – the African audience freely expresses emotions such as grief, fear, sympathy, and scorn.

Law 7: The Law of Ego Projection – the African audience believes that they have potentials for performance and are quick to make unsolicited interjections. Hence, the members of audience function not only as co-performers, but also as critics of the performance (Enita 56).

Law 8: The Law of Closing – this law is derived from the traditional African convention for ending the performance of a folktale. This comprises the performer’s valedictory statements on the morals of the tale, using a closing formula, and the response of the audience to this formula, which may be a final applause, commendation, or disapproval (Enita 56).

About the Play *Iredi War*

Iredi War is a historical play set in the pre-independence period of Nigeria. It is based on the 1906 insurrection of the Owa people of Delta State against the high-handed and oppressive British colonial rule, which was at that time superintended by O.S. Crewe-Read, a young man of about twenty five years who took over

administration of the area when the older District Commissioner went on leave.

Few days after taking over, Crewe-Read becomes so high-handed and oppressive that the people rise against his administration. In response, he tries to get his police to arrest the Obi (King) of Owa. In the process, the policemen kill one of the youth leaders of Owa which results in the people of Owa carrying out a reprisal that leads to the death of Crewe-Read. As a consequence of this, the British colonialists undertake an expedition to punish the people of Owa and their king for the killing of Crewe-Read. In the end, some of the youths of the kingdom, especially the leaders of the rebellion are executed, while the Obi and his palace chiefs are exiled to Warri.

Sam Ukala's Folkist Directorial Aesthetics in *Iredi War*

As a playwright and director, Sam Ukala's artistic works explore African traditional standards of beauty and correctness (aesthetics) in the construction and performance of his plays, which are highly steeped in African oral tradition. Adeoye observes that Sam Ukala's folkist style of directing is composed of the following elements: the language of African folktale in performance, the use of members of audience (M.O.A), a large measure of accessibility, authenticity and popularity within Africa, and the use of the "eight laws of aesthetic response" in folktale performance. This style is a search for "a viable audience-performer relationship," and directors who wish to employ this style must study and internalize the folkist's icons by studying Sam Ukala's plays (40). Ukala makes it clear in his University of Hull, UK, 1994, lecture that:

The African folktale is not prose. It exists only in performance before a live audience. It therefore entails dramatic phraseology, pleasant to speak and to hear; movement, gesture, impersonation, music-making and dancing; and sometimes, costuming, make-up, masking and puppetry (qtd. in Enita 50).

Ukala, in an interview with this researcher, observed that the "Laws of Aesthetic Response" constitute the performance

structure, within the matrix of which the director, the actors and the audience work. The actors are trained by the director to anticipate and handle, extempore, relevant interjections and physical participation, not only of the M.O.A, who have been rehearsed, but also of the public audience. This fluidity conjures the ambience of African folktale performance, which is a new experience every time a performer performs a tale before an audience and in which the artistic event results from a collaboration of the audience with the performer. Unlike in the Brechtian theatre, in which the audience is permanently alienated, in Folkism, the audience is generally integrated in the creative and performance process, yet any of its members may detach himself/herself, whenever he/she deems it necessary, to judge both the performers and the characters they represent (Ukala).

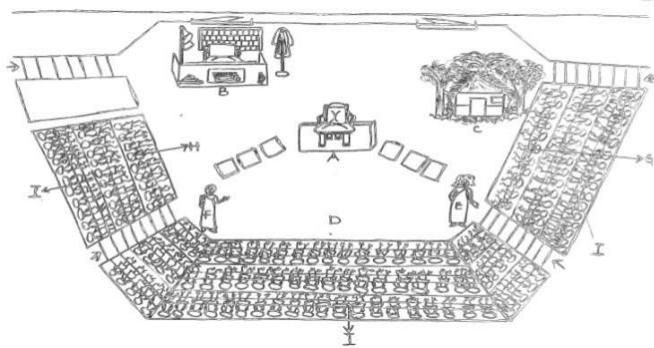
In addition, central to folktale performance are the illusion – breaking techniques such as role changing and improvisation, which allows for an actor to play multiple roles and to make as many improvisations as are necessary. This tradition is evident in Femi Osofian’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* and Sam Ukala’s *Akpakaland*. Ukala also affirms in the interview that “Folkism” accommodates both realism and fabulism because folktales do. Hence, folkist actors are trained in three systems of acting: the psychological, appropriate for realistic acting; the mechanical, appropriate for fabulistic acting; and the psycho-mechanical, appropriate for actions which require supplementing internal resources with external techniques. Yet, in Folkism, the set is largely sparse and symbolic because its run-on performance, which also derives from folktale performance aesthetics, does not allow for stoppages for changing set and costumes. Simultaneous setting is, therefore, the norm. Ideally, the arena or three-quarter arena stage is required to simulate the village square, the front of a house, a road, or even the forest, but, where that is not available and the proscenium stage is used, it is adapted to efface the picture-frame and curtain rail and action sometimes occurs among the audience in the auditorium and along the aisles. Of course, there can be no orchestra pit; its space is an additional performance area while the orchestra performs visibly mainly in the audience

(Ukala). Ukala, speaking on his use of the folkist tradition in his directorial art, submits thus:

As a director, I employ the above features of Folkism in my productions. For example, *Harvest of Ghosts*, which I co-wrote and co-directed with Bob Frith of Horse and Bamboo Company in Lancashire, U.K., and which toured the UK, Ireland and Holland in 1999, was a festival performance, which took place outdoors throughout its tour. In addition, I see the actor as my chief interpretative tool, yet, not as a puppet or hammer or chisel, but as a human tool, creative and interpretative in his own right. So, after my reading and analysis rehearsals, I allow my actors to further analyze, conceptualize and meditate on their roles and devise and execute their own ways of interpreting them. If an actor does this to my satisfaction, that is, meets my expectation of the appropriate interpretation of that role or even surpasses my expectation, my comments on him during rehearsals would be mainly commendatory. If he performs below my expectation in some aspects, I coach him in those aspects by explaining the motivation and feeling of the character and the rationale for his action in that context; generally, this arouses in the actor the right interpretation of that aspect. If the coaching fails to hit the right cord in the actor, however, I would demonstrate to him to copy. So, I begin rehearsals as a democrat to every actor and, depending on the creative and interpretative skills I find in a particular actor, could become a coach to him or, later, even a dictator. I usually double cast, triple cast or even quadruple cast major roles to enable me eliminate anyone who proves incapable of benefitting from coaching or demonstration. There has, however, been very few cases of such elimination due to the usual thoroughness and integrity of my auditions and casting. Therefore, I often end up having the best actor in a role play in the opening night while the other actors play in turns in subsequent nights (Ukala).

Sam Ukala's folkist directing style is typified in his play *Iredi War*, where as a playwright and director, he provides the stage directions and blocking of characters for the play, using the thrust theatre orientation. This analysis focuses on the first bit of the first

scene of the play. Ukala's use of blocking in his directorial aesthetics is represented thus:



Keys: A (Owa palace court), B (Army Area Command), C (Owa forest), D (Townsquare), E (Narrator I), F (Narrator II), G (M.O.A.), H (M.O.A.), I (Audience):

In “The Beginning” scene of the play, Ukala explains that the play is performed on a three – quarter arena formation (thrust stage). Half of the arena is the performance area while the other half is the audience area. The performance area has four parts: stage centre is the Owa palace court; stage right is the office of the Army Area Command, Asaba, which later serves as the Office of the District Commissioner at Agbor; stage left is Owa forest with a tent that would house the camp of Crewe-Read (the Assistant District Commissioner) while the broad front stage of these settings represents the townsquare and later the road to and fro Owa-Nta. He adds that although the time of the story is mid-1906, the time of the telling is today, and the changes in the locales may be indicated by signposts or posters, which would be supported with clues from the dialogue about the locales.

The main action begins at moonlight, we see many towns people, M.O.A, and members of the public audience already seated, while others are seen rushing in. Performers in costumes have also gathered at the town square, some sitting, some standing in corners, rehearsing their lines or playing some musical instruments in low tones, as spotlight catches Narrator I who is

seated up stage left amongst the Audience. She rises, and with her right hand, casts an imaginary white chalk powder at the Audience, then she speaks "I give you white chalk!", the Audience responds, "If you concoct, may it be effacious!". This arousal call and response is done thrice as Narrator I approaches the performance area. She reaches downstage left and raises a song:

Tell a tale
Tale of I-gboba
Tug at the rope
It's unsnappable

As this song rents the arena, some performers soon accompany the singing with drums and other instruments, while others dance. This infects the Audience, many of whom now join in singing, clapping and dancing till Narrator II is spotlighted in the audience, seated upstage right, chin-in-hand, he hurtles forward and stops the music and speaks:

Narrator II: Thank you! Thank you! But, please, sit down. (*To Narrator I*) you shouldn't have turned that song into a dance.

Narrator I: Why?

Narrator II: Tonight's tale is not a happy tale.

Narrator I: A tale is a tale, my brother. Now that the people have sung and danced, they have been activated in their minds and bodies to get the best out of the story. (*To Audience*) or haven't you?

Audience: We have!

Narrator II: Okay. (*To Audience*) people, we have this proverb: "one does not sit in his own home and crush his scrotum in the process". But our story tonight bellies that proverb.

Narrator I: Yes. Obi Ogboba of Owa was sitting in his palace and he crushed his...say it, if you dare.

Narrator II: That's why I said it's a sad tale.

Narrator I: But there's also hope in the song we danced to.
They tugged at Igbofa, the rope, but he couldn't be snapped.

Narrator II: Yes, my sister. But if they made you crush your scrotum, would you say you haven't snapped?

Narrator I: (*Checks herself for a scrotum*) well, I don't have a scrotum.

Narrator II: I have, and I can tell you that it's a tragedy to crush it. But, sometimes, you sit in your own home and crush your scrotum!

Narrator I: But we must tell this story, whether it makes us cry or not. And ... (*Gestures at Performers*)...no one here can tell it better than us. (*With loud hisses and shaking of their heads, the Performers exit in different directions*).

M.O.A.: See! They're angry!

Narrator I: No ... they cannot be. They are in us. We merely displayed them for you to know them (Ukala 11-13).

The above description of the beginning section of the first scene of the play serves to provide a guide to directors on how to realize the performance in the folkist style. In it are blockings; stage directions and descriptions of what the set and action should be composed of, which typifies how a folkist theatre operates in performance. We see Narrator I come out from amongst the audience to rouse them through songs and dance, which culminates in a festival of dance and song galore as we see a beehive of performers and audience members on stage immersed in the singing and dancing. This is interrupted by Narrator II who also comes out from amongst the audience and stops the music. The narrators begin introducing the story; Narrator I gestures at the Performers mockingly and tells the audience that no other person can tell the story better than they (the narrators), and this makes the Performers exit the stage with hisses leaving only the two narrators. In reaction, the M.O.A feel the Performers are angry because of the way they left the stage but Narrator I assures them that the Performers cannot be, after which the narrators continue

with the introduction of the story. The entire action serves to demonstrate how the elements of audience participation and integration operate in a folkist theatre and typifies Sam Ukala's directorial aesthetics.

Conclusion

This study has examined Sam Ukala's folkist directorial aesthetics as exemplified in his folk script, *Iredi War*, and this would guide directors who wish to direct folk plays with the necessary knowledge they need. This study observed that a lot of Nigerian and indeed African directors are yet to familiarize themselves with Sam Ukala's folkist directing style. This research therefore calls on African directors to study the folkist directorial aesthetics of Ukala, as examined in this study, as this would expand their creative and interpretative acumens and guide them in their interpretation of folk plays, in line with the folkist theatre tradition.

Works Cited

- Adedeji, Joel A. "Alaringo": The Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre." *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Ed. Y. Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigerian Magazine and Great Britain: The Pitman Press, 1981. 221-247. Print.
- Adeoye, Abdul Rasheed A. "On Theatre Scholarship and Controversy: The Case of the Director in the Traditional African Theatre." *The African Symposium* 10. 2 (2010): 84 -93. Print.
- Clark, Ebun. "Ogunde Theatre: The Rise of Contemporary Professional Theatre in Nigeria 1946-72." *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*. Ed. Y. Ogunbiyi. Lagos: Nigerian Magazine, and Great Britain: The Pitman Press, 1981. 295-320. Print.
- Cohen, Robert. *Theatre*. 5th ed. USA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000. Print.
- Ebong, Inih. "Introduction." *Play Production Processes*. By Effiong Johnson. Lagos: Concept Publication Limited, 2001.19-32. Print.
- Enita, Godfrey O. "Ukala, Folkism and the Laws of Aesthetic Response". *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ed. Austin O. Asagba. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2008.48-57. Print.
- Johnson, Effiong. *Visions Towards a Mission: The Art of Interpretative Directing*. Lagos: Concept Publication Limited, 2003. Print.

- Krama, Clive. *African Traditional Theatre and Drama: Themes and Perspectives*. Port Harcourt: UP, 2006. Print.
- Musa, Rasheed A. (2002). "Play Directing and Directors: An Evolutionary Documentation in the Nigerian Theatre." *Humanities Review Journal* 2.1 (2002): 46-56. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy." *New Theatre Quarterly* 12.47 (1996): 279-287. Print.
- _____. *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2014. Print.
- _____. Personal Interview. 21 January 2017.
- Wills, Robert, ed. *The Director in a Changing Theatre: Essays on Theory and Practice, with New Plays for Performance*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1976. Print.

Four



Communication Art and the Directorial Praxis of Sam Ukala

Nicholas Efe Akpore

Introduction

The art of directing has metamorphosed overtime from ordinary coordinating and superintending dramatic actions of improvised performances to a state of recognition in the Practice of theatre. Tyrone Guthrie defines directing as the art and craft of controlling the evolution of a performance out of material composed or assembled by an author or authors. Directing typically involves the preparation and placement of actors, sets and properties and the use of lighting, sound, choreography, and music. It also means superintending the preparation of a dramatic work for the stage, film, television or some other medium. A theatre director must be a craftsman first. He must devote sufficient time and energy to learning the intricacies of this difficult and excitingly interesting trade by doing it. For directing involves choosing the actors, coordinating their performances, and supervising the designers and makers of scenery, costumes, properties, wigs and all other paraphernalia the production requires.

Chris Nwamuo regards play directing as the melting pot of all the arts of the theatre. He, like Robert Cohen and John Harrop, believes that it has grown from an instructional process to a creative one, noting that it involves mood and its conveyance through movement and rhythm. He states that play directing celebrates the rhythms of life on stage as gracefully and as scientifically as possible. For him, play directing means the presentation of a piece of drama on the stage for an audience,

interpreted both in terms of dramatic action and dramatic sound, and in terms of the emotional and intellectual concepts of an author's script (162-163).

John Fernald notes that the success with which a director carries out his job can easily be glossed over by both spectator and critic. For they can be deceived by the spectacle – scenery and both theatrical effects thus forgetting to ensure an imaginative interpretation of what the author has written. The idea of a theatre director being a craftsman first and foremost, who devotes all his energy to learning the intricacies of the whole trade, informed Stanislavsky's definition of a theatre director as "a matchmaker who brings together the playwright and the theatre and when the play is successful he brings happiness to both, the director is a midwife who brings to birth the performance, the new creation of art" (Gorchakov 16). Directing involves choosing the actors, co-ordinating their performances, and supervising the designers and makers of scenery, costumes, properties, wigs and all other paraphernalia the production requires.

Hodge asserts that the director's job is difficult and that directing is not just book work but communicating with audiences through actors and staging. He remarks that the "director's core activity is communication", stressing that directing is "not pinning down a play script to the ground like a wrestler but releasing it to fly with the angels". In fact, directing is a communication art that deals with the whole gamut of making meanings out of the given circumstances of a play. Hence Hodge submits that

Directing is not a totally intuitive process but is also an art-creating process in which the director brings the materials (the play script) of the form to the conscious surface, that he becomes consciously aware of them, in the interest of finding their strengths and weaknesses, all of which will serve as a basis for theatricalising the play script to the best possible advantage (17-18).

He concludes that any work in the theatre which includes directing as a primary study in communication and artistic leadership, requires the utmost in hard work and personal discipline.

Solomon Ejeke quotes George II, the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, when he asserts that; directing is the imposition of complete control on the various facets of production process (Ejeke, 2003). Like Gordon Craig, he believes that the director is the author of the stage spectacle. His theatrical practice revolves around ensemble playing, for it is only through such a method that an integrated performance could be realised on stage. H.D. Albright *et al* describe his directorial attributes thus: “a desire for unified effect stimulated the theatrically-minded George II, Duke of tiny Saxe-Meiningen, to strive for ensemble playing, for integration of acting and décor and for what is now called “director’s design”” (Albright *et al* 161).

Communication is the exchange, sharing, and transmission of messages, ideas, facts, and data through verbal and written signs, symbols, and even gesture. Communication is so basic to human existence that it is both an individual and collective activity in any society. It is evident that a play must communicate or it is not a play at all. Peter Brook has argued that „the choices a dramatist makes and the values he observes are only powerful in proportion to what they create in the language of the theatre” (Brook 35). J.L. Styan posits that we do not ask that a play communicate forever; we do ask that a play communicate in its own time, through its own medium, for its own community. The task with plays great or trivial is to examine the line of communication, the transmission of signals between stage and audience and back again, the stimulus and the reaction, on the occasion. (Styan 1).

The theatre is that place where the eye can reinforce the ear to compel attention to what ever visual element that needs decoding. The theatre is the testing ground for the validity of words and images. Also as Styan remarks; even at the level of clothes and paint and noise, the theatre bombards its audience with a hundred simultaneous capsules of information, anything capable of reaching the mind and imagination through the eye or the ear.(4). It can be deduced from Styan’s assertion that communication does not depend on words alone but also visual elements such as beautiful scenery, costumes, etc.

Richard Southern asserts that; “drama needs an audience to throw the switch: no audience, no circuit; no circuit, no play. The essence of theatre does not lie in what is performed or even in the way it is performed. It lies in the impression made on the audience by the manner in which you perform. Theatre is essentially a reactive art” (26). The concern of the director therefore in the communication process is the reaction and feedback, all the chemical changes that occur during the transmission and reception of theatrical signals (Styan, 26). The test of dramatic communication is whether it kindles an audience, makes the image grow, and creates life. Directing involves the coordination of the work of all the artists partaking in a production into a unified whole. This is what Jacques Copeau describes as, “the sum-total of artistic and technical operations which enables the play as conceived by the author to pass from the abstract, latent state; that of the written script, to concrete and actual life on the stage” (Cited in Marsh Cassady, *Theatre: An Introduction* 296). It also involves interpretation of the script, which must be communicated to all the associates of the director in the production to guide them in their work.

Sam Ukala’s Directorial style

Ukala’s directorial style is hinged on Folkism as a concept and practice. Ukala defines Folkism as:

The tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture and concerns of the folk (people in general) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale (285).

This concept is hinged on the performer-audience relationship which derives from traditional African Folktale aesthetics. Ukala developed this theory because he affirmed that the audience has been left in a situation where they find it difficult to decode the play and communication, which makes the essence of the drama lost. Ukala created folkism as a rescue to the shortcomings of Nigerian literary drama. This theory houses eight laws of aesthetic response which is palpable in performances directed by Sam

Ukala. In accessing Ukala's directorial style, the words of his mouth will better elucidate this style, in a personal interview with Egbo Kaosisochukwu, he remarks that:

I cannot assess my directorial concept, styles and techniques; I use them and expect people who see them to assess. Luckily a number of students have studied my style, I have also supervised some of them. Some of them have gone out with questionnaires asking people if they actually got the message in the plays I directed, if they participated as members of the audience, if they sang along with the cast, if they participated on stage or did anything in the so called performance which is what I call collaboration (the audience-performer collaboration) which is a key factor in traditional African performance. (August 9th, 2017).

Sam Ukala crystallizes this collaboration into the eight laws of aesthetic response. Godfrey Enita outlines these laws:

- The law of opening
- The law of joint Performance
- The Law of Creativity
- The law of the urge to judge
- The law of protest against suspense
- The law of the expression of the emotions
- The law of Ego Projection
- The law of Closing (51-56).

Sam Ukala's directing is guided by these eight laws of aesthetic response; his style of directing is highly communicative with the audience. Ukala is one director who does not submit to Gordon Craig's theory of directing which advocates for directorial supremacy but rather he is a democratic director who has a listening ear. He submits thus, to the via media theory of directing which allows the negotiation between the actor and the director. In the words of Ukala, diverse approaches can be applied to various productions, hence, the cast and crew can sometimes determine the directorial approach. Suffice to say that Ukala employs the various theories of directing to achieve his aims and objectives. In the words of Solomon Ejeke:

Contemporary theatre directing revolves around three major theories, namely: the Gordon Craig's theory, the Laissez-faire theory and the Via-Media theory. The first of these emphasises the autocratic approach to directing while the remaining two theories democratise the art of directing. Unquestionably, experimental directing employs a combination of these theories in the realisation of its objectives (2006:94).

From the words of Ejeke, and in tandem with Ukala's submission, it can be stated that Sam Ukala is an experimental director. His directorial style ably revolves around experimentation with diverse approaches, he asserts that if he gives an actor a role and he does poorly, he will encourage and guide the actor thereby presenting him with a second chance, if he does not improve, he then bullies the actor, if the actor still does not improve then he kicks the actor out of the production.

Ukala's Directing and Communication

The art of directing in a broad sense is geared towards the art of communication. In essence the practice of directing must send a message and receive a feedback; this message is sent through a particular medium using the cast and crew as credible communication models. Sam Ukala is regarded by most theatre scholars as a director and playwright. He appears to be an artistic god endowed with directorial prowess. His contributions to Literature and Practical theatre spectrum in Nigeria, is worth a lot of appraisal. Validating the above claim, Oghenemudiaga Akpughe opines that Sam Ukala at the Department of Theatre Arts, DELSU, has exercised a central and dominant authority over theatrical productions of all sorts. As an artistic director, he unifies and binds all elements of performance together into a whole – both interpretation and presentation. His interpretation of a play ensures not only the actors and designers understand the play in the same way, but also that they all understand and agree on the nature of the intended audience and the limitations of talent and circumstances under which they will be working together. His play presentations includes all elements that the audience will see and

hear: the text, actors, scenery, properties, costumes, lighting, and sound, all „fit together“ appropriately for the intended audience, and developed with due regard for the particular circumstance of the production.

Above all, Ukala is both an artist director and a manager; he is unique among theatre professionals precisely because of this rare combination of traits. Within the same person, he combines the often solitary consciousness of the artist with the gregarious organizational intellect of the manager. He has a body of knowledge and skill that helps him fulfill his myriad functions as a director. He has a sophisticated understanding of how to interpret plays and a knowledge of theoretical principles that underpin them. In short, Ukala, in addition to suitable personal traits, also has a solid, well-rounded theatre and English education. It is this knowledge and awareness Ukala possesses that distinguishes him from other directors, and make his communication with the audience very lucid.

In a bid to achieve total success in the artistic process of communication in theatre directing, Sam Ukala has shown his keen interest in the various arts that culminate into an ensemble. He begins his communication process by the choice of a play to perform.

Choosing a play for an audience constitutes one of the most crucial factors in the practical realization of theatre. It is apt to note here that Ukala’s choice of play for performance is largely within the confines of his literary creations. Emmanuel Emasealu states that:

The audience is never given the opportunity to express its preference with regards to the choice of play. This is often done by the director, producer, playwright, or the institution financing the production. It is important to note that when a play is wrongly chosen for an audience the primary essence of effecting theatrical communication with the audience cannot be guaranteed. This ultimately leads to audience discontentment (75).

In Ukala's theatre, it is observed that in choosing a play, it is not the genre of the play that matters, such broad compartmentalization is for dramatic convenience only. Emasealu further states that a play should not be chosen because of the popularity of the playwright or because of the producer's dream of fantastic box office returns. A play should be chosen first and foremost because of the audience factor (76).

Undoubtedly it is difficult to satisfy an audience. This is simply because every audience is a conglomeration of idiosyncratically heterogeneous individuals. For this reason, the choice of a play should be hinged on an aggregate opinion of the potential audience's mental and philosophical disposition. This may be determined by considering the age range of the potential audience, an average estimation of their educational levels, their predominant occupation, their socioeconomic level, the immediate environment and the perceived interests of such anticipated audience. The implication of the submission here is that the content or message of the play must be of relevance to the would-be audience.

In choosing a play for his audience, Ukala insists that the play be richly endowed with dramatic elements that are authentic to the Nigerian theatrical and cultural sensibilities. These elements which include music, dance, song, mime, costume and make-up, among other things, must not be employed out of context, but should be properly integrated into the plot of the play.

The production of a play must be as a result of serious consideration for the potential audience in matters of thematic concern, language and general theatrical appeal. Similarly the use of most effective human and material means of communication must be considered. The argument of Ukala's choice of play for performance as a characteristic for qualifying him as a director par excellence on the Nigerian stage has come to the fore that he basically directs his own plays, and does not actually engage in the directorial surgery of the works of other authors. The art of directing involves interpretation and recreation of the play script. Sentiments are to be expunged from the director's mind in the process of interpreting a work of an author. These sentiments

majorly come in when a director is interpreting his own plays, he tends to pay a deaf ear to the voice of not pinning a play to the ground like a wrestler but letting it fly, he is blinded to the lacuna in his own creation. Hence, his directing will be emotionally clouded. Ukala is one director who is unarguably guilty of this emotional directing.

After choosing a play, a play that is relevant to the environment, the director goes back to his drawing board; he reads the play over and over again to get a firm understanding of the author's intention. Thus a theatre director evolves a method of studying the play script for the sake of its full theatrical implication. It is worthy to note here that the most productive way to study a play is that of the theatre director who recreates a full theatrical extension of it geared towards performance. The director must perform the play in his imagination; that enables him to see if his interpretation is practically workable in the theatre. Granville-Barker succinctly expresses it thus:

he must, so to speak, perform the whole play in his imagination; as he reads, each effect must come to him; the succession and contrast of scenes, the harmony and clash of the music of the dialogue, the action implied, the mere physical opposition of the characters or the silent figure standing aloof-for that also can be eloquent (Cited in Styán 4).

The director must have a graphical representation of his to-be cast, they should exist in the director's imagination, and this imagination process will then guide him in the process of casting the play for performance. Sam Ukala is one director who engages in an imaginary casting and creates an imaginary picture of the character before engaging in physical auditioning. Like Ola Rotimi and Dapo Adelugba, Sam Ukala employs the „Known Actor“ casting technique in most of his productions.

In spite of the numerous approaches to casting, the method that appears to be most enduring is the audition method. This is the method that Sam Ukala uses readily, even though he also relies on the „Known actor“ or „Personal knowledge of actors method“. The audition method of casting is the practical test of actors in order to

determine their suitability for roles in a production. Ukala's adoption of the open audition, is to ensure that if the actors whom the director may have in mind when he is dreaming are not available for audition there would be no need for him to do another audition. Sam Ukala favours the „Known Actor" casting, in which he looks for actors with whose acting profile he is familiar. For communication to be effective, the tools with which the message will be sent must be credible. In the art of directing, the tools with which the director communicates is the actors, in order for the right message to be sent, the actors must be qualified, if they are artistic raw materials, the director should refine them to near perfection so as to establish a firm communication between the performance and the audience. Sam Ukala like, Dapo Adelugba, engages in double, triple and quadruple casting: this Casting approach is significant because of the artistic bountiful harvest at the end point, this is affirmed in the words of Dapo Adelugba that:

I not only use the double casting method, I triple cast or quadruple cast roles. I particularly became fascinated by the growth and the kind of multiplier effect of trying to work in repertory because it means, in addition to achieving your own goals of a director of a play, you are able to train a large number of people if one adopts the multiple casting methods. For the energy you put in which is obviously going to be a little more than rehearsing one person, you harvest in triple or four-fold. There are other advantages that lend themselves to the travelling theatre concept (Cited in Oni & Adeyemi 2011).

Ukala's submission in an interview with Egbo Kaosisochukwu affirms that he double casts, even triple and quadruple cast in trying to achieve success in his productions. Sam Ukala is one director who considers his actors and his audience simultaneously; he notes that since actors in this part of the globe engage in other activities aside from the job of acting, they do not have the stamina which professional actors have. Hence over engaging a particular actor for several rounds of performances may hamper his artistic delivery. It is apt to note that Ukala's multiple casting is relevant for effective communication to take place. If a director really wants the best out of the actor, the actor must be in

the right frame of mind. This can only happen when the actor observes some hours of rest.

Concern for communication process in the theatre is not confined to the author, director's interpretation and the audience alone, but applies to the whole gamut of the directing process. The director's communication with his cast and crew will better create further communication between the actors and the audience. Ukala himself is a designer; as the director, he envisages his design concepts and then he discusses it with his designers, all in a bid to communicate the right message not only through acting but also through spectacle and scenery.

Concerning fulfillment with the overall production of his plays, he is always fulfilled with the total output of his work. His fulfillment is basically dependent on the audience's satisfaction with the performance. Ukala does his best to satisfy his audience, if the audience does not applaud him for a job well done then his job is incomplete, he goes back to his workshop and tries to find out what was missing in the work. The communication process begins at the source which is the author and ends with the consumer which is the audience. Communication is a give and take process, when a message is sent and the recipient does not get the message clearly then there will be no feedback. When the audience struggles to get the main idea of a performance and fails to get it, the communication process is said to have been breached somewhere. Sam Ukala is one director who loves completing the communication circle.

Conclusion

The major preoccupation of this chapter has been to synergize the directorial praxis of Sam Ukala, and the art of communication. Also, another intention of this work was to examine the method Sam Ukala employs in ensuring that his productions communicate effectively with the audience. Ukala is quite interesting as a theatre director. His special flair for creating dramatic spectacles on stage is a testimony to his directorial competence. He has an eye for dramatic detail and an intimate knowledge of his chosen medium – the theatre. Consequently, he creates his plays with practical

aesthetic finesse. He exhibits a knack for creating the given circumstances of the play under direction graphically and dramatically.

It is apt to note that the art of directing is not just interpreting, controlling, or superintending, but a systematic process of communicating using various artistic models of communication. Therefore it is apt to note that the art of directing is geared towards audience satisfaction.

Works Cited

- Albright, H.D., W.P. Halstead and Lee Mitchell. *Principles of Theatre Art*. Cambridge, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1955. Print.
- Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968. Print.
- Cassady, Marsh. *Theatre: An Introduction*. Lincolnwood, Illinois, USA: NTC Publishing Group, 1997. Print.
- Copeau, Jacques. "Dramatic Economy". *Directors on Directing*, eds. Toby Cole & Helen KrichChinoy New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc, 1963. Print.
- Clurman, Harold. "In a Different Language" *Directors on Directing*, eds. Toby Cole & Helen KrichChinoy New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc, 1963, Print.
- Cohen, Robert & John Harrop. *Creative Play Direction*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1974, Print.
- Ejeke, Solomon. "A Peep into Ola Rotimi's Theatre". *Kiabara: Journal of Humanities, Supplement I*, 2002.
- _____. "The Poetics of Theatre Directing". *Theatre Studies Review*. 3(1) January 2003, pp. 56-71.
- Emasealu, Emmanuel. *The Theatre of Ola Rotimi: Production and Performance Dynamics* Minna: Gurara Publishing, 2010. Print.
- Enita, Godfrey. "Ukala, Folkism and the Laws of Aesthetic Response" *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. ed. Austin Asagba, Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2008. Print.
- Fernald, John. *Sense of Direction*. London: Secker & Warbug, 1968. Print.
- Gilman, Richard. "Directors vs. Playwrights". *Nigerian Theatre Journal*, Volume 1 ed. Chris Nwamuo, Owerri: SONTA, 1983, Print.
- Gorchakov, N.M. *Stanislavsky Directs*. Trans. Muriam Goldina. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1962, Print.

- Guthrie, Tyrone. "An Audience of One". *Directors on Directing* eds. Toby Cole & Helen Krich Chinoy New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc.1963. Print.
- Hodge, Francis. *Play Directing: Analysis, Communication and Style*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1971, Print.
- Jouvet, Louis. "The Profession of the Director". *Directors on Directing*, eds. Toby Cole & Helen Krich Chinoy, New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc.1963, Print.
- Nwamuo, Chris. 1988. "The Rhythms of Play Directing". *Nigerian Theatre Journal* Nos. 1 & 2, ed. Sonny Oti (SONTA), pp. 163-170.
- Oni, Duro. "Between Theory and Practice: Training of Theatre Artistes in The Nigerian University System: The Adelugba Approach," *Developments in The Theory & Practice Of Contemporary Nigerian Drama & Theatre: A Festschrift in Honour of Dapo Adelugba*, ed. Duro Oni & Sola Adeyemi, London: Alpha Crownes Publishers, 2011.
- Sievers, David W. *Directing for the Theatre*. Dubuque Iowa: WMC. Brown Co. Publishers. 1961.
- Southern, Richard. *The Seven Ages of the Theatre*. London: Faber & Faber, 1979. Print.
- Styan, J.L. *Drama, Stage and Audience*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1975. Print.

Interviews

- Akpughe, Oghenemudiaga. An Interview on the directorial style of Sam Ukala, (August 12th , 2017).
- Kaosisochukwu Egbo. An Interview with Sam Ukala on his directorial style and technique, August 9th, 2017.

Five



Prof. Sam Ukala as a Director: An Interview

Austine Amanze Akpuda

Introduction

Prof. Sam Ukala can be described as a complete theatre artist – Playwright, Actor, Director, Teacher, Theorist. Having once dealt with his principles as an actor, theorist and playwright, we are concerned here with Ukala’s work as a Director of plays. Although his directing credits go back to the late 1950s and range across such productions as “Bob Million” at All Saints Primary School Mbiri, Delta State, “Nazizi” at Ika Grammar School, Agbor; Sam Ukala’s *Whiteness is Barrenness*, UNN (1976); *Whiteness is Barrenness*, ABU, Zaria (1976); *There’s Darkness There*, Bendel state University, Ekpoma (1988); *Break a Bone*, Bendel State University, Ekpoma (1992), and so on, which includes the directing of no less than ten convocation plays. We limit the interview to some general principles about directing, Ukala’s directorial, philosophy challenges and triumphs in directing among others.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Who taught you courses in Directing and what did you find in their methods that encouraged you to desire to become a Director?

Sam Ukala: I’m lucky to have been taught by two very influential lecturers who were great directors also. The first was Prof. Kalu Uka (then Mr. Kalu Uka) at the Department of English, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. In my third year, 1976, he taught me a 9-unit course, “Directing and Play Production”. He also taught me “Acting”, a 12-unit course. The second was Prof. Dapo Adelugba at the University of Ibadan. At my Master’s level in 1983, he taught me – I think it also carried 12 units – a course

entitled “The Arts of the Theatre” and took my class through practical interpretative workshops, using especially Amos Tutuola’s *The Palm Wine Drinkard* and Wole Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest*. As expected, Prof. Kalu Uka laid the foundation, taught me the director’s functions as an administrator, leader, interpreter (student, envisioner, critic, teacher), taught me about visual and auditory stimuli from animate and inanimate objects and how the director patterns them on stage, taught me the relationship between the director and his associates – the playwright, actor, designers, audience, etc. He directed me as Egonwanne in *A Harvest for Ants*, his own adaptation of Chinua Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, in which production I was practically exposed to his very functional methods of crowd control. Prof. Dapo Adelugba built on all I got from Kalu Uka. He particularly took me higher in script reading and analysis, in speech delivery and interpretation, in projection and voice control, and in the director’s control of his cast and crew. What I learnt from these two great masters of Theatre Arts, who became my friends for life, planted my feet firmly in directing.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What circumstances brought you into Directing?

Sam Ukala: I said earlier that what I learnt from Professors Kalu Uka and Dapo Adelugba planted my feet firmly in directing. That means I had been directing, albeit with wobbly feet, even before I met Kalu Uka in the Directing and Play Production class. The circumstances that brought me into directing occurred far back in the late 1950’s in the end-of-year activities of All Saints Primary School, Mbiri, in the present Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State. From about Primary 3, I began to improvise drama skits, which I “directed”, acted in, and presented as one of the massively attended end-of-year activities of my school. Other activities included debating and poetry and Bible recitations. The most popular of my skits was “Bob Million”, my re-rendering of the story of the prodigal son. I continued with my improvisation and direction of playlets at Ika Grammar School, Agbor, the secondary school that I attended. It was, in fact, the one that I did in Form One, entitled “Nazizi”, that saved me from the brutal

treatment that “freshers and tadpoles” received as their “tails” were cut at the end of their first year in school. “Nazizi” was the story of a bombastic teacher, who was so enamoured with highfalutin words that he caused his class to repeat each one many times before proceeding to his next sentence. I put “directing” at this stage in quotes because I didn’t really know that was the name of what I was doing. I called it “organizing” then. I didn’t know it was a full-fledged course with loads of theory and practical work. I didn’t know all it entailed. But because of my earlier experience and practice of “organizing” play performances, I didn’t find the practice of directing entirely new. What were new and enriching to me were the theories and tools contained in courses in Directing.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What was your first Directing Job and what responses did you receive from the actors/actresses, the audience and your colleagues?

Sam Ukala: Directing job! I wish it were a job for which I got paid! You mean the first play I directed, right? Well, if I discount the plays I “organized”, I would say Sam Ukala’s *Whiteness is Barrenness* was the first play I directed after a few months of studying Directing and Play Production in 1976. My actors and actresses were so excited and enthusiastic, despite the fact that most of them were my classmates. Indeed, that was the first opportunity many of them had to act. I remember that one of them, who was a class lower than me, couldn’t even distinguish between the character’s speech and the stage direction. He memorized and delivered everything to the great amusement of the more experienced members of the cast! I am glad to note that this neophyte who cut his teeth under my direction is now a significant Nollywood director, a Ph.D holder and a lecturer in Theatre Arts at the University of Port Harcourt. The play was so well received by the audience that the UNN Arts Theatre was full to capacity for three days running – full of students, staff and other members of the University community. I stepped into the branch of African Continental Bank on campus the morning after the last night of the play, filled and submitted my withdrawal form, and a man, who

later introduced himself as the Manager, came out of his office and recognized me by the counter.

“The great actor and director!” he hailed. (I also played the lead role in the performance.) “What brings you to our bank?”

“Good morning, Sir,” I replied. “I came to withdraw some money, Sir.”

“How much do you want?”

“Ehm... Sir, I’ve given my withdrawal form to the cashier.”

He collected the withdrawal form from the cashier and gave me the ₦12 that I wanted from his wallet. “That’s our gift for your brilliant work. My wife and I tried to see you after the performance last night but couldn’t. You’re really great. Keep it up”. I was so overwhelmed that I couldn’t hear what I muttered to him in gratitude, if I muttered anything at all, as he went into the banking hall to attend to the issue for which he emerged from his office in the first place.

My lecturers couldn’t also hide how highly impressed they were. One of them, a Briton, Dr. Nick Wilkinson, wrote a review of the production, which he later published in Claudia Baldwin’s *Nigerian Literature: A Bibliography of Criticism, 1952-1976*. Boston Mass.: J.K. Hall, 1980. About two weeks after the production, the Head of Department, the late Professor Emmanuel Obiechina, called me into his office to inform me that the newly built Studio Theatre of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was scheduled to be commissioned in April 1976 and our Department was invited to showcase a drama production at the event and that the Department’s Board of Studies has decided to showcase my *Whiteness Is Barrenness!* I led my cast and crew to perform at the opening ceremony of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria Theatre Studio about April 20, 1976 under the generous sponsorship of the University of Nigeria! Two lecturers of my Department, Dr. Richard Sanders, a German, and, I think, Dr. Mrs. Snyder, a Briton, accompanied us on the trip, but they left the leadership of the students to me and functioned strictly as observers. We were in a 32-seater Greyhound Bus while they came in Dr. Sanders’ blue Volkswagen Beetle car. Not long after our return from Zaria, I began to direct my second play, *Combined Service*, for the Student

Christian Movement, which was also thunderously received. I have no doubt that these plays, which I wrote and directed, contributed largely to my winning, at the end of the year, the British Council Prize for Best All-Round Student, even though I was also the Vice-President (de facto President) of English and Literary Students Association (ELSA), Departmental Librarian, President of the Poetry Club, Editor of *Omabe*, our poetry magazine, and also among the top of the class in academic performance.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: You have had a lot of exposure being handled by many directors while you acted many roles. Can we learn from you what practical directing lessons you took home while being directed by Emeka Agbo in Arthur Maimane's *The Opportunity*; Andy Enefiok in Martin Owusu's *The Sudden Return*; Inih Ebong in Wole Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*; Cletus Uzonwanne in J.C. de Graft's *Through a Film Darkly*; and Paul Khumba in J.P. Clark's *The Masquerade*, among others?

Sam Ukala: Emeka Agbo and Andy Enefiok were my classmates at the undergraduate level and we all drank from the same Kalu-Ukaian spring; Paul Khumba was my classmate at the Master's level and both of us drank from the Adelugban spring. These classmates knew me as an experienced director and actor, and directing me was their delight. Even Mr. Uzonwanne, a graduate of my Department retained as a Graduate Assistant, who directed me in *Through a Film Darkly*, virtually turned me into his co-director of others and left me to direct myself in the star role of John. Only Inih Ebong, who was a class ahead of me, added what seemed like a spiritual or mystical approach to directing, which caused the actor to go deeper than the surface of the character that he played to connect with cosmic consciousness for a more profound insight. It caused me to see Igwezu, which I played, not just as a young, hot-headed revolutionary, but also as an extraterrestrial cleansing force. It caused me to generate a certain electrical aura, which shocked not only Kadiye, the fraudulent priest, but also my (Igwezu's) parents. Though Ebong did not specifically say he was applying a spiritual or mystical approach, I could glean it from his interpretation of roles, especially the role of

the blind Beggar, and from his piercing eyes, which seemed to see beyond the skin.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Suppose you were the one directing each of these plays how would you have managed the actors playing the roles of Solomon; Kojo Tabi; Igwezu; John; and Diribi, which characters you once played?

Sam Ukala: Perhaps, you expect me to say I would have handled them as I was handled. I am sorry to disappoint you. My answer is, I would have handled them as they deserved. You see, actors are differently endowed, and those who are similarly endowed are endowed to different extent. Experience has taught me that there are five kinds of actors:

- (a) those who are so endowed with both creative and interpretative acumen that they hardly need a director;
- (b) those that need the director to analyze or explain their roles and, thereafter, perform with little or occasional guidance;
- (c) those who need full doses of directorial teaching and coaching;
- (d) those who require the director to demonstrate for them to copy; and
- (e) those whose talents are awakened only by directorial bullying after analysis, teaching and demonstration would have failed.

Those who cannot be saved even by bullying would normally be taken out of the stage by a director who wants to make progress, who wants to save himself and his production team from the wrath or booing of a disappointed audience. Such people, therefore, do not get to be called actors at all. The point I am making is that, apart from the fact that each role makes its own special demands, I would have adopted different techniques in directing the actors in accordance with the talents and skills that they come to the stage with.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Charles Nnolim has noted that “the true critic is a midwife, a mediator between the text and the

reader, between the author and his audience”. Within the course of our conversation I begin to see the ideal Director as this type of critic – a midwife and a mediator. Can this analogy hold?

Sam Ukala: In a way, yes. The director midwifes a play, but he does not do it alone like the critic of a novel or a volume of poetry or even a play or a performance. There are other departments of midwives, whom he works with, the Department of Actors and the Technical Department, which comprises the designers and executors of set, costumes, lights, etc. Everyone in these departments interprets the play or an aspect of it according to his/her understanding of it or a part of it. The director criticises the acting, all the designs and constructions vis-a-vis his overall concept of the play and co-ordinates and packages all that he has approved for presentation to the audience. Yet, on the day of performance, the audience does not see him. It sees the set, the actors, the lights, hears the music and sound effects and gets the message of the playwright as interpreted by the director and relayed by the audio-visual components of the performance, but it does not see the director the way the midwife is seen by the woman who gave birth and the family into which the child is born.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Do you subscribe to Stark Young’s thesis that “the director is the artist who takes the drama as it is put into his hands and labours to recreate it in his own technical terms. And this drama, when it is recreated into these terms, becomes theatre and something that is different from what it was before”?

Sam Ukala: Sure. Having been a playwright himself, Stark Young knew that what is put in the hands of a director or what a director chooses to direct is a volume of dead, cold print. It is inanimate – does not breathe, cannot move, talk, sing, dance. But theatre as a performance does all of these.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What is your philosophy as a Director?

Sam Ukala: My philosophy is to be honest to myself and to work in mutual respect with all my associates. Being honest to myself enables me choose a play I believe will communicate the

appropriate message to a particular audience at a particular time, cast only those I believe have displayed sufficient capacity or trainability at the audition to interpret their roles, and judge inputs from all departments as objectively as possible in relation to my overall concept of the play. To work in mutual respect with all my associates is to acknowledge that each one has the capacity to play his/her own individual role better than me while I have a better overall view than anyone else. So I endeavour to interpret and relay the playwright's thought, not mine – if I want to relay mine, I write my own play; but I'll not be slavish to the script, that is, I'll not hold every line, every word, every action, sacrosanct, but may make amendments that would make the language more appropriate and the action clearer to my audience. That is to say, I would neither be a slavish adapter nor a ruthless adapter. The first sees a play script as perfect and untouchable, sees himself as the slave of the playwright and his script; the second, being egotist and without respect for the playwright and his thought, sees the play script as a springboard upon which to launch into divergence from the thought and style of the playwright. But the creative adapter, which I choose to be, makes only necessary amendments and with a view to improve on the linguistic and theatrical craftsmanship of the play and thus communicate more vividly the playwright's thought and the aesthetic values of the play, all in consideration of the nature and pleasure of his/her audience.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Why is the Director of a stage play not given the same type of recognition and projection as his counterpart in Cinema?

Sam Ukala: This is because of the influence of what Andrew Sarris, an American film critic, named the "auteur theory", the theory of the-director-as-the-author. It arose in France in late 1940's from the cinematic theories of André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc, particularly from the explanation of "camera-stylo" or "camera pen", in which Astruc holds that "the director, who oversees all audio and visual elements of the motion picture, is more to be considered the author of the movie than the writer of the screenplay". In other words, because the film director controls

such fundamental visual elements as camera placement, blocking, lighting, and scene length, his personal contributions and stylistic stamp overwhelm the contribution of the screenplay writer, who supplied the story line and, possibly, also the theme, language and aesthetic values, and this makes the director the de facto author of the film. Though many critics fiercely oppose this theory which elevates the interpreter higher than the author of what is interpreted, the translator higher than the original speaker, it has been introduced since the late 20th century onto the avante garde stage by the likes of Peter Brooks, who produced stunningly strange reinterpretations of Shakespeare's plays. Such directors engage in what I earlier called ruthless adaptation. Fortunately, it has not gained much grounds in the theatre, especially in Africa. But the director of the stage play has always been acknowledged in the announcement of any stage play in Nigeria, notwithstanding that the audience would not see him on stage on the performance night as I earlier explained. I do not think he needs to misappropriate the playwright's work and supplant the playwright before we consider him as having been recognized and projected. Stage directors, such as Duro Ladipo, Hubert Ogunde, Bayo Oduneye, Dapo Adelugba, Ola Rotimi, and others gained popularity as directors, not auteurs.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Chris Nwamuo identifies 5 major responsibilities that should engage the attention of the Director, namely, (a) Selecting a script, (b) Functioning as a critic, (c) Determining the production style, (d) Deciding who acts in the play, and (e) "making the artistic decision of how to enter into a personal relationship with each actor in order to elicit from him the very best of which he is capable". Do you subscribe to these stages and phases of the Director's engagement and, if yes, which of the processes have you found challenging as well as fulfilling?

Sam Ukala: All what Prof. Nwamuo said is subsumed in what I learnt in *Directing and Play Production* and what you might have deduced to be my directing strategy described above. (See Nos. 1, 5, and 8 above.) Every stage in the production process is a challenge; every challenge surmounted gives fulfilment; no one is

more challenging or more fulfilling than the other because the success of the production is measured by the cumulative impact of all the stages of the process.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Can we have an idea of the plays you directed in which the above variables found realization?

Sam Ukala: All the plays I've directed since 1976, 25 of them, some twice or thrice in different years, with different casts and in Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Buzz Kulik has stated that "the problem of working with actors is that every actor is a special kind of creature and you have to find the key". How do you conceive your actors?

Sam Ukala: At 5 above, I identified the five types of actors I've worked with for 41 years now. My experience suggests that every actor might be differently endowed and to different degrees, though I have broadly grouped them into five. Unlike Buzz Kulik, I do not see working with them as a problem, just because I have got to identify what type each one is and how to unlock his/her potentials. After a few rehearsals with each group, I would know who falls into which category and begin to apply the appropriate approach to training him/her. Those in category (a) are a delight to work with. Some of them get larger than the director's vision of their roles and surpass his expectation of the possibilities in the interpretation of their characters. Categories (b), (c), and (d) provide the director in an educational institution the opportunity and pleasure to teach those who are teachable in a practical setting. That is why I open my rehearsals to any student who cares to observe them, provided they maintain decorum. That is also why some observers, after watching me teach an actor on stage for a while and noticing that he/she is not catching up while they have assimilated from the sidelines what I've been teaching, have occasionally offered to replace the actor on stage.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Do you share Robert Altman's thesis that "what I'm looking for instead of actors is behaviours, somebody who will bring me more ... I'm looking for behaviour

that we as the authors say that we want in a person. You bring something to me that I've never seen before but that I know is right”?

Sam Ukala: No, I do not share Altman’s view. When I was a Personnel Management Trainee at Lever Brothers Nigeria Limited, Apapa (now Unilever), I was taught not to see factory operatives as aprons, but as human beings. Perhaps, because of that training, I rather look for actors instead of behaviours because actors wear behaviours like aprons and one actor can wear one behaviour after another, even in one production! The behaviours are made from within the actor, who can discard one as soon as he has made another. So what I look for is the actor who makes behaviours.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Paul Mazursky once said that “my experience as an actor, when I worked for other directors, was that very few directors knew anything about actors . . . I do know about acting and how **to help an** actor when he’s in trouble, but I don’t try to help an actor unless he is in trouble”. What is your response to this?

Sam Ukala: I do not quite understand what Paul Mazursky means by “very few directors knew anything about actors.” There is a great difference between an actor as a member of a society, as a citizen of a country, and an actor rehearsing or playing a role. The actor wears a different behaviour in each of the contexts. It is in the second context, the context of playing a role, that the director’s knowledge of the actor is relevant in a production, and what the director should know about him are his creative instincts and interpretative skills, which he brings to his role, his strengths and weaknesses. Any director who does not know that of his actor after a few rehearsals need not continue with directing because he won’t be able to identify where and when his actor is in trouble. I doubt that Mazursky means that there are many such directors. Most of those who directed me certainly knew something about me in connection with my role at a given time.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Have you directed yourself before? If yes, in what plays/films and what were your experiences?

Sam Ukala: Yes. In many plays – *Whiteness is Barrenness*, *There's Darkness There*, *Gateway to Heaven*, *Break a Boil* at Leeds, U.K., the film of *Akpakaland*, the stage premiere and film version of *The Trials of Obiamaka Elema*. Directing myself has been a tasking but exciting experience. If I was playing a lead role, as in *Whiteness is Barrenness* and *Gateway to Heaven*, I got someone to read in my lines while I directed other actors until they consolidated their roles and the production took shape. As my lines were being read in, I memorized them and envisioned my movement and stage business in relation to the blocking I was giving to other actors. At home, I performed to my standing mirror, and, sometimes, recorded my voice on audio tape and assessed its emotive impact on playback. While performing on stage along with the other actors, I retained my directorship of them, and kept my ears erect to pick up comments on my acting from onlookers. Somehow, I also seemed to see myself through my mind's eyes, as if I was standing outside of myself and watching.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Ola Rotimi once talked about directing a 500-man cast as his ultimate artistic ambition. You have directed over twenty five plays. What are your fantasies as a Director?

Sam Ukala: I have fantasies only as a playwright, not as a Director. But I do have an ambition as a Director, and it is to train my actors to need less of me.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Effiong Johnson has informed us in his Inaugural Lecture that as “the boss of the modern theatre” and “master craftsman”, among several other epithets, that the Director is best described as “the co-ordinator of all the theatrical arts into a synergistic structure to attain wholesome aesthetics” (61). How is this achieved?

Sam Ukala: A theatre production is an organic whole. It has units or components supplied by the cast and crew operating as actors, designers – of set, scenery, props, costumes, make-up, sound, lights – and constructors or builders of all that have been designed. It is the Director, the Chief Interpreter of the play, who critiques all of these prospective inputs, suggests necessary

amendments, and finally accepts only what fits into his overall concept and vision of the play. Thus he co-ordinates all the departments of the production and blends their inputs into an organic whole, which is the production.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Which plays did you find more challenging directing and why?

Sam Ukala: There are two plays that I found more challenging directing: *The Placenta of Death* and *Harvest of Ghosts*, both directed in England in 1998/99. The challenge arose from the largely European cast and crew that I had to direct. In *The Placenta of Death*, we had to create the ambience of a moonlight story-telling session, and get both the performers and the audience to see themselves as co-performers, as collaborators in the creation of the artistic event, to sing a Yoruba song together, and the performers to respond to relevant interjections from members of the audience. *Harvest of Ghosts*, which I co-directed with Bob Frith of Horse + Bamboo Theatre, Waterfoot, Lancashire, was my first experiment with visual theatre – wordless theatre which depends on objects, movement and background music to communicate. Besides, it was an outdoor performance, modelled on African festival performances, complete with African drumming and masked and raffia-costumed performers. In the United Kingdom, Ireland and Holland, which it toured, it played on the streets or in fields in atmospheres of festivals, which we encouraged the communities that booked us to create before our arrival. These performance modes were largely strange to a large number of my cast and crew and our audiences, and most of its rave newspaper reviews described the performance as “unique” and “breathtaking”. Also in both plays, because Horse + Bamboo Company that I was collaborating with was a puppet theatre company, we cast puppets in some roles and I had the challenge of directing puppets and their manipulators for the first time.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Who were your most fascinating actors/actresses in the course of your career as a Director?

Sam Ukala: The first is Festus Ebea, who played Iyare in *There's Darkness There*, which I directed at the Bendel State

University, Ekpoma, in 1988. The second is Henry Akinrinboya, who played Uwa in *Break a Boil*, also at Ekpoma in 1992. The third is Victoria Lee, who wore a male mask in *Harvest of Ghosts*, 1999. The first two were exquisite in the interpretation of their roles; they fascinated me by the ease with which they surpassed my expectations of what was possible at their levels. The third, an English lady, was incredibly fierce and nimble in movement, showing no sign at all that a beautiful lady was behind the mask.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Are there plays which if you had the opportunity again to direct you will adopt another idioaesthetics to produce?

Sam Ukala: The answer is YES in all the plays I had earlier directed. You see, productions are ephemeral, temporal, that is, they tick away with the clock. Even a production of a play, running for three nights, would not be the same night after night. The environment – state of electricity supply, the weather, the state of the set or scenery, the loss or damage to a prop; the kind of audience – noisy, cheering, jeering, attentive, collaborative, harshly critical; the health and mood of individual actors – sudden body aches, diarrhoea, menstrual pains, voice loss, good or bad news just before the rise of the curtain, presence of parents or loved ones in the audience; all these and more make it impossible to have exactly the same performance twice. Similarly, a director's experience grows everyday; his interpretative skills sharpen; his aesthetic tastes may be influenced by exposure to new theories and the styles of other directors, whose productions he sees. As a director, I am susceptible to these changes. So, I do not consider going to read the production notes of a play I directed five years ago or even see its video, if I am to direct the same play this year. I would see it as a fresh assignment and employ my creative instincts of today in tackling it. After all, I would be working with a fresh cast and crew and we'd be playing to a fresh audience. Doing the play exactly as I did it five years ago would approximate serving stale food, but, luckily, it would be impossible, even if I tried, because of all the environmental and human factors I already mentioned.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Who are your favourite Directors in the world and in Nigeria and why?

Sam Ukala: Constantin Stanislavski and Ola Rotimi. Stanislavski, 1863-1938, a Russian director and actor, whose method or system is a set of techniques by which the actor portrays emotions on stage by putting himself in the shoes of the character, by finding a genuine answer to the “Magic If” – If I were in this character’s situation, how would I respond mentally, emotionally and physically? I never saw any of Stanislavski’s live performances – he died ten years before I was born, but I watched a scene or two on YouTube; Prof. Kalu Uka introduced me to his theory at my undergraduate level and some of his books are still available. In my application of his theory in my acting and directing, especially as an undergraduate, I found that his system naturally generates electricity from the actor and superlatively enhances his believability in the audience. Though it has a few disadvantages, chief of which is that the young actor may not have sufficient experience, sufficient emotional memory of the character’s circumstances to recall from within, such disadvantages disappear as the actor matures. Ola Rotimi, 1938-2000, created his own magic on stage by his superb stage craftsmanship – elegant stage composition, almost flawless deployment of actors, smooth movement, perfect crowd control, effective management of polyglotism, especially in *Hopes of the Living Dead*, and deliberate wooing of the audience through different strategies to ensure their robust participation in the production. True, I propounded the theory of Folkism, which I define in *New Theatre Quarterly* XII(47), 1996, as “the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture and concerns of the folk (the people in general...) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale”; true, I direct folkscripts or folkist plays in accordance with those conventions, which are largely non-illusionistic; yet, when I direct non-folkist plays, especially realistic plays and even realistic characters in folkscripts, I usually apply the Stanislavski method. As far as audience cultivation and engineering is concerned, the

strategies of Folkism and those of Ola Rotimi are kindred spirits; both are rooted in traditional African performance aesthetics.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What criteria have influenced the selection of the plays that you have directed over the years?

Sam Ukala: The relevance of their thematic content to my audience, their aesthetic values, my concept of what I think the audience needs to hear and see at a given stage in its life, the experience I reckon that my cast and crew ought to acquire from the selected plays and, of course, the potential to attract reasonable financial returns, at least, to pay the bills of the production.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What convocation play gave you your break as a Director?

Sam Ukala: Sam Ukala's *The Slave Wife*. It was the first convocation play, 1986, of Bendel State University, Ekpoma (now Ambrose Alli University). It brought me into the limelight, not only in the University, but also in the State. Because of its impact, the University established a tradition of convocation plays, and the Bendel State Library Board, with its headquarters in Benin City, commanded a performance of it at its 1991 Book Fair, which also toured some secondary schools in Benin City.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What were the responses like?

Sam Ukala: Very encouraging.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: What is your idea of a good directing of a play and a film?

Sam Ukala: To my mind, good directing is effective midwifery of the thematic (thought content) and aesthetic values of a play or film script first to the cast and crew and then to the audience. It is the co-ordination of various arts, the blending of different inputs, into an organic whole.

Austine Amanze Akpuda: Thank you, Prof., for your time.

Sam Ukala: Thank you, Austine.

PART TWO



Literature, Theory and Criticism



Plate 4: Sam Ukala, SONTA Fellow 2006 being decorated at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, 2016.



Plate 5: Sam Ukala about to receive the Nigerian Academy of Letters (NAL) Fellowship Award, 2016.

Six



Transmuting Folklore for Dramaturgic Relevance in Contemporary Nigeria: An Assessment of Sam Ukala's Dramaturgic Foray

Martins Uze E. Tugbokorowei

Introduction

What is folklore? This is a question that has agitated scholars for quite some time. This agitation exists in spite of the agreement that folklore has to do with the LORE of the FOLK. And this is the crux of the matter: what constitutes the “lore” and who are the “folk”? In order to come to an acceptable starting point for this discourse, it would be necessary to take one step at a time by properly situating these terms.

- a. **Lore:** Lore has to do with the traditions and stories of a particular group of people. It goes beyond just stories to also embrace the traditions of a people, that is, their way of doing things or the way certain things are done by that group of people. In this sense, lore could almost refer to the culture of a people. Group of people in this sense is not restricted to its geographic meanings. It could be people divided into chronological groupings, social, educational, economic, and as many groupings as are possible. One significant feature of lore is that it is essentially unwritten. That is, it is passed on from one generation to the other, essentially, by oral means or by practice. Needless to say that lore is expressed on a variety of levels, and these we shall come to in due course. The concept of the lore of a people and its

constituents does not generate much debate. We shall thus take the above as a representative view and move on to more troublesome waters.

- b. **Folk:** Ordinary, the term folk should not generate much debate in terms of its meaning, going by the general use to which it is put and the general meanings we attach to it. For example, we hear of such phrases as “my folks back home”, “hello, folks”, “how are your folks?”, “I like the old folks” and so on and so forth, and we know what these phrases mean. They refer to people, human beings, without any trace of classification or differentiation.

When the term is subjected to academic discourse, however, particularly in relation to art and culture issues, it begins to acquire connotations out of the ordinary. There are those who see the term folk as applicable only to ordinary, unsophisticated and uneducated people of a community or a country. In the book *The American Folk Scene*, virtually every contributor took this position of seeing the folk as those on the fringes of civilization, living rustic and sometimes bohemian lifestyles. This book chronicles the American folk revival of the 1950`s and 1960`s and shows some musicians who, in their attempt to project “authentic” folk personalities, began to live lifestyles that were almost bohemian and out of tune with the culture in which they were based. In the same way, some traditional musicians glorified in their being termed the authentic folk and were generally eager to be imported into urban areas to render performances of “folk songs”. In Nigeria, scholars like Isidore Okpewho and others also have this condescending look at the ordinary, unsophisticated people by looking at them as the folk and as being the ones who produce the lore of the folk. This is evidenced in his article “Towards a Faithful Record: On Transcribing and Translating the Oral Narrative Performance”. This, however, should not be the case.

The term folk in reality refers to people generally. It also refers to people who are linked to a particular region or country, or to people who have a particular way of doing things, or who share

a particular lifestyle. In all of these, no where have we suggested that folk refers to unsophisticated people. Indeed, it is instructive to take the injunction of Jan Harold Brunvand to heart that when one is talking about the “folk” in folklore:

...one should not think only of quaint, rustic tradition-bearers, but rather of any group that has distinctive oral traditions, which is to say, just about *any* group. (5)

The “folk” as we can see, therefore, are you and I, indeed all the peoples of the world that can be linked to any particular geographical place and to particular ways of life.

Folklore

From the foregoing discussion, we can conclude that folklore is the lore produced by the folk. This definition is not so straight forward as we have seen from the discussion above. Indeed, if we trace the origin of the word, we can become somewhat disconcerted. The term was actually coined by W.J. Thoms, a 19th century English scholar eager to create an English word to serve in place of the Latin “„popular antiquities“ or the intellectual „remains“ of earlier cultures surviving in the traditions of the peasant class” (Brunvand 2). We are gladdened, however, that this connotation has long been abandoned.

In actuality, we can say that folklore has to do with the traditions of a people that are not subjected to the recording process. Bernth Lindfors has the following to say on this subject: “I define folklore in its broadest sense to include popular beliefs, stereotypes and verbal performance types as well as folktales, proverbs and other forms of patterned oral arts” (3). This would suggest that folklore only has to do with beliefs and the verbal arts. This view has come about, essentially, on account of anthropologists and their studies of cultures, particularly non-literate ones. Such anthropologists have deployed the term to investigate such verbal arts as story-telling, proverb-making, riddling and song performance. Jan Brunvand, however, has the following view:

Generally speaking...folklore may be defined as those materials in culture that circulate traditionally among members of any group in different versions, whether in oral form or by means of customary example. (5)

This position extends the frontiers of folklore beyond the domain of the verbal arts. Indeed, Brunvand tells us that the expression of folklore is based on three modes of existence, viz: verbal, partly verbal, and non-verbal. These categories, which are not necessarily water tight as they overlap in one form or the other are explained by Brunvand thus: *Verbal* includes folk speech, folk proverbs and proverbial sayings, folk riddles, folk rhymes, folk narratives, and folksongs; *Partly Verbal* includes popular beliefs and superstitions, gestures, material things (totems), folk games, folk opera, folk dances, folk customs, and folk festivals; *Non-Verbal* includes the “traditional materials of folk architecture, arts, crafts, costume, and foods and the non material traditions of gestures and folk music”. (3)

We may go on and on as there is hardly agreement by scholars as to what folklore means. However, in the different submissions by different scholars, they invariably make reference to certain qualities as being applicable to folklore, these include the assertions that (a) it is traditional, (b) it is oral, (c) different versions exist side by side, (d) it is communally owned, (e) it becomes formalized over time. Thus we cannot deny the fact that folklore exists in all societies and cultures, no matter the level of “sophistication” or otherwise of that society or culture.

Having given a general overview of folklore, it would be necessary at this point to take a look at the folktale, the folk narrative which draws its materials from the three different levels of folklore expression as postulated by Brunvand. While some scholars use folktale as the all inclusive term, others use the term “oral narrative”. According to Stith Thompson, folktale includes all forms of prose narrative handed down through the years. Thompson says that folktales have been classified into different forms, including fairy tale or household tale, novellas, hero tale, sage or local legend, explanatory tale, myth, animal tales, fables, humorous anecdotes, legends, saga, etc. (7-10). Sam Ukala

supports this view of the folktale by saying in his essay “Masquerade, Folktale and Literary Theatre of English Expression in Africa” that:

The African folktale may be defined as any traditional oral narrative, which is purely fictional or is based on factual history, which has, however been so embellished and distorted that it cannot be fruitfully subjected to any empirical proof or verification. By this definition, the epic, myth, legend, novella, marchen, saga, sage, animal tale, fable, anecdote, and the hero tales are folktales. (171)

To Enna Musa, however, “oral narrative” is the all inclusive term. He says oral narrative includes “(a) folk-tales, (b) story-telling, (c) riddles and jokes, (d) proverbs and other tongue-twisters” (33). Both of these views point in the same direction. The oral narrative includes folktale, which in turn includes story-telling forms such as epics, legends, myths, etc., and all these incorporate riddles, jokes, proverbs and other such arts to achieve their purpose.

In the light of the above, we are constrained to use “oral narrative” as the all inclusive term. This choice is not made lightly as no less a scholar in the stature of Isidore Okpewho has towed this line as can be borne out by the title of the seminal work he edited on this subject: *The Oral Performance in Africa*.

What are the characteristics of the oral narrative? The first characteristic we need to take note of is that it is essentially performance. Enna Musa says no one can deny that they are performances and quotes David Kerr to the effect that it is “...not literature but theatre ... the essential feature of which depends upon the relationship of performer to audience” (33). In the same vein, Sam Ukala says in the same essay above that the oral narrative is not prose, that it is before an audience that it exists in live performance (171). Further to that, Isidore Okpewho in the introduction to *The Oral Performance in Africa* makes reference to Dennis Tedlock and his study of American Indian “ethnopoetics”, who recommends that the narratives be seen as “dramatic poetry”

and not as things similar to written prose (5). All these point to the fact that oral narratives are expressed in performance.

The oral narrative performance, by its nature, has some features. E.T. Kirby says the content of an oral narration approximates drama, and that the performance is theatricalized by incorporating the following ingredients: music and song (in which the audience responds like a chorus), dialogue, representation by means of gesture, expression, and voice modulation, and audience participation (250). To Sam Ukala, still in the essay above, the ingredients that make an oral narrative complete include “movement, gesture, impersonation, music-making and dancing, and sometimes costuming, make-up, masking and puppetry” (171). According to Ukala, these ingredients make the narrative pleasant to speak and hear because of the dramatic phraseology inherent in it (171). The oral narrative is therefore a dramatic piece performed as theatre before and with an audience.

The other point we may need to make is that the oral narrative is found in virtually every culture. Every society has its own unique oral narratives that are structured according to the dictates of the environment in which it finds itself and according to the lore of that society. In spite of these differences, however, we notice that because oral narratives are sourced from the common pool of the human unconscious, there is a certain level of similarity in oral narratives, both in terms of content and structure, across different cultures. Stith Thompson corroborates this by saying:

Even more tangible evidence of the ubiquity and antiquity of the folktale is the great similarity in the content of stories of the most varied peoples. The same tale types and narrative motifs are found scattered over the world in most puzzling fashion. (6)

Just as we have similarity in content and structure, we also have similarity in the functions that oral narratives perform in a society. A primary function is, of course, entertainment. Beyond entertainment, however, we find the oral narrative also performing didactic and educative functions in the society. Jan Brunvand says folktales are told mainly for entertainment but they also highlight a

truth or a moral lesson (103). In the same way, Sam Ukala tells us that the “folktale performance is a social and socializing event, bringing people together for entertainment and/or edification” (“Masquerade, ...” 176). Also, Enna Musa says oral narratives “provide a didactic indoctrination in the areas of hygiene, obedience, hard work, respect for elders, sex education, morality, and domestic science” (39). Musa concludes by saying the narratives “help to develop oral craftsmanship among the youth” (39). The place of the oral narrative in instruction and education can, therefore, not be denied.

An oral narrative performance is able to provide full aesthetic satisfaction for the audience when it fluctuates the emotional sensations or feelings of the audience by periodically activating, stabilizing or depressing their sensations (Sekoni 142). Ropo Sekoni says when such fluctuation occurs, the narrative is less likely to be boring and the interest of the audience can be sustained. In this way, the audience is entertained while at the same time getting the needed instruction or education. According to Sekoni, “conflict-producing images activate sensation while conflict-resolving images depress sensation” (143). A good narrative, according to Sekoni, should have clusters of images and these images should be aligned such that the sensation of the audience can be moved forth and back on a wavelength of expectancy. Sekoni defines image as behaviour, such as when an act that is comprehensible is performed, while image cluster is a sequence of images that lead to the forming and conclusion of conflicts. All these are very crucial to the understanding of an oral narrative and the enjoyment of not only the entertainment inherent in it but also the deriving of the necessary instruction or education from it. A fuller appreciation of this concept would play itself out when we consider the experiments of Ukala and how successful he has been. In the mean time, it is fit we look briefly at the development of drama and theatre in Nigeria.

Drama and Theatre in Nigeria

Arguments have been advanced as to whether or not drama and theatre existed in Nigeria before colonization. In spite of the hype

that the issue has generated, the matter in our view is quite simple and quite easily resolved. Countless number of scholars have shown in their works that drama as performance and theatre have existed in the different communities and cultures that constitute present day Nigeria. Scholars and writers such as Hugh Clapperton, Richard Lander, Joel Adedeji, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, G.G. Darah etc. have written extensively on the existence of drama and theatre before the advent of colonialism in Nigeria. See Sam Ukala's *African Theatre: Beast of No Gender?* for a fuller discussion of these writers and the existence of dramatic/theatrical performances that pre-dated colonialism such as the Alarinjo theatre, the Ogiso folktales and legends, the Ozidi Saga and the Udje performance.

As for written drama, however, this did not take a foothold until the introduction of literacy in Nigeria. A point to note also is that early Nigerian dramatists, even when they dealt with indigenous themes and set their plays in the local environment, modeled such works after European standards. By way of just one illustration to back up this point, let us see what Oyin Ogunba has to say:

There is, of course, no doubt that modern African Literature in English has been rather heavily influenced by the European tradition ... J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, when not invoking Hopkins, is modeling his plays on Aeschylus' trilogy; Soyinka's writings assimilate a good portion of English and American writings, but his humour owes a great deal to Restoration witticism ... even the unpretentious (Amos) Tutuola has assimilated some Bunyan and some Arabian Nights stories. (7)

This was the general situation till when playwrights and theatre practitioners like Femi Osofisan, Ziky Kofoworola, Bode Osanyin and the like began to infuse African performance aesthetics into their works. We must add here that Bode Osanyin at a time erroneously thought himself to be following in the footsteps of Bertolt Brecht. From such humble beginnings, Nigerian dramaturgy has matured to reflect the true indigenous aesthetics as

is evidenced by the sheer number of dramatic outputs that bear the Nigerian, nay the African literary aesthetic.

Even with this positive situation as it were, some playwrights felt that the efforts put in to indigenize dramaturgy in Nigeria did not go far enough. One of such playwrights is Sam Ukala.

Sam Ukala's Dramaturgic Foray

Samuel Chinedum Ukala, a Professor of Drama and Theatre at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria, is of Ika extraction in Delta State, Nigeria. He trained at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and at the University of Ibadan. His interest in the direction that Nigerian dramaturgy should take showed early in his life as he wrote one of the most popular plays of his while he was at the 100 level in the university. The play, *The Slave Wife*, sign posted the initial stirrings of what has come to be the focal point of his intellectual and creative endeavours – that of infusing drama and theatre with motifs drawn from indigenous performance aesthetics.

Ukala reached the apogee of his quest while undertaking his doctoral research. It was with this programme that he crystallized his thoughts on an aesthetic principle for Nigerian dramaturgy into what he called "*Folkism*". His Ph.D thesis entitled "From Folktale to Popular Literary Theatre: A Study in Theory and Practice" embodies the essential principles of *Folkism*. This aesthetic principle has been theorized, preached and practiced by Ukala as is evidenced in the following publications of his: "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy"; "Masquerade, Folktale and Literary Theatre of English Expression in Africa"; "Politics of Aesthetics"; *Placenta of Death*; *Akpakaland*; and *Break a Boil*. He has also produced a video film entitled *Akpakaland*.

In all these works cited, he has tried to theorize and practice the ideals of this drama and theatre, by stating in "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy" that Folkism is:

The tendency to base literary plays in the history, culture, and concerns of the folk (the „people in general“...) ... and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale. (285)

In the same essay above, Ukala gives reasons why the folktale should provide a matrix for this concept. That both the folktale and the literary play are narratives that are realized in performance, they are both secular, temporal, mimetic, interpretative, and synthetic by incorporating speech, music, dance, mime, ritual etc. (285)

In his Ph.D. thesis and the essays “Politics of Aesthetics”, and “Masquerade ...”, he codifies his ideals of *folkism* into what he calls the “Eight Laws of Aesthetic Response”. These laws are (1) The Law of Opening, (2) The Law of Joint Performance, (3) The Law of Creativity, Free Enactment and Responsibility, (4) The Law of the Urge to Judge, (5) The Law of Protest Against Suspense, (6) The Law of Expression of Emotions, (7) The Law of Ego Projection, and (8) The Law of Closing. These laws, derived from the folktale performance are expressed in his creative works.

Law 1: The Law of Opening

This law is derived from the folktale performance in which there is usually a standard opening formula. We find this in his plays as shown below: In *The Slave Wife* which Ukala calls a pseudo folkscript, there is a Narrator/Director/Praise singer. Even though he does not start the play in the traditional manner, this character in his interaction with the audience approximates the opening of the traditional folktale. In *Akpakaland* and *The Placenta of Death* however, this opening formula is well deployed.

Law 2: The Law of Joint Performance

This law shows how the performer and the audience team up to propel a folktale performance to its logical conclusion. With his concept of “M.O.A” – Member(s) of the Audience – Ukala is able to bring the performer and the audience together in performance. This is seen in the plays *Akpakaland*, *Break a Boil*, and *The Placenta of Death*.

Law 3: The Law of Creativity, Free Enactment and Responsibility

This is a law that actually manifests itself according to the maturity and skill of the performer. There is no gain saying the fact that Ukala is a highly creative artist who fleshes out stories from folktales that he uses as the bone-structure. He then structures his plays to achieve the desired effect using his free will. Of course, he takes responsibility for his creations as can be seen by the strength of his views regarding *folkism*.

Laws 4, 5 and 6

These laws are quite relevant to the success of a performance. The audience evaluates the performance as it unfolds, the audience makes comments and asks questions to reduce suspense, the audience also expresses their emotions as appropriate in the course of the performance. Of course the audience also interjects into the performance in order to show its own worth. Ukala makes provision for these laws to be expressed, first by the introduction of the M.O.A., by the way the plot is structured and by the manner of language deployed that encourage ample audience participation.

Law 8: The Law of Closing

This law stipulates that the performance of a tale ends appropriately, either with a closing song or the enunciation of the moral(s) inherent in the performance. In all the plays under consideration, Ukala provides appropriate endings as you find in a traditional folktale performance.

Conclusion

Thus far, we have been able to show the place of folklore and its different colourations in the affairs of the society. We have also shown that Nigerian playwrights have consciously moved away from Western models in the crafting of their plays. Beyond that, we have shown that Sam Ukala, in his obsession to imbue his drama and theatre with aesthetics drawn from the indigenous folktale performance tradition, has pointed out new vistas that

other Nigerian and African playwrights would find very stimulating and inviting.

Earlier in this discourse, we spelt out the functions of the folktale in a society, which to wit, are: entertainment, instruction and education. In assessing the success or otherwise of Ukala in his adoption of folktale aesthetics in his plays, we cannot but look at them against these critical points. Are the plays entertaining? No doubt they are as they are always produced in different universities and communities. His experiment with Visual Theatre through *Harvest of Ghosts*, which drew largely from his folkist ideals received critical acclaim when it toured the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Holland between 1998 and 1999. The same play was equally well received at the performances that held in Asaba, Delta State and Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria in 2002.

What about the instructional and educational values of the plays? These plays are rich in these, treating issues of leadership (good and bad), relationships, corruption, jealousy, poverty, disease etc, all steeped in the traditional beliefs and customs of the people. These are, of course, laced with the wisdom inherent in the application of these beliefs and customs.

Does the presence of the values outlined above in the works of Sam Ukala make his experimentation successful? Before we give an answer, it is imperative we take the views of some scholars on Nigerian, nay African literature, drama, and theatre and how they can be relevant to the society that gives them birth. We start with Chinweizu *et al* who advocate the decolonization of our literature and a movement back to African ideals. To them, this would not only create an authentic identity, but would also make our literature to become relevant. According to them:

If African literature is not to become a transplanted fossil of European literature...it needs to find more ways of incorporating forms, treatments and devices taken from the African oral tradition. The demand for such incorporation is not a mere matter of antiquarianism, nor is it a matter of searching for some vague authenticity. It has to do with the function of a literature in its society. (239-40)

We can see that the search for indigenous models in African literature, drama and theatre is not a fad but a task that must be done if these art forms are to be truly independent.

Towing this same line, a great African theatre scholar, Ziky Kofoworola opines that the theatre is a veritable means of preserving our folklore. In his own words: "I see no better way of reproducing our traditional folklore as living forms of our cultural heritage than the theatre" (300). Further down the same essay, he says: "One of the practical ways of doing this is a systematic adaptation of the various aspects of the folklore as evident in the traditional oral poetry to the theatre" (305). We can see, therefore, that the efforts of Sam Ukala are not out of place. They are, indeed, necessary as they serve very utilitarian functions in the society.

The usefulness and relevance of Ukala's experiments with folkist ideals cannot be over emphasized. He has extended the frontiers of the theorizing and performance of drama and theatre in Nigeria. He has successfully transmuted folklore, giving it modern characteristics, and making the product something to be proud of, something to hold high and proclaim to the world that this is authentically Nigerian and African. The import of the preceding words is reinforced by Bernth Lindfors who says:

I am particularly interested in the skill with which Nigerian writers exploit new aesthetic opportunities by incorporating traditional matter in the novels, plays and poems they write...I believe that those who do this most successfully are contributing something original to world literature. (3)

No doubt, Ukala has been successful in his dramaturgic journey to discover an indigenous aesthetic principle. It is safe, therefore, to say he has contributed something original to the world. The case is rested.

Works Cited

- Brunvand, Jan Harold. *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1968. Print.
- Chinweizu, et al. *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature* (Vol. 1), Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Co. Ltd., 1980. Print.

- De Turk, David and A. Poulin Jr. *The American Folk Scene: Dimensions of the Folk Song Revival*. New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1967. Print.
- Kirby, E.T. "Indigenous African Theatre." *The Drama Review*. (Indigenous Theatre Issue) Vol. 18, no. 4 (T-64). 1974. (27-35). Print.
- Kofoworola, Ziky O. "The Housa Example." In Abalogu, Uchegbulam et al. (Eds.) *Oral Poetry in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981. Print.
- Lindfors, Bernth. *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*. 2nd Ed. Ibadan: Caltop Publications (Nigeria) Limited, 2002. Print.
- Musa, Enna Dauda. *Theatre and Politics in Pre-colonial Nigeria: The Case of Eggon Society*. Ibadan: Oputoru Books, 2004. Print.
- Ogunba, Oyin. *Literary Art and Literary Creativity in Contemporary Africa*. (Inaugural Lecture Series No. 36) Ife: University of Ife Press, 1979. Print.
- Okpewho, Isidore. "Introduction: The Study of Performance". in Okpewho, Isidore (Ed.) *The Oral Performance in Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1990. Print.
- _____ (Ed.) *The Oral Performance in Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1990. Print.
- _____ "Towards a Faithful Record: On Transcribing and Translating the Oral Narrative Performance". in Okpewho, Isidore (Ed.) *The Oral Performance in Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1990. Print.
- Sekoni, Ropo. "The Narrator, Narrative-Pattern and Audience Experience of Oral/ Narrative Performance". In: Okpewho, Isidore (Ed.) *The Oral Performance in Africa*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1990. Print.
- Thompson, Stith. *The Folktale*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *African Theatre: Beast of No Gender?* (Inaugural Lecture No. 13) Abraka: Delta State University, 2007. Print.
- _____ *Akpakaland*. in Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and Other Plays*. Agbor: Oris Press, 2004. Print.
- _____ *Alpakaland*. (a video film) N.P.: Sam Ukala Films, 2006. CD.
- _____ *Break a Boil*. in Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and Other Plays*. Agbor: Oris Press, 2004. Print.

- _____ “Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy”. *New Theatre Quarterly*. XII (47) Aug. 1996, (279-87). Print.
- _____ “From Folktale to Popular Literary Theatre: A Study in Theory and Practice”. (Ph.D. Thesis) University of Obadan, 1986.
- _____ “Masquerade, Folktale and Literary Theatre of English Expression in Africa”. in Ogude, Steve et al *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. Print.
- _____ *Placenta of Death*. in Ukala, Sam. *Two Plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2008. Print.
- _____ “Politics of Aesthetics”. In Banham, Martin et al. (Eds.) *African Theatre and Politics*. Oxford, Bloomington and Johannesburg: James Currey, Indiana University Press, and Witwatersrand University Press, 2001. (29-41). Print.
- _____ *The Slave Wife*. Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1990. Print.

Seven



Presenting History Through Folkist Drama: An Analysis of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*

Elo Ibagere

Introduction

It is a common fact that drama is a phenomenon that exists in society. It focuses on the society in which it exists, as a detached entity; yet it is a part of the society. Drama usually focuses on a particular period of a society's existence. The period depends on the concerns of the dramatist. Even when such drama decides to focus on a particular historical period, it is usually from the perspective of the dramatist. That is, the dramatist uses such drama to make a statement about the period of focus. Hence the common refrain of drama being a mirror of the society.

As drama mirrors the society, it serves to record the society and engender change towards what the society ought to be, by proffering ways of attaining the position the society should be in. *IPSO facto*, then, drama creates and recreates societal events. Drama, therefore, records history. The dramatist cannot be said to write about what is outside his experience or environment. Even when the focus is outside his immediate experience, such an event (or content) must have been vicariously experienced. Such vicarious experience may include knowledge got from books, biographic or other recorded materials. The experience may be from oral narratives of those who had physical experience of the event the drama focuses upon. In this regard, then the dramatist becomes one who is engaged in the recreation of history. In his engagement as a historian, he transposes the historical facts obtained from written sources into the oral dramatic form that is meant for performance before an audience. The dramatist therefore extends the history so recorded or recreated from the written or

oral form to the living form of the stage. The advantages of this extension cannot be overemphasized. Apart from the fact that it creates the opportunity for those not literate enough to relate to the written form, it widens the reach of such history to those who may not have the opportunity to behold the written or oral version. Besides, such dramatic form has the capacity to inform its beholders better about the event in question.

It must be noted that every drama focuses on the socio-political issues of a particular era, especially when such drama relates to the era in which the dramatist exists. But the accuracy of facts of the event being focused upon becomes suspect if the event took place in the distant past. In this regard, certain elements of the dramatic presentation are crucial. For instance, accuracy in respect of costume, expression, décor, and so on may become a problematic issue in mounting such a play. This is not to say that the sole purpose of the history play is to record and present history accurately. The history play could be written and performed purely from the theatrical point of view and still retain its quality as a historical record. It all depends on the aim of the dramatist as well as how he presents the facts and orchestrates the action in the play.

Against the above stated background, this chapter focuses on Sam Ukala's history play, *Iredi War*. The chapter analyzes the play both as drama and history. The analysis reveals the quality of the play as a record of the event that took place in Owa, as well as a dramatic piece. The analysis takes cognizance of the style Ukala has adopted in writing the play. The play adopts the folkist medium – an African based foundation espoused by Ukala himself. The play is, therefore focused upon the background of the folkist principles enumerated by Ukala as well as the appurtenant demands of folkism.

Ukala, a quintessential African dramatist propounded the theory of folkism as best representing and demonstrating African dramatic performance. He has enunciated some principles which are characteristic of this form and has equally gone ahead to write and produce several dramatic pieces in this form. *Iredi War*, which is the focus of this chapter, is one of such presentations.

Conceptual Framework

History, in its most basic definition, is a record of past events. But such records are compiled by one who has a particular perspective, from which he records such events. Hence history cannot include all that actually happened. This point is aptly noted by David Henige who asks, “should history encompass all that has ever happened anywhere and at any time? In that case, historians have set themselves an impossible task” (1). He equally realizes the fact that the information purveyed by historians can be added to. According to him “oral historians are among the greatest adders since virtually none of the data they use are (sic) accessible before their research” (1).

The foregoing establishes the fact that those who record events are usually engaged in subtraction and addition of facts depending on what they intend to achieve. This creates a challenge for writers, especially those who adapt such records into other forms as they attempt to be as accurate as possible. This challenge is well noted by Christine Dumoulin who submits that, “writers of books, dramas and movies often struggle to balance historical accuracy with telling a good story” (2007). This is why it is a normal feature for a play or movie to be fraught with inaccuracies, especially when it focuses directly on a historical event.

But because history is full of drama, there cannot be a completely accurate account. Craig Mason (2015) has noted that:

History is drama. It's full of character and conflict. Have you ever read a chapter from a history textbook that talked about a peaceful group of people who just went about their lives without struggle or conflict or hunger or war for hundreds of years?

The above confirms that historical facts may not be accurate because one can only view and comprehend an action from a particular perspective. Every person takes away something from drama. What is taken away may not be common to everybody. Every person takes away what is important to him. In recording history through drama, then, there is the challenge of striking a balance between adherence to the demands of theatre and being

historically accurate. This is because the dramatist may have other interests bordering on the need to entertain (for instance), which may be at variance with the need to be historically accurate.

The above becomes more critical in the consideration of *Iredi War* as a folkist drama based on historical facts. Folkism has been copiously defined by Ukala as:

The tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture and concerns of the folk (the people in general...) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African convention for composing and performing the folkale. (1986:47).

Ukala has equally formulated some principles guiding the performance of the folkist drama. These principles he refers to as “the laws of aesthetic response”, are eight and they form the focus of Godfrey Enita’s analysis of folkism. They are as follows:

1. The law of opening
 2. The law of joint performance
 3. The law of creativity, free enactment and responsibility
 4. The law of the urge to judge
 5. The law of protest against suspense
 6. The law of expression of emotions
 7. The law of ego projection
 8. The law of closing
- (see Enita 48-56)

The laws, as enumerated above, presuppose that any folkist drama should adhere to the principles. However, on another level, a folkist drama which seeks to tell the history of a people should display some additional features. Jamiesson (2016), in analyzing the historical plays of Shakespeare provides some characteristics such a play should have. According to him, Shakespeare’s history plays among other features, are not historically accurate, provide social commentary and explore the social structure of the societies they focus on.

The attempt to further conform to the demands of historical drama equally presents other challenges. Here, finally is a new vista of interest. That is, the question of what constitute the

aesthetic requirements as regards writing a historical play against the background of folkism. This certainly involves the marriage or adaption of forms and principles. Ukala has been noted to effect this marriage in his previous works. For example, Bonny Ibhawoh submits that "... *The Slave Wife* provides a classic example of this marriage of history, philosophy and literature in African oral tradition" (67). He has continued this marriage in *Iredi War*, in which he focuses on the history of Owa kingdom in Ika North East Local Government Area of Delta State.

It now becomes expedient to examine *Iredi War* based on the stated principles of folkism, as well as a historical document that chronicles the history of the Owa people. This is to find out whether the marriage of forms and principles has been successfully consummated by Ukala in the play.

***Iredi War* as Folkist Drama**

Iredi War chronicles the fierce battle between the forces of the colonial head of the Agbor district and the Owa people. It was the brash audacity of this colonial hot-head, Crewe-Read (bastardized by Ika people as Iredi) that resulted in the war, ending with defeat of the Owa people. The treachery of the colonialists and their collaborators finally led to the arrest and incarceration of the Obi of Owa and his chiefs.

From Ukala's postulation, folkist drama must conform with principles of folkism. However, that may not be the ultimate requirement of the folkscript, as some appurtenant or associated features may be part of such drama. According to Ukala, folktale cannot be fully represented in prose form, hence its dramatic form becomes quite expedient. He explains this profusely:

the seemingly "untranslatable" aspects of that performance are representable in drama. The reason why those who had been frustrated by the prose form, did not turn to drama may be their slavish adherence to tradition or their lack of training in the art of dramatic composition". (1990:292).

The import of the above submission of Ukala is that, in transposing the folktale into drama, some creativity must come into play while still maintaining the form and adhering to the principles of folkism. This may include addition and subtraction.

In the construction of *Iredi War*, Ukala employs his creative ingenuity to tell the tale of the Owa people. He employs the principles of folkism in this regard. Usually, the story teller is the narrator who greets the gathering and begins the story. The law of opening does not strictly indicate the form it must adopt. It may be a song or a proverb or even a dance. In *Iredi War*, Ukala begins the play with the narrator casting an imaginary white chalk as a sign of peace or cleansing of the arena, then breaks into a song signifying that a tale is to be told. This opening is equally creative in the sense that an opening does not have to adopt a particular form. The form, thus chosen by Ukala can be said to be appropriate to the play and creatively so.

One important feature of the folkist play is joint participation. In this regard Ukala creates an audience within the play, while the theatre audience become like movie audience watching the spectacle of a complete theatre enactment, that has its own audience. The audience within the play as well as the theatre audience are made to participate in the performance. Ukala's *Iredi War* aptly displays this characteristic. For example, on page 82, the theatre audience and the MOA (players who are members of the playing audience) are made participants.

NARRATOR II: By July 2nd, half of Rudkin's troops were casualties. Then the remaining half adopted a new tactics: advance, strike ... (Narrator I joins in) ... and retreat. Advance, strike...

MOA, AUDIENCE: ... and retreat ...

Further down the page, it continues

NARRATOR I: Advance, strike

MOA, AUDIENCE: ... and retreat

The above shows that the theatre audience is fully incorporated in the action. So it takes part in the action and watches the same

action. This is not just in conformity with folkist principles but is an extension of the action to the theatre audience.

It is needless to say that the play equally reflects other folkist principles. For example, there is no need for protest against suspense as the play has a fast pace and the narrator does not suspend the story to catch his breath. Also there is no need for ego projection as this is evident in the proud disposition of the Owa people who are prepared to protect their king and kingdom with the last drop of their blood.

At the end, there is a fitting closing with usual expectation of more tales later. Usually, a folktale teller would end a story with the beginning of another which may be suspended due to passage of time far into the night. This is how *Iredi War* ends as the playing audience requests to know “who will break the pot of the dead” and the narrator promises to tell them, but in the next era.

The fast pace adopted by Ukala is appropriate for such drama that is full of action, as the focus is war. A war usually involves planning and execution of plans. It is perhaps, the fast pace adopted by the author that compelled him to eliminate the feature of interlude that is usually a part of the folktale or folkist drama. In this regard, the narrator would suspend the tale to catch his breath. This makes for some diversion and creates suspense. A song is normally raised with MOA (in this case) and, perhaps, the theatre audience, drawn into a chorus, followed with a question from the MOA as to what happened next in the story. Ukala probably avoided this feature in order to obviate slowing down the pace of action. But the feature is an important ingredient that makes the folkscript soup thick.

Again, it is a normal feature for the expression of a particular character to be presented in its original form. Hence the story teller would usually speak through the nose in a purported imitation of the proverbial tortoise. The expressions of the various characters in the play should therefore reflect their status in the society. In this regard, the expression of Gilpin, the court clerk is somewhat inappropriate for his status. The following dialogue on page 46 shows this flaw.

CREWE-READ: Nonsense, Mr. Gilpin! What d"you mean, if it"d please me?

GILPIN: Sorry again, Sir. But, as you well know, "if it"d please you" is an English manner of speaking ... if it"d please Mr. D.C., let"s send Jamba. He"s not known in this area.

CREWE-READ: Okay. But he"ll go with Afopele, the son of paramount Chief Imaran

GILPIN: I don"t mean to be obdurate or intransigent, Sir....

Again, on page 73, Gilpin, in response to a statement by the District Commissioner, Chichester says:

GILPIN: But, yesterday, you sounded like him, Sir-brashly draconian, shouting at me, "be straight!" "Answer, ONE WORD", you even insinuated I was Ekumeku.

Further down the same page 73, in reply to the same Chichester:

GILPIN: But that"s the point, Sir.

Insurrection is often induced by racism, arrogance, high handedness and insensitivity. Crewe-Read was guilty of all...

The expression of Gilpin as shown above indicates somebody either at par in status with Crewe-read or someone above him. A common court clerk (court ma) is not expected to have such a polished expression. It could have been better if Gilpin"s expression was presented as imitation of the grammar of his master and should be inaccurate. And even when he uses good grammar, it should not be syntactically correct, and used to elevate himself before the common people.

In the same vein, the expression of the Owa natives should reflect their social and philosophical orientation. The expectation then is that the people would still be in close affinity with their beliefs during the period the play focuses on. Therefore, the expression made by Iwekuba on page 42 is out of place. Addressing the Owa warriors on page 42, Iwekuba says:

To prepare the unprepared among you. They shot him
(pointing to Uzun"s body)... just once with same gun that

went dumb when it was aimed at me. And here he lies lifeless. Some of you here came to that scene and when it was time to fight, you ran away! You can't go to war like that. **And God forbid** that you return like this ... (emphasis mine).

One is tempted to ask here, which God is Iwekuba referring to? He cannot, possibly be referring to the Almighty God – the Christian God. Such a man whose body could not be penetrated by bullets must have the Owa god that protects him from the Whiteman's bullets. And it is that god he must be referring to. And that god has an Owa name which he must have called, not God Almighty. At least he should have called on the ancestors, if not the Owa god. This feeling of rejection of the phrase "And God forbid," is based on the fact that Christianity could not have taken a firm root in Owa land at the time to make the people recognize the God of Crewe-Read and call on Him. It is their native gods that they would call in such a circumstance.

Ukala is very much aware of the challenges of what he refers to as "slavish adherence to tradition" and is obviously on a path to avoid such challenges. He is equally engaged in the creative process as he presents the history of the Owa people. Accurate presentation of this history could be at the risk of offending creativity. Which then is paramount – creativity or accuracy? This chapter adopts the view that creativity is supreme in this regard, because, as has been well noted, recording events may be from a subjective perspective. But creativity has established standards: aesthetics – in this case, folkist aesthetics. Against the background of the aesthetics of folkism, *Iredi War* is a masterpiece, having adhered to the principles of folkism as well as their appurtenant requirements.

Iredi War as History

It has been well noted that history does not necessarily record everything that happened. History can also include certain things that are incidental to the recorded event. Thus a historian may add or subtract from the event he records. This may be noticed in the expression of the historian. The issue of accuracy is, therefore,

crucial. As has been noted, a challenge arises out of the need to balance a good story with factual accuracy. In an attempt to tell a good story, which, as a matter of necessity should involve employing good expression, accuracy may be scarified on the altar of good expression. But this should not be to the extent of distorting facts or deviating from the original story or adding what may become pejorative to the story. Apart from the fact that *Iredi War* is history being told, it is being told using a different medium from the original one used to record the event.

The issue then, is the adaptation of an already recorded history, into drama (which itself, is a record of past events). This history play, if the Shakespearean model, earlier stated, is used as reference, should focus on the social environment of the period in question (that is, Owa kingdom in 1906). It should explore the social structure of the society at the time. But the play may not be completely accurate in terms of the event in focus, because the playwright may have a different concern in mind, Ukala is definitely aware of the foregoing indices of evaluating a history play. He has decided to adopt a creative perspective in presenting the facts of the event, while, at the same time, remaining faithful to the facts. In the preface to the play, he says:

In folksim, the dramatic recreation or adaption of a story is faithful to the original, not slavishly, but enough for the owners of the story to recognize it and identify with the recreation or adaption. (*Iredi War* 6)

By his own submission above, Ukala proclaims what he set out to do in the play. His aim is to tell the history of the Owa people, not accurately, in strict terms; because that may be impossible - more so, when he was not a participant at the event. He is telling the story from a perspective that would make the people recognize and understand their history much better. He states, in the preface to the play that his account is based on two major accounts by Keith Steward and Chief Dan Agbobu. According to him, he is more concerned with the bone structures of both accounts which were similar. So he has added the flesh which

involves the imaginative addition of the perceived words of the main actors of the event.

There is no better way of adding to historical facts than imaginatively reconstructing the dialogue of the characters in the historical event. The concern here is whether such creative embellishment adds any value or contributes to the understanding of the event. There is no over-emphasizing the fact that Ukala's presentation has added so much value to the history of the Owa people. Apart from extending the history by virtue of its adaptation to another medium, the play furthers the understanding of the event and the characters involved. For example, from the play, one can understand the very nature of Crewe-Read as a brash, exuberant and inexperienced young man whose indiscretion and indecorous bravado resulted in the war. One can also understand that had the experienced Chichester, the District officer remained in his position to direct affairs; the tragic war would have been avoided. Through the adaptation, people who had never had any contact with, or read the history of the Owa people would now avail themselves the opportunity of knowing this history.

The play showcases the social condition of the Owa people at the time in question. They are presented as a people who lived in peace with their neighbours and went about their daily life without rancour. From the play, one could understand the social strata of the people. They had a respectable king, Obi Igboba, who was the head of the kingdom. Next in hierarchy were his chiefs with the Iyase (prime minister) as the head of the chiefs. There was also the War Minister who commanded the warriors and prepared them for war. Even then, such war was purely for the defence of the kingdom, not to annex any kingdom. Then there are the common people who made up the general community and seen to be law abiding. They supported their king and ensured a peaceful coexistence in the land. The characteristic treachery of the Whiteman is also presented. A post-colonial belief had it that the white man deceived the African with the Bible. He came teaching the African to kneel, close his eyes and pray. After the prayer, the African opened his eyes to find himself having the Bible, while the Whiteman now had the land. Such treachery is seen played in *Iredi*

War. Obi Igboba and his chiefs are deceived into accepting to go for a meeting summoned by the District Officer. The meeting turns out to be an arrest and summary trial which effectively brings Owa kingdom to her knees. The usual employment of Africans to conquer their fellow Africans for the white colonialists and bring them under British or French hegemony is equally featured in the play. From the play, one is able to know the motive for the expansion of the British Empire as well as the causes of the various wars in Africa at the time, as reference is made to such other wars as Benin and Ekumeku.

From the foregoing, it is clear that *Iredi War* sets out to chronicle the history of the Owa people by focusing on the war of 1906 as the British Empire maintained its expansionist tendency. The defeat of the Owa kingdom was inevitable especially as the most powerful empire on that axis- the Benin empire- had been defeated about a decade earlier. It must be noted that the play does not just embark on recording the history of the people. Otherwise, there would no addition. There would have been a slavish representation of the facts. But the need for better understanding of the circumstances leading to the war, how it was fought and how Owa was defeated, has compelled more than the mere presentation of the facts. There is, therefore, an excursion into the subterranean stratum of the people's life to present the perceived role of even the king's wives, chiefs and individual warriors as well as the people's socio-political foundation.

Ukala employs simple, free flowing expression, so alluring that one would find it difficult to put it down when reading. It is fast paced and reveals so much about the Owa people, such that from the play, one can understand the current disposition of the people in the present socio-political configuration of Delta State of Nigeria.

Conclusion

The question as to whether the play exhibits folkist tendencies cannot arise because it is an apt folkscript, satisfying the requirements of folkism sufficiently. Whatever misgivings noted, have resulted from challenges associated with the transposition of

the history event from one medium into another. First from oral medium into the written forms of Keith Steward and Chief Agbobu and from these accounts into the play. Such an exercise cannot be successful without a little infringement on accuracy as attempt is made to uphold creativity while avoiding slavishness at the same time. But as Anyanwu and Ibagere have noted:

The language of the stage or of the novel, indeed of literature, is that of pictures in action. So you watch and even participate. The essence of adaption is after all, to endow the new work with merits of the new medium and throw more light on the original. (228)

The above submission is exactly what *Iredi War* seeks to achieve and has achieved immensely. We can therefore look up to the play to understand Owa history in this regard. After all, the historian should not “beguile himself with the belief that he need only question the natives of a tribe to get at their history” (Lowie 163). In effect then, Ukala, though not a native Owa, can be questioned and relied upon as a resource person in researching into this particular aspect of Owa history. He does not only rely on oral tradition, but has the accounts of two other historians to strengthen his records.

Works Cited

- Anyanwu, Chukwuma and Ibagere, Elo. "Nigerian Home Videos and the challenges of Adaptation from Stage to Screen: *Akpakaland* in Adaptation". Asagba, Austin Ovigie (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2008. (221-230). Print.
- Dumoulin, Christine. "Interpreting History through drama: North Carolina Museum of History". 2007. Accessed 20th August, 2017. Web.
- Enita, Godfrey. "Ukala, Folksim and the Laws of Aesthetic response". Asagba, Austin Ovigie (Ed.) *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2008. (48-57). Print.
- Henige, David. *Oral Historiography*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1982. Print.
- Ibhawoh, Bonny, M.A. "Literature as history: Oral Historical Tradition in Sam Ukala's *The Slave Wife*". Ogude, Steve, Egede, Benji and

- Uhunmwangho, Amen (eds.) *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. (64-74). Print.
- Jamieson, Lee. "Shakespeare Histories". [http://www.thoughtco.com> Shakespeare...](http://www.thoughtco.com>Shakespeare...) 2016. Accessed 20th August 2017. Web.
- Lowie, Robert. "Oral tradition and History". *JAF* 30, 1917. Cited in Henige, David. *Oral Historiography*. London: Longman group Limited, 1982. Print.
- Mason, Craig. "Teach any Lesson Through Drama". *Theatre Folk*. 2015. Accessed 20th August, 2017. Web.
- Ukala, Sam. "From Folk to Popular Literary Theatre: A Study in Theory and Practice" Ph.D Thesis, 1986. Cited in Enita, Godfrey. "Ukala, Folkism and the Laws of Aesthetic Response". Asagba, Austine Ovigie (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2008. (48-57). Print.
- Ukala, Sam. "Transmission of the folktale by Print: The question of Authenticity and Reliability" in Emenyonu, Ernest et al., (eds.). *Literature and Black Aesthetics*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1990. (287-299). Print.
- Ukala, Sam. "Folkism: Towards a national Aesthetic principle for Nigerian dramaturgy" *New Theatre Quarterly* XII (47) August, 1996. (279-287). Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft books Limited, 2014. Print.

Eight



Folktale as Panacea of the Oral Tradition: An Example of Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland*

Lilian Chidinma Agogbuo

Introduction

Most modern African writers in their work, draw from their oral tradition which is the way of life, beliefs and customs of the people. Oral traditions are used as orature gotten from the oral heritage of the African people to make their work authentically African. This is because the foundation of the African literature is the African oral tradition. It is seen as the integral part of the culture of any group of people since it is that learnt behaviour shared by a social group which provides traditional modes of conduct. Thus, African writers find oral tradition unavoidable in the development of themes, styles, point of view and character in their creative works.

In the early traditional African society, much emphasis was placed in child education and there were certain general principles that were handed down from generation to generation. In it, children were not only educated to realize the necessity of communal life, but were also instructed on self-control and self-sacrifice. Since there was no formal school where children could attend in order to be taught their culture, the communities developed their way of inculcating values in their young ones and also preserve their identity as groups through the oral traditions which were handed down from one generation to another in order to reflect the people's way of life and the most important elements of their culture, customs, beliefs and expectations.

The oral traditions had a definite purpose to instruct people in principles of right and wrong and consisted of materials

transmitted by either words of mouth or by custom and practice. In support of this fact, Taiwo sees oral tradition as “an integral part of the culture of any group of people ... communities sought to preserve their identity as groups by handing down orally from one generation to another, the most important elements of their culture” (9). Thus, the body of oral tradition formed admirable sources from which parents, grandparents and elders ceaselessly drew materials to support their lessons. They did this, because they realized the need to use the oral traditions to lay solid foundation for the moral and aesthetic upbringing of their children. This is why to Kandel, education is a living thing and is spontaneous only if it is inspired by the cultural foundations of the people whom it seeks to serve (45).

The most important and popular form of the oral tradition is the folktales. It deals with aspects of African culture, morals, wisdom, bravery and brotherliness. It serves as the principal avenue for informal education and entertainment for children in the traditional society. From it grows the root of African life and worldview. Other forms of the oral traditions include the myths, legends, proverbs, songs, festivals, riddles, incantations, etc. In essence, the predominantly didactic and moralistic nature of the folktale is what the oral tradition strives to perpetuate for it acts not only as valuable educational device but is equally valuable in maintaining a sense of group unity and group worth.

Folktale and its Storytelling Technique

The folktale is a delectable verbal art form that has charmed humanity through the ages. In the past, it played a significant role in the traditional system of education as it enforced conformity to social and moral norms as well as validated social instructions and religions. Nowadays, folktales are regarded as authentic heritage and literary artists continue to use elements from them in their work since they are used to educate and entertain. They also reflect societal behaviours, norms and promote the art of good language usage. This is why Krama describes folktale as a genre of African theatre developed from secular rites and drawn heavily from oral traditions (11).

The etymology of the folktale indicates that it is a conflation of two ideas, namely folk (meaning the people/community) and tale, a narrative or story. It is an axiom in folklore that the old stories do not belong to any particular individual creator hence the name "folktale" which is an anonymous tale owned and transmitted by the folk, the ordinary people of various societies. Okoroiwu in line with this mode of transmission, describes folktales as "stories originating in remote times and handed down orally from one generation to another of the common people of a race or nation" (55). Seen as a dialectic story told in the mother tongue of the narrator, the folktale contains residuum of knowledge or experience whose intergenerational transmission is assured by the very recounting of the tales.

It is however an articulate medium for expressing the people's ideas of society and human relations, aesthetics and philosophy. Its technological advancement employs one form of folklore or the other in the day to day activities whether consciously or unconsciously. Thus the dynamism of the folktale seen both in the past, present and future, reflects the interface between continuity and renewal in the study of folklore in general and the folktale genre in particular. Here Krama and Ohia believe that the past serves as means of presenting social actions and is usually a reference point for something at all times since the society needs the past as guide for the future with history being a tale told as meaningful guide for social actions (161).

Central to the folkist theatre are elements of storytelling and audience involvement in the enactment of the plays' action and since Africa has a long and living tradition of storytelling, to understand the culture of any part of Africa, one must read and listen to the folktale as most of the ethical teachings usually come from the folktales and the tales are usually made to have happy endings and triumph over difficulties with or without supernatural help. The folktale narratives are simple to understand and this makes it appealing to a wider audience and because it is composed of elements very common to the African people they easily identify with and it reflects the different stages of development of a

particular society while revealing their fierce sense of justice, powers of patience and endurance.

The generic antiquity of the folktale is bound up with what Achebe describes as the compulsive urge of humanity to signify, renew and immortalize itself through stories. Analysis of Achebe's description shows that stories are created by humans for the entertainment and edification of human beings. Writing on the enchanting power of stories, Okri is of the view that stories enrich the world and can change lives. He adds that "even when it is tragic, storytelling is always beautiful, it tells us that all fate can be ours ... it reconnects us to the great sea of human destiny, human suffering and human transcendence" (47).

In the past, twilight was the story-time in Africa which usually served as a sort of evening entertainment where the children gather round the the storyteller to listen to his stories. Because some of the children are already tired after the day's activities, the storyteller puts a lot of life into his narration lest they fall asleep. Most of the time, the narration is accompanied by dramatic and musical performances. The listeners also participate in the performance by singing choruses, beating drums and playing other instruments to heighten the drama of the story. The children are expected to derive knowledge and wisdom from the stories and through the stories, become acquainted with the customs, traditions and religion of their people. In essence, while the stories are told on moonlit nights or on special occasions, the storyteller or narrator collaborates with the audience and may change from speech to song and back again according to the requirement of the story.

This is why parents through the tales give their children education because they are convinced that if a child must achieve greatness and a happy future, he/she must be taught to appreciate the ideas compatible with the achievements of greatness and happiness in the form of wisdom, obedience, heroism and religion. Thus the tales are geared towards teaching the child what to do and what to avoid, what to appreciate and what to disdain; as forming the mores, ethos and pathos of their people. The tales are also intended for their entertainment and for proper mental and

psychological development. Hence folktales were among the chief means of molding the character of the children as traditional education in Africa is a cultural action directed at creating attitude and habits necessary for participation and intervention in one's historical process (Okonkwo 143). Here according to Taiwo, the folktales unlike the myths and legends are not concerned with only history and explanation of natural phenomena, but deal with situations with which the listeners are familiar (14).

Modern African Writers and Tradition

Believing that growth from within a tradition is vital to the flourishing of any literature, most African writers whether Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Ijaw, etc. bring to their work cultural histories. These different tribal traditions express themselves in modern African cum Nigerian drama and give it diversity and strength. Here, the modern writer turns to indigenous sources of inspiration and exploit their own cultural heritage by making use of their folktales and other forms of African oral art in their literary work (Lindfors 31).

To emphasise this, Emenyonu notes that the modern writers use oral traditions in their writing to show a transition of culture and its effects. He goes further to note that its function includes preservation of culture, teaching and satirizing of the society (78). Ekwensi also shares the same view that African literature reflects the African community and historical experiences of Africans. He said "African writing is based on the turning heritage of the Africans ... it reflects African history as background to today and tomorrow cries (94). While to Finnegan, oral tradition is the foundation store and root of modern literature (89).

In order words, the modern African writer haven been exposed to his oral tradition as well as western tradition, is influenced in his creativity by his oral tradition even when he writes in western language and he draws his experiences from the environment which he is conversant and at home with. In Palmers own view: "Some of the earliest writers derived their inspiration from traditional lores, customs and oral traditions in a bid to

demonstrate to the readers, Africans and non-Africans alike, that Africa has a culture she could be proud of" (14). Here, the African writers are committed to the act of telling a story because the oral tradition of storytelling is still very much alive in African society.

Ogunba notes that the modern writer through the oral art makes us see our weakness and graces in a better light (49). Jones affirms that African writers derive their original inspiration from their cultural base "the rich oral tradition which is part of the ethnic cultures of Africa that provides both thematic and stylistic inspiration for writers". He adds that "the best writers exploit the resources of their base for ideas, themes and other linguistic influences" (5). In their paper, Kabir Usman and Umar Mohammed observe that despite the transformation of aspects of folklore and oral tradition into written forms, the people still manage to keep alive and sustain their society's oral folkloric traditions which educate, reflect and promote culture as well as provide amusement through imaginative and creative fantasy (qtd in Darah 46-47).

An outstanding characteristic of modern African writing is the return to the past where the writers recreate the simplicity and romantic attraction of the traditional way of life of the African which was disrupted by his contact with the western world. It becomes pertinent therefore to recommend at this point that the old and new modern African writers should continue to portray the good qualities of African culture and tradition in their modern literary works. This is because the literature of a people represents one of the aspects of their civilization. It gives literary expression to their culture out of which it grows.

Ukala as an Oral Tradition Dramatist

There is no doubt that modern Nigerian dramaturgy is indebted to oral tradition. The Nigerian playwrights have had to explore and appropriate the rich and variegated dramatic elements and motifs that are residual in the mine of the folktale (Awhefeada106). Working within the realm of the folktale, the Nigerian dramatist often weaves contemporary socio-historic realities into it to make

his play relevant in the literary scheme. Folktale thus provides a veil for the thematic concerns of the plays.

Sam Ukala for instance uses a lot of materials from oral tradition in his plays. It serves as a material for his writings because folktale is an authentic heritage. Ukala recognizes the need to return to this traditional way of life by using the structure of Ika folktales in his plays. He realizes the educational role of folktales in the process of initiating the young people into the culture of their community. Ukala, more than any other Nigerian playwright has been consistent in appropriating and experimenting with different features of folktales. His source of folkloric material has helped to illuminate not just his provenience but the rich cultural heritage of his people, hence his formulation of a Folkism theory. It is against this background that the paper examines Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland* which derives a great deal of its substance from the folktale.

Examining the playwright's usage of African folklore using the Ika-Igbo social and cultural milieu as backdrop for his *Akpakaland*, reveals that the play is held together by beliefs, customs and traditions which control the behavioural pattern of the people, in consonance with the view that society takes precedence over the individual. One of the major characteristics of Ukala's dramatic achievement has been his conscious drive to translate traditional materials to modern ones, to create a modern indigenous theatre out of the synthesis of the western and the African worlds (Eke & Obika 16). The result of this his effort is the body of plays that clearly represent the dual heritage of African literature. It underscores Ukala's masterly grafting of the folkloric appurtenance of his Ika on the complex contemporary socio-economic and political concerns of the wider Nigerian provenance (Awhefeada 105).

Aspects of Folktale in *Akpakaland*

In order to achieve a cohesive and free flowing storyline, Ukala puts to effective use the narrator storyteller technique with the storyteller assuming the role of an anchor man or link man who

ties the loose episodic incidents and events together. He fuses the traditional storytelling technique with the Western dramatic form in the construction of the play. This is an attempt to achieve greater directions, greater clarity and greater popularity. This technique of storytelling and narration are some of the effective methodologies of his folkism theory. In *Akpakaland*, the narrator performs the role of the storyteller. He starts off by creating conducive atmosphere for his story by arresting the attention of the audience through a song. This is a declaration of the narrator's intention to tell his story and it receives a corresponding response from the audience who join in singing signifying their acceptance of the storyteller and their willingness to participate in the performance. This collective agreement serves as a springboard for the raconteur to proceed with the introductory formula. The Narrator says:

Narrator: (Hails) I give you white chalk!

Audience: If you concoct, may it be efficacious (4)

Here the narrator announces that he comes in peace and the audiences respond that they expect the narrator's story to be efficacious, that is, it should be morally and socially uplifting enough to inculcate the right ethical values in the citizenry. Against this backdrop, the narrator goes on to introduce the characters:

Narrator: There was, there was, if not in a folktale, they do not tell it. There was Akpaka, the President of Akpaka land (10).

This introduction indicates that the setting is Akpaka land. It further reveals the protagonist in the person of Akpaka, with his retinue of wives from the provinces of the rich and the poor. Through this, the narrator provides a basis for plot development and exploration of the domestic conflict between the wives. The narrator comes in to interject from time to time. Thus functioning as a time-link as he summarizes the activities of the various characters in the conflict. His narration and explanation propel the dramatic action by creating the suitable atmosphere for the climax

of the play – the public denudation. He further provides the recipe that enables the masses to dislodge the oppressors and have access to the wealth of the nation (34). Through the narrator, we hear the voice of Ukala urging the masses to reassess and redefine their statues; a positive self-assessment that will imbue them with the required confidence and dignity.

Also there is the opening and closing formula technique in the play. The law of opening is expected to arouse the audience as seen in the opening of *Akpakaland*. The opening of the play is in an atmosphere of singing and dancing with the narrator addressing and leading the audience in the opening song. In the opening glee which introduces the play, the narrator opens with the introductory formula of call and response. He says:

Narrator: Lu n'ilu	Tell a tale
Ilu Nwokoro	Tale about Nwokoro
Donuodo	Tug at the rope
Udokpiri-kpiri	Rope kpiri-kpiri (4)

This creates the necessary action and sets the mood and atmosphere for the story to be told. This enables the narrator to charge the atmosphere for agitation and participatory governance. Subsequent protests that help to usher in change in the politics of *Akpakaland* spring from the charged atmosphere established by the act of opening. As it is conventional with the storytelling tradition, the narrator-raconteur ends the story.

Narrator: from there I went, from there I returned–o
Audience: Welcome–o
Narrator: (with a bow) Eo! (52)

This comprises the narrator's valedictory statements on the tale using a closing formula and the response of the audience to the formula.

Ukala in the play also artistically exploits the interactive role between actors and audience. He woos his audience by creating members of the audience (MOA) as characters who sit in the audience rather than being on stage so as to actively participate in the dialogue. The introduction of the MOA provides the additional

effect of clarifying meaning, reinforcing and furthering the action of the play. Through the audience participation, the solution on how the poor can overpower the abusive rulers is given by the narrator. Here, MOA asks the narrator “How may the poor unite and seize power”. In his response, he replies “by cultivating self-esteem and refusing to be bribed with crumbs from the oppressors table, by being dedicated to the course of self-liberation and self-humanization and by looking among the poor for a true, selfless leader”. Another aspect on audience participation goes like this:

MOA: Foolish people! So you support Fulama

Narrator: (re-appearing) what did you expect? When there is a dispute between the influential rich and the unknown poor, who supports the poor?

MOA: (dismally) No one (57).

These excerpts clearly show the active involvement of the audience in the dialogue on the stage. This is a novel idea in modern African dramaturgy. Through the active participation of the MOA, the entire audience finds itself taking part in the dialogue. Ukala’s audience is thus not only involved in the participation of songs but in the total directing of the play as the action unfolds; thereby fortifying the African essence of communal involvement in social and cultural activities.

The play *Akpakaland* is not structured into the conventional acts and scenes. The idea behind this aesthetic style according to Ukala in an interview with the researcher is because “it is a folkist play or a folk script based on the aesthetics of African folktale composition and performance where there are no scenes, no acts. The play runs on and there is no place where there is a stop for people to change costume” (Ukala). To him, if taken from the traditional aesthetic of folktale performance, the play has no business with acts and scenes. Therefore, the dramatic recreation or adaptation of a story is faithful to the original, not slavishly. The plot is simple, language is familiar but imagistic and story is run-on like the folktale, not structured in acts and scenes so staging is simultaneous and the performance structure allows for robust audience participation (Ukala).

Akpakaland also employs the folktale structure of a gradual linear progression of events and incidents. It is woven around loose incidents and events in an episodic manner which arouses the audience to active participation. Through the relationship and interaction of characters like Enwe, Akpaka's wives and citizens we are made to know that the society is in dire need of regeneration. Ukala uses the clamour by Fulama for a public inspection of the King's wives as a pretext for the building up to the revolt of the masses at the end of the play. In the end, the triumph of the „forces of the poor over the rich“, becomes a fitting end to a night of sordid revelations and also end to bad rule, exploitation and oppression in *Akpakaland*.

Conclusion

Though anchored in the folktale motif, *Akpakaland* makes a strong statement on history and contemporary political experience. The indices of rebellion, political instability, intrigues, class conflict, corruption, succession crisis among other motifs in the play's foreground remains the undoing of not just Nigeria but many other African countries. What Ukala has done is to subject these contemporary ills to the easily recognizable and widely understood social medium of folktales. Beyond the entertainment inherent in this style is the strong moral dose in it as well as the therapy derived from the transmission from the present to the distant past which is the setting of folktales.

Ukala in creating the story emphasizes how jealousy and oppression can snowball into a national catastrophe that can lead to destruction of the individuals and groups which make up the society. Therefore, *Akpakaland* is a dramatic enactment of the realities of contemporary politics, leadership and nationhood using a folkloric mechanism. It is seen as a satire of misrule, corruption and injustice. It establishes opposition between good and evil, tending towards open-endedness, irresolution and chaos, and vacillates between comedy and tragedy with the intention to attack, warn and chastise the people so as to expose their vices and follies. Thus, Ukala satirically uses *Akpakaland* to expose the vices of the

ruling class and advocates a change in the society that is, a political reform; collective fight done by the poor masses against social discrimination, irregularities and economic deprivation.

Finally, Ukala has demonstrated his clout as a liberal intellectual interested in the real and potential impact of intellectual engagement on national development in his realization of an ideal society. He considers his scholarly status as a vital instrument of social change in his contribution to the reassessment of the Nigerian socio-economic and political arena as well as national development. Thus standing as a polemicist especially in Nigeria, he strongly advocates for a return to the folk arts as a talismanic model for the ailing Nigerian socio-political structure (Ukala, 2004). He is of the strong belief that recourse to the oral traditions is one effective panacea to Nigeria's multi-varied problems as a nation. He holds that the oral traditional art forms should be desperately deployed to put aright everything written literature with its imperialist background and negative aftermath has destroyed in Africa.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation". *African Writers on African Writing*. Ed. G.O. Killam. London: Heinemann. 1973: 7-13. Print.
- _____. "What has Literature got to do with it?" *Radical Essays on Nigerian Literature*. Ed. G.G. Darah. Lagos: Malthouse. 2008: 1-11. Print.
- Awhefeada, Sunny. Sam Ukala: Folklore, Dramaturgy and the Redemptive Praxis" *Nigerian Journal of Oral Literature*. 1. (Aug 2013):105-127. Print.
- Darah, Godini G. "A Survey of Studies on African Folklore and Oral Literature". *Nigerian Journal of oral Literature*. 1. (Aug 2013): 23-52. Print.
- _____. "The Folktale is Dead: Long live Storytelling". *Nigerian Journal of Oral Literature*. 2. (Aug 2014): 37-50. Print.
- Eke, Obiora & Obike, AloyNnamdi. "The Folklore in Zulu Sofola's *Wedluck of the gods*". *Akwa Ibom State University Journal of Arts*. 1 (Jan-Dec 2014): 55-68. Print.
- Ekwensi, Cyprian. African literature. *Nigerian Magazine*, 83 (1965). Print.

- Emenyonu, Ernest. *The Rise of the Igbo Novel*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press. 1978. Print.
- _____. *New Directions in African Literature: Building on the Legacies of the 20th C*. Ibadan: Heinemann Edu. Books Plc. 2006. Print.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press. 1979. Print.
- Jones, E. D. "Myth & Modernity: African Writers and their Roots". *Editorial African Literature Today*. London: Heinemann. 1979. Print.
- Krama, Ilama Clive. *African Traditional Theatre and Drama: Themes and Perspectives*. Choba: Akpokem International. 2013. Print.
- Krama, Ilama Clive & Ohia, Chizenum George. "Social History and Social Action in Selected Nigerian Plays". *The Crab Journal of Theatre and Media Arts*. 7. (June 2012): 161-169. Print.
- Lindfors, Bernth. *Folklore in Nigerian Literature*. New York: African Publishing Company (1973). Print.
- _____.Ed. *Forms of Folklore in Africa*. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1977. Print.
- Ogunba, Oyin. (1972). "Studying Traditional African Literature". *Black Orphans*. 2.7. (1971/1972): 42-50. Print.
- Ogunba, O. (1978). "Traditional African Festival Drama". *Theatre in Africa*. Ed. Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press. (1978): 3-26. Print.
- Okonkwo, Chuka Eze. "Education and the African Novel: A Synthesis of a Culture in Crisis". Faculty Seminar Paper, University of Port Harcourt. May 1983.
- Okoroiwu, Sunny O. "The Role of Folktales in Modern African Literature in relation to Chinua Achebe's Arrow of God and Things Fall Apart. (Unpublished B.A Thesis) 1978.
- Okri, Ben. *A Way of Being Free*. London: Phoenix. (1997): 42-47. Print.
- Palmer, Eustace. *An Introduction to the African Novel*. London: Heinemann. 1970. Print.
- Taiwo, Oladele. *Culture and the Nigerian Novel*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd. 1976. Print
- Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and other plays*. Agbor: Oris Press. (2004): 7-61. Print.
- _____. Personal Interview. 21 June 2017.

Nine



Charting a New Direction in Nigerian Playwriting Through Folkism: A Study of Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland* and *Placenta of Death*

Godwin Onuche and Peter Ogohi Salifu

Introduction

The literary theatre, more often than not, is usually criticized based on its thematic relevance to the society. Among other factors, this may be as a result of the fact that a play in its meta-textual intricacy employs a composite of oral tradition, history, culture and the entire activities of a people (folk) in general. In this regard, the Nigerian literary theatre could be said to have been of relatively low relevance over the years. In the opinion of Ugwu Ifeanyi and Orjinta Ikechukwu:

The period of 1940-2011 portrayed Nigeria's literary theatre as being largely irrelevant to its audience, due to the compositional lapses of many English play texts and their stage productions. These loopholes mainly comprise inappropriate and alienating aesthetics of subject matter and language of the texts (79).

The above position affirms that the stated level of irrelevance of the Nigerian literary theatre is as a result of the composition of language and thematic thrusts which were greatly devoid of indigenous materials. To create the sort of relevance in question, there is every need to fashion plays embellished with indigenous contents and indigenous theatrical materials.

Recounting the efforts of playwrights to achieve a relevant literary theatre in the past, Ugwu and Orjinta further state that:

Dating from the postcolonial era in 1960s, writers sort to correct these abnormalities through decolonizing dramaturgical options and the employment of aesthetic elements that could relate to the African psychological, socio-cultural, political and historical realities (79).

We may be right to say that the above assertion is one of those ideas that gave impetus to Sam Ukala in his coinage of the concept of “Folkism”. This concept is the focus of this chapter. In the following sections, we shall first consider the concept in itself in order to adequately understand it within the context of this discussion. Next, we shall do a brief synopsis of the texts under consideration. And lastly, we shall explore the folk elements in the two texts. This will lead into the conclusion and the recommendations for this study.

Conceptual Clarification

The term folkism can be primarily approached by a separation of the root word „folk“ and the suffix „ism“. Folk here is used to describe a people, their culture, traditions or history. On the other hand, the suffix „ism“ adds to a word to make it a belief, movement or theory. On this note, Folkism may relate to the study of a people and their culture. Within the context of this study, folkism is studied as coined by Sam Ukala in his quest to envisage a Nigerian Literary Theatre based on the people’s indigenous materials particularly in play writing and play performance.

Ukala in his disposition possibly coined the concept of Folkism as a response to the claim that the plays written by some Nigerian playwrights are irrelevant to some point. For instance, Ezechi Onyerionwu opines that the motivation for the theory of folkism lies in Ukala’s identification of fundamental lapses in the dramaturgy of Nigeria’s most prominent playwrights Such as Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan and JP Clark (100). Onyerionwu lambasts Soyinka for dabbling in unnecessary esoterism and abstraction in the making of his plays. Buttressing Ukala’s coinage of folkism, Uwadinma declares that,

The concept is coined as a response partly to the prevalent criticism of Nigeria literary plays as irrelevant and unpopular and partly to his findings that the unpopularity and relative irrelevance of Nigeria literary plays derive from their unfamiliar dramaturgy which are alien to the folk and a majority of the supposed educated audience (3).

Invariably, the theory of folkism in its intricacy seeks to employ language such that even when written in English, contains idioms and proverbs that the African can easily identify with. This is because a total abandonment of the English language is impossible. As Ukala puts it, "The Nigerian writer in English may be incapable of writing proficiently in his/her indigenous language" (280). Based on this, he presents a suitable English language that could be used to ensure accessibility. This English language he terms the "Indigenized English". According to Ukala, this English

is like the language of Africans. Folktale in performance, easy to comprehend, dramatic (that is easy to articulate because of its short and/or balanced sentence structure; pleasurable to hear because of its music, made by alliteration, assonance, repetition, rhythm and rhyme) and rich in idiophone, an extra-lexical sound which suggests meaning by creating a mental picture (231).

Ukala frowns at African playwrights who write plays devoid of folk materials, he maintains that many of the African scholars have written plays that

are not accessible to the populace because of their difficult language, their distortion of source material beyond recognition, complex sentence structure and mode of presentation that is foreign and strange. Because of these, the audience finds it difficult to comprehend and identify with the plays. (285)

Folkism therefore sets to bridge the language gap between Nigerian plays and the audience/readers. This aim is re-stated by Ola Rotimi in his assertion that "African literature today... should

most usefully focus on how the African writer handles the problem of language so as to make it more accessible to his people” (11).

It is noteworthy that several other African scholars supported and attempted to produce a theory like folkism to fit into the African dramaturgy. In this regard, Onyerionwu identifies the effort of Nwachukwu Agbada who in his two essays: “Theatre for Development. The case of Community Drama” (2007) and “Drama and Theatre for Rural Emancipation: A Modest Proposal” (1989) aligns to what has come to be the concept of folkism. In the essay “Theatre for Development ...” we can give a folkist interpretation to Agbada’s observation that,

any effort which could give rise to a popular theatre practice in Nigeria and which in turn could assist in transforming the people – particularly the rural folk in their social, mental and cultural essences ...[is] a theatre to which the entire people can respond, a theatre of relevance (101).

In the second essay, Agbada raises significant questions.

How far have... playwrights (our literary dramatists carried the people with them? How much of the inner lives of these people are celebrated in their works? To what extent are the values and sensibilities of the people reflected in these dramatic enactments? Does the language of these plays bear the very communication model suited to the broad masses of our people? How much of their sentiments is incorporated in the feel of these artistic renditions? (quoted in Onyerionwu 101).

Nwachukwu Agbada’s position in the two essays are tailored towards the precepts of what is now called folkism irrespective of the fact that Onyerionwu believes he (Agbada) was obviously “lacking in Ukala’s kind of theoretical effrontery” (101). The concept of folkism from the foregoing can thus be suggested to have satisfied the task faced by African writers in the 1980s which, according to Charles Nnolim, is the task of building “carefully and painstakingly a poetics, a theory of African literature” (80). In the opinion of Nnolim, the 1980s needed “a scholar ... with the synthesizing mind of an Aristotle to build ... a poetics of African literature whose uniqueness is no longer a matter for debate, whose

vital juices are fed with uniquely African orature...” (30). The concept of folkism is quite significant in this regard.

Folkism as a concept finds expression in the inclusion of various forms such as folktales, folklores, folksongs, idioms, proverbs, folk dance, myths, legends, rituals, masquerades and masquerading in the process of play creation. Fundamentally, these elements are organized to take the performance pattern of the typical African folktale.

Synopsis of *Akpakaland*

Akpakaland presents the relationship between Akpaka, the President of Akpakaland and his five wives (Fulama, Yeiye, Seotu, Unata and Iyebi). Out of these five, the first three (Fulama, Yeiye and Seotu) were chosen from the rich class while Unata and Iyebi were chosen from the poor class. The differences in their social status notwithstanding, Fulama becomes envious of Unata. In her bid to disgrace Unata, label her evil and consequently gain Akpaka’s attention, she (Fulama) mysteriously conjures a cow tail upon Unata. Aware of the implications inherent in a human possessing a cow tail, Fulama reports to Akpaka that his favourite wife has grown a tail. With this information, Akpaka swiftly forgets the urgent state matters and succumbs to Fulama’s pressure. To ascertain the truism of what the other wives see as an accusation, Akpaka decrees that his wives shall parade naked so as to ascertain which of them has a tail. In the bid to avoid this public disgrace, Unata (Akpaka’s wife from the province of the poor), who is the victim though be-witched by Fulama, seeks solution from Enwe (a medicine man). With the support of Unata’s father, Idemudia, Enwe is convinced into mysteriously returning the tail to the sender (Fulama). He achieves this using an enchanted roasted plantain set as bait for the one who sent the tail. Fulama falls prey to the strategy as on one of her ridiculous visits she smells the plantain and begs for it. On Unata’s permission she eats it. By this symbolic act, the tail is transferred to Fulama (the sender). Eventually the public parade of Akpaka’s wives reveals Fulama herself as the one who has grown a tail.

Because of Fulama's societal status and wealth, Akpaka attempts to manipulate the people and give Fulama a light punishment instead of public execution as earlier announced. This injustice agreed on by Akpaka, his ministers and the executioner as a result of Fulama's social class aggravates the poor masses that resort to violence. Incidentally the whole pandemonium leads to the death of Fulama who is hit by a stray bullet, the poor masses also seize the opportunity to seize power from Akpaka and all his ministers of injustice.

Synopsis of the Placenta of Death

Placenta of Death tells the story of Owodo III, Oba of Owodoland, Emeni and his daughter, Ibo, who is Owodo's wife. Emeni is a wealthy slave who by virtue of his daughter's marriage to the Oba is placed and rated high within the royal household. The Oba, Emeni and Ibo are placed to represent the rich and influential class. On the other hand, the oppressed and the poor class are represented by the slaves and the free born. Among them is Omon; the Oba's second wife and her family.

Ibo takes advantage of her high social status and plans with her father to turn the hands of time to her favour by devising various ways of turning Owodo and the free born children of the land into slaves. This she does in defiance to the words of the Oba, Iyasere and Ihama who constantly try to dissuade her (Ibo) from carrying out her evil plans. To achieve her aim of disuniting Owodo and his second wife, Ibo exchanges the Oba's gifts meant for Omon on the occasion of her child delivery. In place of the Oba's well thought out and packaged gifts, Ibo places vulture meat in the food packaged by the Oba for Omon. Out of disappointment at the sight of the gift, Omon dries and preserves her placenta with the intention to revenge what she perceives as the Oba's gift of dishonour. At an opportune time, Omon uses the dry placenta to prepare soup for the Oba to eat. The Oba, ignorant of the bad meat (a placenta) in his soup, consumes it and shares it with some slaves who were at work on his farm. Consequently, the Oba and the slaves who partook of the placenta took to incessant vomiting which even leads to the death of one of the slaves. Discovering the cause of the

ordeal, the Oba summons his subjects to enable him detect the person who must have dropped the meat in his soup. Omon owns up and while the Oba intends to attack her, Iyasere opposes him, the Oba insists on punishing Omon but it results in a fight between Omon's supporters and the Oba's allies. In the fight that ensues, the Oba and his allies are killed, this avails the poor masses, the oppressed slaves, to come together and declare their oneness.

From Folk Elements to the Play: An Analysis of *Akpakaland* and *Placenta of Death*

The quest to write plays and by extension perform them with outlooks, content and thematic thrust that could be regarded as peculiarly African may have informed the formulation of the theory of folkism. The implication of this postulation in Nigeria's literary world may be considered as a new dimension towards playwriting. Nigerian plays in terms of content and theme, more often than not, find true expression and identification within the context of Nigerian society. To achieve the desired appeal and ensure relevance of the thematic exploration by such plays, the indigenous school of thought specifically, the Laws of Aesthetic Response were identified as a guide towards playwriting with indigenous materials and appeal. According to Ukala:

The law of opening; the law of joint performance, the law of creativity, free enactment and responsibility, the law of judgement, the law of protest against suspense, the law of expression of the emotions, the law of ego, projection and the law of closing (33).

Beyond the laws of aesthetic response, here is an insight into the evolvement of *Akpakaland* and *Placenta of Death* from the "history, culture and concerns of a folk (people in general)" it is an intended underscore of these plays as rooted within the provisions of folkism.

Akpakaland

Akpakaland, in its conformity with the theory of folkism, is compositionally laced with several indigenous elements. On a

primary note, its storyline derives from popular folktale of the Ika folk of Delta State Nigeria, the story is also a reflection of what can be termed the myth of the human tail. These correspond with the derivation of the story from the concerns of the people (folk) which forms part of the basic definition of the theory of folkism.

Beyond this however, major indigenous elements employed in *Akpakaland* include; Storytelling (folktale), folk songs, folk dance, ritual, praise chant, the indigenized English language and proverbs.

Storytelling, which is the first element above, forms an integral part of the traditional African society where the story teller takes charge of narration, re-enactment and selection of characters for role play. According to Austine Anigala, “the story teller in traditional African performance is a raconteur or narrator, who tells stories artistically created by himself or those drawn from the reservoir of folktales” (129).

In *Akpakaland*, the narrator plays this role of the storyteller. As obtainable in the traditional African performance of the folktale, he (narrator) begins the play by catching the attention of his audience through songs and dances. With every assurance of audience arousal and interest, he begins the story:

NAR: (*Hails*) I give you white chalk!

AUD: If you concoct, may it be efficacious!

NAR: I give you white chalk!

AUD: If you concoct, may it be efficacious!

NAR: There was, there was, if not in a folktale, they do not tell it. There was Akpaka, then the president of Akpakaland... (13).

With the above and the lines that ensue, the Narrator establishes the locale of his story, his characters and the theme of his story. He basically establishes the plot of the story as action unfolds.

The storyteller after this introduction plays his role of narration at strategic points either to clarify the storyline, introduce the next action or a new character. For example, at the first appearance of Enwe, the Narrator sheds light on his cunning character as he speaks:

NAR: (*Re-emerging.*) Enwe didn't say plainly who cast a tail on Unata, He was probably mindful of professional ethics. Like their orthodox counterparts, traditional doctors keep secret their diagnoses. But the water that one would drink, does it flow past one?

To aid narration, he (the narrator) employs the technique of imitation and role play which is closely associated with storytelling in the traditional African society. He calls thus:

NAR: Now, I want three ladies who, who know this folktale and can impersonate or imitate very well to come out here, please. (*A number of ladies come out and parade themselves. Narrator selects three of them*) (42).

In the end, he concludes his tale using the familiar call and response with which such stories are concluded in a folktale. He ends it this way:

NAR: From where I went from there I returned o!

AUD: Welcome o!

NAR: (*With a bow.*) Ee! (56).

On another note, the play *Akpakaland* also employs folksongs. The song used at the beginning of the play is effective for audience arousal since it is a folk song known to all.

... action begins in the audience with the NARRATOR leading the audience in the opening song for an Ika folktale performance session:

Lun'ilu tell a tale
Ilu Nwokoro tale about Nwokoro
Don'udo tug at the rope
Udo kpiri-kpiri rope kpiri-kpiri (13).

Also, the song sang by the wives of Akpaka before their strip tease is suggestive of a folk song as it is sung by all his six wives and in the same tone. Iyebi for example sings hers:

IYEBI: Akpakaland

Look at my front
Look at my back
Look!
The lizard has a tail
Man does not have
Look! (48).

After Unata, the other wives (Seotu, Yeiyé and Fulama) follow suit. Closely related to the folksong is the next indigenous element; the folk dance which throughout the play goes simultaneously with the folksongs.

Another indigenous element employed in *Akpakaland* is the ritual element of the typical traditional Nigerian society. Ritual refers to a system or collection of rites. This element finds expression in the traditional society which is pre-occupied with festivals and belief in deities. This element is portrayed in the play through the activities of Enwe who occupies the position often termed the „eye of the gods“ in indigenous Nigerian parlance. From his first appearance in the play, and all through, he is shown as being engaged in one ritual and divination or the other. He is introduced thus:

(... ENWE is seated in front of his instruments of divination. He is blowing into the air a ground preparation, which he pinches out of a bowl... Occasionally, he rattles a slim gourd to which cowries had been strung...). (19)

The play portrays the height of trust in the rituals performed. This is why in the face of trouble, Enwe pronounces that “no problem is tough for the gods. Tell the oracle what your problem is” (22). In fact, the entire storyline formed around a mythical human tail revolves around ritual activities, to make a human being grow a tail and the mysterious transfer of the tail to its sender is all in itself ritualistic. Throughout the play, the ritual activity is also communicative of a theme on its own, especially of the African spirituality; it also contributes to the overall thematic structure of the entire play.

Noticeably, praise chant is also another indigenous element in *Akpakaland*. This element is presented at two levels: between humans, and from humans to a higher or the supreme being. These two categories are portrayed in the play. On the first level, (between humans) Idemudia visits Enwe and his first words were chants of praise:

IDEMUDIA: (*Entering*) Enwe of the lineage of the agile.

ENWE: That's me.

IDE: Enwe that does not even trust the child strapped to her back.

ENWE: If he stretched its hand to pinch off a leaf, how would I know? (20)

On the second level (from humans to a higher being), Enwe renders a long chant of praise to the gods:

ENWE: O-minigbon!

You that see at night

As though it were noon.

A secret, black charcoal

Dropped in the dark

Winks at you like the firefly... (23)

Furthermore, the indigenized English language is another element introduced under the theory of Folkism. It entails the use of words in ways that are suggestive of their meanings. According to Ukala, the Indigenized English is similar to the African way of speaking, it is:

Easy to comprehend, dramatic (that is easy to articulate because of its short and/or balanced sentence structure; pleasurable to here ... and rich in idiophone, an extra lexical sound which suggests meaning by creating a mental picture. (231)

In *Akpakaland*, this element is exemplified by Fulama in one of her reproaches to Akpaka:

FULAMA: ... Execute her! Execute the long-tailed Iguana!
(*begins to hoot*). (15)

In another instance, Unata uses the indigenized English language:

UNATA: Yesterday morning, the lower end of my spine
itched. I scratched it and something jumped out *kpruu...*
(22)

UNATA: ... last night, Akpaka invited me to his bed. I told
him that my headache was so serious that I couldn't play
cha-cha... (32)

In whatever context this element appears in the play, it adds to the expected dramatic action to suggest its meaning.

Lastly, the proverb, another important indigenous element is greatly employed in *Akpakaland*. It consists of wise and witty short sayings that are great in morals. Some proverbs used in the play include:

FULAMA: ... when rubbish is too much in the soup, the blind
one notices it... (14)

UNATA: ...when one sees a weakling, does he not hunger for
a fight? (17)

ENWE: ...when a man abandons melon soup and begins to
eat okro daily, chances are that the okro will cloy in his
mouth and he might return to the melon soup he had
earlier abandoned. (28)

AKPAKA: ... the human ear catches strange news as the nose
of the bee catches the smell of palm wine. (44)

AKPAKA: ... when kola is served, do we roast or boil it?
(44)

AKPAKA: ... only a fool would prick the eye with an ear
prick... (45)

Placenta of Death

Placenta of Death like *Akpakaland* is composed of various elements such as storytelling, gong/drum language, folk songs, folk dance, ritual, the indigenized English language and proverbs.

In the same manner as *Akpakaland*, the storyteller in *Placenta of Death* is the narrator. This play (*Placenta of Death*) presents the storyteller in the capacity Anigala views him. According to Anigala, “The story teller is an artist who provides both entertainment and instruction. Usually he tells his stories at the end of the day’s work, before people retire for the night” (129). To this end, the Narrator in *Placenta of Death* sets the mood for his story through a call to which the audience responds:

NAR: (From audience) Tohio!

AUD: Ya ya, ya ya, kpo!

NAR: (Rising) Tohio

AUD: Ya ya, ya ya, kpo! (11).

His next speech makes it clear that, as Anigala observes, folktales are told at the end of the day to ease the stress of the day before the people go to bed (129). The Narrator speaks: “Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you warmly to tonight’s story session. I hope you had a fine day at work...” (11). As the enactment of his story goes on, he re-appears to further explain the story and carry the people along. The storyteller in the personage of the Narrator repeatedly performs this function, giving explanations and further insight into the story. At the end of his story, he concludes by re-emphasizing the theme of his tale in a short sentence, just like in a folktale as he speaks “yes, Osaze, the slave and the poor are one” (74).

Another indigenous element in the play is the use of gong beating and drumming as a means of communicating with the people who are already acquainted with the meanings that go with every sound produced. The gong beating as used in this context reflects its use within the traditional society in communicating the various rites of passage such as the news of birth or death. As used in the play, the sound produced signifies the birth of a baby. The stage direction describes it thus: “(sound of “ku-u-ku-kuu”, the traditional Dein proclamation of the birth of a child, fills the air from all directions) ...” (24). As expected, the sound is understood by members of the community who, according to the play, are

called the people of Deinland. Hearing the sound, the women ask themselves:

2ND WOMAN: ... I heard the proclamation. Who's given birth?

1ST WOMAN: I heard it at the same time as you. It sounded really robust. I wish I could go back to find out... (25)

After more questioning, the 2ND WOMAN still not sure who has given birth supposes that "... a messiah may have been born unto the Dein tribe" (26). In a similar vein, the drum is also used to call the people together. The stage direction instructs: "(... *the ema a long huge drum beaten to summon the citizens in an emergency sounds from the dark... Citizens of Owodoland begin to arrive in groups from all directions ...*)" (64). The sound of this drum communicates an invitation for everyone to gather. As characteristic of all folk media elements, the meaning is known to all, this is why King Owodo expresses surprise at the absence of Odogbo from the gathering. Discovering Odogbo's absence, Owodo asks: "... Is there anyone so deaf he could not hear the ema?" (65).

Also, folksong is another indigenous element employed. The Narrator, knowing the efficacy of a well-known folksong in setting the mood for his story, insists: "we must begin our story with a song. So raise a song, in spite of the times. But raise a song of the times..." (11). To ensure a popular folksong is used, the Narrator gives room to Members of the Audience who raise the song themselves. In the same manner, another folksong (A birth song) is introduced later on following the birth of a baby. The instruction goes thus: "(*sound of "Siwo siwo! Siwo!!" is heard from Osaze's quarters. A birth song rises, then snaps as IBO zooms into the courtyard, carrying her son, all richly wrapped up*)" (34). Apart from folksongs, folkdances also feature in the play as seen in the farmers' foot stamping dance (58), and in the "Idegbe-ani waist and bust dance" of the maidens (31).

The ritual elements of the traditional society are also reflected. The oracle is held in high esteem. As such, anyone who acts without consulting the Oracle is unserious. For this reason,

Ihama feels Owodo approached important issues with triviality, placing less importance on the oracle. Also, rituals are seen as the best form of defense in times of trouble and at all times. Speaking about Omon, the Narrator reveals that “her physician had boiled and roasted her in charms” (32).

As used in Akpakaland, the indigenized English language is also employed in *Placenta of Death*. The background for this usage is established in an introductory note at the beginning of the play that: “words and sounds not explained in the glossary should be made clear by their contexts” (10). This defines the essence of the indigenized English language. Examples of its usage include:

EMENI: You know the boy is going to be strong *kpo-kpo-kpo* like my father... (29)

Imitating Ibo, the Narrator also speaks the indigenized English:

NAR: It’s a son I’ve born him o, a son that is... (*Gesticulates size and strength*)... *Jakpoto!* His heir for that matter... those who have been flapping their bottoms *kpem-kpem* because they’re Oba’s wives... (32)

Lastly, proverbs form a large part of dialogue in the play. Among others, few proverbs used are:

NAR: Should the giant be cut in two or the dwarf stretched out of his joints? (12)

OWODO: ... if a child smacks a mound of excreta, we do not cut off its hand; we wash it. (12)

NAR: Who is the mother of goat that goat should want to be the mother of a man?... (14)

IBO: He who sits first doesn’t sit badly. (15)

Essentially the two plays (*Akpakaland* and *Placenta of Death*) by virtue of their storyline, characterization, the use of indigenous elements and thematic preoccupation epitomize the form of authentic Nigerian texts. The infusion of these indigenous elements (Storytelling, folk songs, folk dance, ritual, praise chant, the indigenized English language and proverbs), therefore, presents the

plays as meeting the standard of the proposed nature of an authentic folk script.

Conclusion

The model of playwriting envisaged by the theory of folkism has been in this chapter termed a new direction for playwriting in Nigeria. The paper laid its background on the inadequacy of folk material and themes explored by Nigerian playwrights which is as a result of the absence of some indigenous materials. The study subsequently submits that Nigerian plays will receive wide reception if they are compositionally laced with indigenous materials, and written or placed within the history and concerns of the people (folk); these essentially are the basic variables upon which the theory of folkism is defined.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, it is recommended that:

- i. Playwrights should consider composing plays based on the history and concerns of the ordinary people especially as regards employing indigenous materials that the people can easily identify with. By this, the level of relevance created through Nigerian plays by few renowned Nigerian playwrights will be developed and increased.
- ii. Theatre Arts Departments in Nigerian tertiary institutions should reinforce studies in playwriting, paying keen attention to possible indigenous sources of creating plays such as folktales, folksongs, history and all the nuances of Nigerian societies rather than presenting inspirational themes/ideas in plays with a Eurocentric modality. This can be done by introducing a course in various aspects of African oral literature into the curriculum of Theatre Arts Departments. With this, budding Nigerian playwrights will be guided on how to articulate inspired folk ideas with a view to ensuring wider reception of their works as well as enhancing their thematic relevance.

- iii. Based on II above, there is need for Nigerian tertiary institutions to review the curriculum of studies in African literature and Playwriting to include the theory of Folkism so as to ensure that the rudiments of drawing themes from indigenous materials as well as the manner of their composition are adequately entrenched in the curriculum.

Works Cited

- Anigala, Austine E. "A Sociological Perspective of Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland*". Austine Ovigie Asagba. (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2008: (142-148). Print.
- Enekwe, Onuora Ossie: "Theatre in Nigeria: The Modern vs The Traditional" *Yale Theatre* 8.1 (1976). (62-67). Print.
- Enita, Godfrey. "Ukala, Folkism and the „Laws of Aesthetic Response". Austine Ovigie Asagba. (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2008. (48-57). Print.
- Ezechi, Onyerionwu. "Samuel Chinedum Ukala: Dramatist as Scholar". Austine Ovigie Asagba. (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2008. (93-110). Print.
- Nnolim, Charles E. "The Critic of African Literature: The Challenge of the 80s" *Literature and Society*". Emeyonu Ogunta. (ed.) *Selected Essays in African Literature*. Zim Pam, 1986. Print.
- Orie, Chibueze Prince. "Destiny and the Man: Sam Ukala's Folkist Mythological Ritualism in *The Slave Wife*". Austine Ovigie Asagba. (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2008. (112-121). Print.
- Rotimi, Ola. *Hopes of the Living Dead*. Ibadan: Spectrum, 1988. Print.
- Ugwu, Ifeanyi and Orjinta, Ikechukwu A. "Folkism and the Search for a Relevant Nigerian Literary Theatre: Sam Ukala's the *Placenta of Death* and *Akpakaland* as Paradigms": *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* vol 3. No. 13, (2013). 79-85. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and other Plays*. Agbor: Oris Press, 2004. Print.
- _____. *The Placenta of Death*. In *Two Plays: The Placenta of Death, The Last Heroes*. Ibadan: Kraft, 2007.
- _____. "Folkism": Towards a National Aesthetic Principle in Nigerian Dramaturgy". *New Theatre Quarterly*. Vol. xii, No. 47 (August 1996). 279-287. Print.

_____ “Masquerade, Folktale and Literary Theatre of English Expression in Africa”. *Eagle in Flight: The writings of Sam Ukala*. (159-178). Print.

_____ “Politics of Aesthetics”. Martin Banham, James Gibbs, Femi Osofisan. (eds.) *African Theatre, Playwrights and Politics*. Oxford: James Currey, 2001. (29-41). Print.

Uwadinma-Idemudia, Eunice I. “From Folkism to Performance: A New Scenic Strategy for Audience Integration”.
www.ajol.info/index.php/ejotmas/article/download/120647/110097. Retrieved 09/10/2016.

Ten



Sisters at Arms: Female Misogyny and Competition in Sam Ukala's Selected Plays

Enajite Eseoghene Ojaruega

Introduction

Sam Ukala is a renowned African playwright. He has to his credit an impressive number of plays and has won a lot of reputable literary prizes, the most recent being the prestigious NLNG sponsored Nigeria Prize for Literature which he won in 2014. He is recognised as the proponent of „folkism“, the ingenious art of fusing traditional history and folklore into modern literary drama. Ukala's plays cover a wide range of subjects as they affect his society, with leadership and its attendant challenges a recurrent focus. Critics like John Ebimobewe Yeseibo (2013) have accused many Nigerian male playwrights of poorly representing women in their texts. Elsewhere, Mabel Evwierhoma believes "... the female characters created by male dramatists are few, weak and mostly display a lack of rights." (2010: 240).

But unlike many others of his generation who do not project their female characters through in-depth characterization, this playwright fits the description of a gynandrist or gynacritic. This is because as a dramatist, he is dedicated to giving voice to women's experiences especially in the course of their interactions with one another and others. He presents females in actions not only capable of causing disaffection and chaos amongst themselves, but also capable of threatening the peaceful co-existence and harmony in the home, community and larger society. But in all of this, he ensures that justice is duly served. By dramatizing this aspect of women's lives, he draws attention to the need to redress some of the negative factors stemming from traditional patriarchal

constructs that seem to promote intra-personal conflicts among women. *The Slave Wife*, *The Placenta of Death*, *Akpakaland* and *Break a Boil* are the selected plays for detailed discussion here.

The Female in Society and Marriage

Most female characters are brought into prominence through their roles as wives in the plays under study, although this is often in connection to male protagonists and not necessarily as “seats of consciousness in themselves” (Josephine Donovan quoted in Evwierhoma 24). But contrary to the traditional impression that they are only meant to be seen and not heard in this role, our playwright relocates this set of women from the margins to the centre in his plays. As a folkist, he places them within traditional settings, yet gives them voice and space in his drama. In fact, we can say that the activities of this particular set of female characters usually generate the conflicts that propel the plots of the plays. Ukala does not shy away from the realities in marital relations prevalent in most African societies as these constitute some of the subtexts in his plays. Polygamy or a plural marriage is the practice of having more than one spouse. Most polygamous societies in Africa are polygynous: that is to say they allow men to take additional wives but do not permit women to have more than one husband (Gaffney-Rhys 2). This arrangement is seen as part of patriarchal constructs maintained by men to serve their self-interests while it initiates and perpetuates female competition, oppression and divisiveness.

Olutoyin Jegede regards this type of marriage as “... a way of establishing man’s authority over women, constraining the movement of women and ensuring man’s easy movement in the harem” (34). Having identified this germane factor, feminist psychology is of the opinion that:

Competition among females is driven primarily not by biological imperatives but rather by social mechanisms. According to this argument, cutthroat female competition is due mainly to the fact that women, born and raised in male-dominated society, internalize the male perspective (the “male gaze”) and adopt it as their own. The male view of women as

primarily sexual objects becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. As women come to consider being prized by men their ultimate source of strength, worth, achievement and identity, they are compelled to battle other women for the prize.” (Quoted in Noam Shpancer’s “Feminine Foes: New Science Explores Female Competition” in *Psychology Today*).

Polygyny, which supports a man and several women living together as a group implies there is bound to be competition for limited resources (Joyce Benenson’s Female “Competition Phenomenon”) which is what the ratio of man to women translates into. Women are therefore compelled to defend their identities as “wives” within such settings in relation to their perceived importance (or not) in the man’s life. This breeds misogyny, which is a hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against women by women themselves. This condition is further worsened by the fact that within such plural marriages, women are more appreciated for their reproductive and service roles than as individuals. The consequences of this are both obvious and subtle as the women are now conditioned to jostle among themselves to fulfil these criteria in order to gain relevance and remain so.

We can use the following example to demonstrate this. Specific statuses and positions are automatically ascribed to the women by virtue of their seniority in such marriages. The first wife, irrespective of her social or birth status is regarded as the Head Wife. She starts out as the “favourite” wife who initially enjoys the undivided attention and affection of the man until another wife is added to the harem. While her position as the first and head wife is not in doubt, the same cannot be said for her place in the husband’s affections if the new wife takes over being the man’s new love interest. This can happen as a result of the former’s inability to give birth to (male) children or because the new spouse, who is usually younger, is more physically endowed than the first wife. The perceived displacement is what often triggers female aggression and crises – directly and indirectly – amongst plural wives with the woman prepared to do all it takes to outwit the other in maintaining or being restored to the favourite position. The ensuing competition often exposes the brutalities of

polygyny which include: insecurity, suspicions, jealousy, lack of exclusivity, ill-will, intrigues, malice, intimidation, oppression, self-promotion tactics, competitor denigration, and others. All of these are tools of manipulation used to cause disaffection for the perceived rival. Instead of nurturing or collaborative associations, the women are constantly at arms against one another.

The Plays in Context

The plot of *The Slave Wife* adumbrates the popular traditional folktale of a king and his quest for an heir and ends with the moral lesson that “good triumphs over evil on the long run.” The patrilineal nature of many African cultures gives room to women jostling to birth male children, especially within a royal or affluent family, as such women are accorded greater recognition/respect. King Ogiso of Idu kingdom is compelled to marry more wives in his bid to produce a male successor to the throne. By this, marriages are contracted not as a result of mutual love or romantic interests, but women are brought in as conduit pipes for ensuring the continuity of the king’s lineage. At some point in the play, the king is instructed by the gods through the diviner, Obu to marry a poor slave girl, Igbon, whom the gods have prophesied will give birth to the much sought after heir. Igbon is treated as a chattel as from captivity she was first assigned to serve the Oba’s wives and then without consultation chosen as the Oba’s wife when he was asked to marry a slave girl.

Alahin, the king’s first wife who like the other junior wives has only female children, feels threatened by the possibility of another woman, a lowly slave wife at that, giving birth to the crown prince and becoming the Queen mother. In her contempt and jealousy for Igbon, she is impervious to the fact that the slave girl already feels cowered and has no intention of entering into any competition with her or the other wives. Yet, Alahin is resolute that “Igbon will have Ogiso’s heir over my corpse” (35). The fear of being usurped from her coveted position of authority and other related privileges as the head wife sends her to connive with the other wives to make life difficult for Igbon. They succeed in getting rid of the male child the slave wife eventually gives birth to

and even go further by threatening to drown her too unless she promises to keep silent about what has happened. Igbon's co-wives, led by Alahin, are depicted as desperate and self-centred as they are insensitive and impervious to the fact that their cruel action is also an act of betrayal against their husband, the king and a subversion of communal progress. They are too far gone and caught up in the grips of their insecurities to care about the consequences of their nefarious deed if the truth is discovered. While Alahin antagonises Igbon at every opportunity she gets, Igbon, conscious of her poor status remains helpless and at her mercy. Their relationship is akin to that of the oppressor and the oppressed.

The playwright finally resolves the conflict between the women via the introduction of a deus-ex-machina. This happens when over a decade later, a messenger appears in the king's court and requests that the wives should each prepare a special dish on a particular day. He tells the king that the lost heir will then appear and would only eat from the dish prepared by his biological mother. On the appointed day, the crown prince eats only from Igbon's dish thereby signifying that she is his true mother. This is in spite of her poorly prepared dish and unkempt appearance. She is promoted to a position of prestige while Alahin's sins are exposed and appropriate judgement meted on her. Alahin's tragic end is as a result of her transgressions against her co-wife which also pitted her against the customs and tradition of the society which as queen, she should have been a custodian of.

Our dramatist opens the action of his play, *Akpakaland* during a period the country is passing through some economic crisis. Through the Narrator, we are informed that:

... the resources steadily dwindled until there was a feeling of insecurity. And as the president was trying to knock out of his bottle of gin how to solve the problem, Fulama said: "Your favourite wife has a tail". (14)

This accusatory statement by the President's first wife against her co-wife sets in motion the ensuing series of conflict amongst the

President's wives and will later snowball into a violent mass rebellion against the leadership and upper class.

Fulama, Akpaka's first wife is enraged by his sustained interest in Unata, one of the junior wives. She accuses the president of being partial and reveals her angst thus:

The moment the President married the Beautiful One, I, Fulama, the light of his morning ceased to shine. For weeks, the President slumbered in the arms of the Beautiful One while the joints of my waist grew cold and stiff. (14)

Again, as in *The Slave Wife*, the antagonism between the women is indirectly connected to the desire to be the favourite and the mother to the king's successor. Fulama is visibly upset by her husband's loss of affection for her, even in spite of Enwe's reassurance that ... "that should really be nothing to squabble about. When a man abandons melon soup and begins to eat *okro* daily, chances are that the *okro* will cloy in his mouth and he might return to the melon soup he had earlier abandoned (28). Fulama is not pacified by this reasoning and decides to take matters into her own hands by launching an attack against Unata, her perceived enemy. Fulama sees Unata's beauty as a threat even as she concludes it is one of the reasons for her husband's abandonment of her. While she grudgingly acknowledges her rival's beauty, she dismisses it as of being of no value in helping the president solve his many problems. Derisively, she tells Akpaka:

You thought that would give her the heir to your throne ... Excessive beauty may not beget an heir. It may not solve, overnight, the problems of Akpakaland. (14)

Competitor derogation or character defamation is one of the tactics women employ during inter-personal conflicts. It is meant to reduce the perceived value of another female rival. Under the guise of needing it to grow back the tail on her cow, Fulama obtains some medicine from Enwe, a traditional doctor, which she places in Unata's path, thus making her grow a tail. The idea behind her plan is to make Unata lose her appeal in order to discredit her in the eyes of the President and others. When she

accomplishes her plan, she initiates moves to disgrace Unata by publicly goading the President and provoking him into ordering all his wives to prepare to strip in public in order to find out who the culprit is. Unata on her part enlists the assistance of her father and the same traditional doctor to help her solve the dilemma she finds herself. She goes about it in a subtle manner without giving Fulama an inkling of her plans for revenge.

Fulama's plan boomerangs as she falls prey to her own evil action when out of greed she eats the piece of roasted plantain Enwe gives Unata to help reverse the infliction. The folktale motif of poetic justice is once again re-enacted in this play as Fulama immediately grows a tail after eating the plantain and Unata is relieved of the burden of being inflicted with one. Both women employ the indirect form of aggression in trying to outwit the other by engaging in circuitous actions in carrying out their plans against the other.

Omon in *The Placenta of Death* proves to be far from docile in the face of female oppression. King Owodo takes her as his second wife amidst pressure from some members of his cabinet because his first wife, Ibo, comes from a lineage of slaves. Even though Ibo's family is rich, it would be unacceptable for the king's heir to come from a family of slaves. Omon is a freeborn and is chosen to be the king's second wife and possibly the mother to the future king. Ibo feels threatened by this situation and plans to humiliate Omon and also cause a rift between Omon and the king.

She gets the opportunity when after Omon delivers her son, she cajoles the king into letting her be the one to send his gift items across to her in her parents' home. Ibo delivers a parcel of roasted vulture meat to Omon instead of the assorted food items the king intended to send. Omon and her family eat from this meat before discovering what it actually was. She believes in error that the king had done this deliberately to insult her and her family because they are poor and not influential. She feels worse when she recalls that during her visit to Ibo's family house after the latter gave birth, Ibo gave the impression that the king had constantly sent them enough food and drinks for days unending. Omon feels slighted by the fact that hers was not only a different story when she put to bed, but all

she got was a bird of prey not even fit for consumption. She quietly plots to get back at the king.

At this point, Ibo's evil intention is about to materialise as her aim is to cause disastrous problems between Omon and the king and pave a way for her son to become the crown prince later. With careful planning and cunning, Omon succeeds in adding her smoked placenta to the pot of food meant for the king and some slave labourers. Soon, the truth is revealed and Omon also owns up to her guilt but goes on to explain why she did what she did. Ibo is ultimately fingered as the cause of all the confusion and the public's verdict is for her to be put to death. The king tries to circumvent justice when he still insists that Omon should be put to death instead. In the ensuing uproar, most of the principal actors including Owodo are killed. Once again, Ukala has been able to depict how female misogyny and competition can have far reaching effects.

However, Ukala reverses the trend in *Break a Boil* by making the younger wife the aggressor. King Gidi covets Uki from a neighbouring king and makes her his second wife. She becomes the king's favourite and Ison, the first wife reveals that: "All I have suffered here since she came is neglect" (81). But Uki takes advantage of her privileged position and launches the offensive against perceived enemies who are suspicious of her incestuous relationship with King Gidi's elder half-brother, Uwa. Ison has witnessed their clandestine trysts, but is afraid to speak up because according to her, "I know this court and I know the power of Uki in it"... "Whatever I volunteer would be understood as the ranting of a jealous woman" (75).

In order to cover their tracks, Uki wants Uwa to get rid of Ison by killing her in cold blood, while Uwa opts for making Ison bear false witness against Eririnma before the king. She urges him on thus: "Cut, Uwa! That woman is very treacherous. She's always schemed to see me out of here" (90). When she is asked if the sight of blood does not scare her, she retorts "I see a keg of it monthly. Uwa, kill!" (91). Ukala portrays Uki as an ambitious woman who is out to secure power and a comfortable life for herself by all means. That she does not flinch at being an accomplice and a

witness to the cold blooded murder of a fellow woman does not augur well for female complementarity.

The playwright artistically crafts incidents of intra-gender conflict amongst women to resonate at the state level. Fulama upon her declaration that one of the President's wives has a tail refuses to accept Akpaka's attempt to dismiss her claim. To his question: "Aren't you bothered about the hunger in this land, the squalor and the disease? The empty treasury, the empty armoury?" she retorts "This (her accusation) is also an important state matter" (14). And in trying to solve the puzzle, indeed, all other pressing state issues are suspended and the general public made to witness the striptease to find out who among the President's wife has a tail. The whole affair degenerates into a public outcry and mass rebellion when the President tries to subvert justice in favour of the guilty one, Fulama.

In *The Placenta of Death*, King Owodo's family and kingdom is nearly torn apart by the women's domestic wrangling. Ibo's strong influence over the king and his inability to punish her for the atrocious action she committed against the junior wife, Omon ends the play on a note of tragedy. Similarly, in *Break a Boil*, the people are finally able to break existing tradition and overthrow oppressive systems through some issues triggered by intra-gender conflicts.

An aspect of intra-gender conflict among women in Ukala's plays explores the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. Cases of discrimination and oppression among women are obviously still rampant as depicted by female relationships in Ukala's plays. This is an indication that the feminist agitation for gender parity between men and women is a far cry from what obtains in intra-gender relationships among women. To this effect, the playwright portrays his female characters operating along parallel lines. On one side are those like Alahin, Fulama, Uki and Ibo who wield some measure of influence over other woman or their co-wives. They display and expect a sense of entitlement because of this advantage and engage in intrigues and subterfuges to maintain their strongholds.

On the other side of the divide are women like Igbon, Unata, Omon and Ison who with the exception of Ison are junior wives at the mercy of manipulative senior wives. Ukala also places his women into distinctive social classes which in turn determine their actions and attitudes towards others. Those like Fulama and Ibo from wealthy backgrounds flaunt this, even in their husband's houses and display authoritarian behaviours in intimidating the other wives. They do not disguise their contempt for the other group, their co-wives, who come from poor backgrounds. Alahin contemptuously refers to Igbon as "...this one of the swine family. Oba's wife. Osalobua laho!" (13). However, they are resentful over the fact that in spite of their affluent statuses, their poor rivals are effortlessly able to achieve what they themselves long for. They therefore develop a sense of hatred and ill-will for this latter set of women. This behaviour has been identified as the Queen Bee Syndrome which is a situation where a woman in a position of authority treats other female subordinates more critically. The conspiracy is to frustrate these other woman in a bid to get rid of them to maintain or regain their own coveted positions.

In examining Ukala's portrayal of women in some of his plays, we identified that female characters are placed in very visible positions and roles. Their relationships and interactions with one another in plural marriages are defined mostly by bickering, intrigues and subterfuges. But this is not to say that there are no cases of female bonding or sorority. There are examples of women lending physical and moral support to each other, even against another female adversary as in the case of Iyebi and Unata against Fulama in *Akapakaland*. However, these are few instances compared with incidents of intra-female misogyny and competition. Apart from the physical rumbles caused by females in conflict, there are also mental and emotional implications associated with female relationships in polygynuous marriages. From the manner which the plays come to an end, the dramatist wants his reader and the larger audience to realise that:

the power to national equilibrium also lies with women. This is because conflicts among them also translate to a troubled centre or uneasy centre. The men and general citizenry are

directly or tangentially affected by the women's activities. It means that conflicts among women, if not nipped in the bud or properly managed can degenerate into national crises and violence. Even the principal male actors get consumed by the crises generated by the women's inter-personal competitions. This means that those patriarchal constructs that pit women against themselves should be revisited and redressed for individual and communal progress and development.

Ukala is adept at creating female characters in parallels in order to show his readers that.

Works Cited

- Akorede, Yetunde. *Feminism and Literature: Womanism and the Intra-gender Conflict Theory*. Port-Novo: ESAF, 2011. Print.
- Benenson, Joyce. "The Development of Human Female Competition: Allies and Adversaries." <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3826208/>. Web.
- Cambell, Jane. "Female Competition: Causes, Constraints, Content, and Context". *The Journal of Sex Research*, 41, 2010. (16-26). Print.
- Evwierhoma, Mabel. "Theatre, Minority Rights and the Gender Question: Whither Nigerian Female Dramatists? Asagba, Austin Ovigie (ed.) *Theatre and Minority Rights: Perspectives on the Niger Delta*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2010. (238-252). Print.
- _____. *Female Empowerment and Female Creativity*. Ibadan: Caltop Publications Nig. Ltd., 2002. Print.
- Gaffney-Rhys, Ruth. "Polygamy and the Rights of Women". *Women in Society*. Volume 1, Spring. (2011, 1-15). Print.
- Igboayaka, Chiamaka Cynthia. "Interrogating Culture, Leadership and Legal Framework in Sam Ukala's *Odour of Justice*". *IKENGA: International Journal of Institute of African Studies, UNN* Vol. 17, No 1. (98-106). Print.
- Jegede, Olutoyin. "Gender Conflicts in African Literature". Charles Smith and Chin Ce (eds.) *Gender Issues in African Literature*. Lagos: Handel Books, 2014. (29-40). Print.
- Kolawole, Mary E. Modupe. *Womanism and African Consciousness*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press, 1997. Print.
- Shpancer's Naom. "Feminine Foes: New Science Explores Female Competition". *Psychology Today*.

<https://www.google.com.ng/amps/s/www.psychologytoday.com>.
Web.

Ukaegbu, Victor. "Mythology and Patriarchal Constraints: The Tale of Osofisan's Revolutionary Women". Adeyemi, O. (ed.). *Portraits for an Eagle: Essays in Honour of Femi Osofisan*. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, 2006. Print.

Ukala, Sam. *The Slave Wife*. Ibadan: University Press PLC, 2004. Reprint. Print.

_____. *Two Plays: The Placenta of Death and The Last Heroes*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2007. Reprint. Print.

_____. *Akpakaland and other Plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2011. Reprint. Print.

Yeseibo, John Ebimobowei. "Portrayal of Women in Male Authored Plays in Nigeria". *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion*. Vol. 1 (77-82). Print.

Eleven



Social Decadence and Moral Imperative in Sam Ukala's *In My Hermitage*

Sunny Awhefeada

Introduction

Nigerian literature was engendered in an embattled milieu which was occasioned by the crisis of history that the colonial encounter bequeathed. This necessitated the conclusion by Omafume Onoge that “modern African literature was born in a hostile milieu” (22). As has been amply demonstrated by successive literary works, the colonial experience with all its contentions and contradictions created a fertile ground from which flourishing literature sprouted. The tensions which arose from the experience bred a deep sense of collective apprehension which was hinged on history and politics. It is for this reason that history constitutes the major denominator in the creation and evaluation of this literature. Any familiar reader of Nigerian literature will notice the faithful almost fetishistic preoccupation of majority of the writers with history and by extension politics. It is instructive to recall Ken Saro-Wiwa’s assertion that “Literature in a critical situation such as Nigeria cannot be divorced from politics. Indeed, literature must serve society as steeping itself in politics, by intervention. . .” (81). But, it must also be said that some of the writers, albeit very few, have had cause to engage the Nigerian experience beyond the imperative and rhetoric of history. These few writers, perhaps, deliberately set out to create some distance between their art and the overarching shadow of politics. Yet, a deep probing of the works reveals unavoidable even though slim strain of reluctant preoccupation with politics. This is the case with Sam Ukala’s poetry.

Sam Ukala is known as an established dramatist. This is evident in the many plays he has written as well as the laurels he has won including the highly coveted NLNG sponsored Nigeria Prize for Literature which he won in 2014. Ukala's established reputation as a playwright has also informed the critical bias which is manifested in the large oeuvre of critical works around his plays. For example in the two festschrifts already published in his honour, *Eagle in Flight : The Writings of Sam Ukala* and *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*, one encounters a preponderance of essays explicating the themes and techniques of the over ten plays Ukala has written. In fact out of the twenty-one essays in both books, nineteen are devoted to the study of his plays. Yet, Ukala has also taken time to write in the two other genres of prose and poetry. The glaring critical vacuum in the criticism of Ukala's creative enterprise is the near critical silence on his poetry and prose. It is for this reason that the present chapter sets out as an engagement of Ukala's poetry contained in his collection entitled *In My Hermitage* (2000).

Ukala's *In My Hermitage*

If as Ayo Kehinde contends, literature is "the expression (whether verbal or written) of the author's/writer's total consciousness or perception and reaction to cultural as well as socio-political realities of the society that produces the work of art" (301), then *In My Hermitage* reads like a deliberate attempt to shy away from mainstream encounter with history and politics. In the poems, Ukala creates a persona who in this case is a hermit who strives to contend with contemporary and not so contemporary social issues as he also strains to dodge the imperative of politics which has remained compelling in Nigerian poetry. B. Olatunji Oloruntimehin insists, "It is a truism that it matters a great deal, for our political and social behaviour, what we consider our own society to be, since our political actions are guided and considered by views (implicit or explicit) of our social condition" (15). Hence, the poems in this collection can be read and appreciated on two levels ultimately bound in the narrative of any society. These levels are the collective and the individual. The persona's

aggregation of social experience at the collective level encodes a general mood of dissatisfaction arising from the unstable nature of humanity. This also elongates into a reluctant implication of historical forces which Ukala suggestively and indirectly encodes in some of the poems. At the individual level, the persona is preoccupied with individual dilemmas and contradictions which arise from moral turpitude and duplicity. Highlighted in this regard are personal nuances and choices which negatively impinge on the moral wellbeing of society. In poem after poem the persona meditates and mediates the existential circumstances within the social structure and how individual acts with all their ulterior designs contribute to a collective moral attrition. Heavily indicted in the poems is the crisis of moral attrition that is assailing humanity.

A necessary departure point for the present study is what Wilbur S. Scott calls “the moral content” (23) which enables critics to study a work of art based on “what it says” (23). Scott’s summation highlights the preoccupation of moralistic criticism to which Ukala’s poetry is highly susceptible. Similarly, T. S. Eliot feels “literary criticism should be complemented by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint” (43). To further emphasize the significance of the moral imperative in literary representation Eliot declares: “But moral judgments of literary works are made only according to the moral code accepted by each generation, whether it lives according to that code or not” (43). Tanure Ojaide agrees with Eliot, saying “culture and society mold individuals to behave in certain ways and to recognize specific norms and virtues as acceptable and others as not” (86). This is justified by the didactic end literature is meant to serve. Hence, Edmund Fuller thinks “you can’t have a vital literature if you ignore or shun evil” (63). A reading of Ukala’s *In My Hermitage* along the foregoing critical touchstones is an opportunity to open up the interstices of a society afflicted by social and moral aridity.

In order to come to terms with contemporary maladies Ukala deftly privileges the oral tradition from where he appropriates elements which attempt to construct moral ethos. This is the case with the collection’s opening poem entitled “tortoise and pig”, a

folkloric anecdote which satirizes duplicity. That Ukala decides to begin the collection with a poem with a strong moral message is by no means fortuitous. His recourse to didactic folklore in the opening poem is part of a deliberate strategy aimed at foregrounding the collection's moral posture. The short but witty poem reads:

tortoise went to dun his debt
 pig his debtor hid himself
 he went on business, good tortoise,
 he went on business," said his wife.
 „a pity, madam," tortoise said,
 „he left his hoofs behind the door!" (9).

As short, simple and humorous as the poem turns out, it assumes a serious didactic essence which negates dishonesty and other duplicitous acts. The witty poem is a folktale motif in which the trickster figure ends up undoing himself through an ill-thought out scheme. What the poem holds for contemporary society is a light preachment against deceit and a veiled satirical castigation of ignoble deeds. What the poet sets out to achieve is an affirmation of moral rectitude which abounds in folklore. Many of the poems that follow can be read along as verses that were engendered by didactic impulse.

In setting the tone for a lighthearted poetic engagement, Ukala subscribes to the folkloric base to appropriate its variegated appurtenances especially children's song. In doing this Ukala tends to keep away from political and historical concerns, albeit not too successfully, as will be seen much later in poems which codify in very vague manners, some aspects of Nigeria's experience. Ukala's intention here finds bearing with what Charles Nnolim refers to as "Group identity with emphasis on communal and collective experience; group solidarity showing group success or failure" (22). In the poems "to the rainbow" and "when I grow up", the poet engages in the expression of childlike wishes. Spoken through an engaging persona using the first personal singular pronoun "I", the poems carry the reader to the child's world of

play. The first of the two poems, which is memorable for its aptness and brevity, reads:

coloured snake that drinks the sea
mother says you vomit rain
drink quickly and then vomit
the stream I fetch is far away (10).

Here is the voice of a child-persona who solicits the understanding of the “coloured snake” so as to make his domestic chore of fetching water easy. However, a more profound reading will yield an existential meaning of the quest for reprieve by a humanity that is over burdened by the rigours of living. Implicit in this scheme is the quest to ease the burden of existence. Hence the child-persona speaks for humanity. Again, this poem is sustained by a folktale motif. As in an oral performance setting, such short, entertaining pieces are deployed by the performer to make the audience settle down for the real performance.

In the other poem Ukala also deploys playful lines:

when I grow up
I shall grow three breasts
the middle breast
shall be long as three pawpaws (11)

This reads like asking too much by the persona, however, it is for the nourishment and sustenance of her anticipated off-springs. The reader/listener laughs on at the hilariousness of the poem until the persona lures him/her into more serious subject matters like the one in the following lines:

my nation will not be so self-hating
that she will guzzle her own eggs
and break her own wings
when the gun goes for nations to fly (13).

The persona’s wish when he grows up into adulthood is that of a society that is rational and self-sustaining and not that which is destructive and retarding. The persona’s individual aspiration morphs with a collective social order which could make or mar.

The persona is thus concerned about the existential condition which the society foists on him/her. What the persona does is to assume a soothing posture of wishful thinking and construct in his/her imagination the ideal social condition bereft of maladies be they corruption, bad leadership, crime, hopelessness and other indices of social and moral denigration. In spite of Ukala's attempt to be apolitical, his verse demonstrates a major character of contemporary Nigerian poetry which according to Idris Amali "seeks to speak to and for the people; it is poetry that reaches the people, educates and prepares their minds, mobilising them for desirable socio-political and economic changes" (97). Emerging from this imaginative configuration is the persona's ideal society which he/she hopes to inherit when he/she becomes an adult. Ukala's aim at projecting a child-persona who envisages an ideal future as opposed to deploying an adult persona should at this point be interrogated.

On the face value, using a child persona in envisaging a future social order appears more realistic than using an adult in depicting the anticipation of change. The adult is part of the present social decadence deplored by the poet. Hence, an adult's sense of change, since the decadent order is what he/she is used to; will not be as refreshing and hopeful as that of the child. Secondly, Ukala is aware that change is neither achieved overnight nor is it by accident. It therefore makes sense to deploy a child-persona who will not only anticipate change, but also mature with the process initiating it. It is also apt to see the use of the child-persona as a means of drawing the reader's empathy to the subject matter. The dolorous tone of the speaking child evokes a great deal of sympathy and attention from the listener/reader which an adult voice will not attract.

Ukala's hermit wears many masks. Apart from being a child and an embodiment of a collective moral imperative, he/she is also a keen observer of nature and often interfaces it with contemporary social reality. As an observer of nature he/she passes for the persona who is obsessed with nature from where he/she draws inferences and makes important statements about life. The statements made by the persona are deceptively simple, but they

have deep philosophical underpinning. The hermit in Ukala's poetry is the type who not only thinks about phenomena, but also interrogates them in order to rationalise social occurrences. Hence in the poem "The Flowing Stream", the persona tells us:

I stood and watched the flowing stream
...
I asked myself why it complains
And felt I should rather ask it;
„Is it your weary endless trip?
Or sleeplessness at night?
Is it big-fish-eat-small-fish
That turns your stomach's gall? (23)

The conversational poem sounds very similar to English Romantic poetry as Ukala gives human quality to natural objects and in this case "the flowing stream". Through a probing conversation Ukala raises questions behind the mystery of the stream as reflected in the ceaseless flow of water and the relationship between the different sizes of fish. What the persona does in this interrogation of nature is actually an attempt to unravel the societal ordering and how it manifests in the predicament of the individual. It is also possible to read this poem as that which depicts human exaction, inequity and insecurity all of which are factors which constitute disillusionment. The hermit, from his observation post, is able to view human society *vis a vis* nature, draw a parallel between both and reach a conclusion which depicts a distorted social order defined by moral turpitude.

Emmanuel Ngara observes that "... solitary contemplation can lead to wisdom..." (46). This thinking applies to the hermit who is all-seeing and all-knowing as the recollection from which his imagination springs pervades different social segments. This is evident in his ridicule of religious hypocrisy in the poem "Neo-Orthodoxy". Apparently satirizing the rave of Pentecostalism, the persona says

Spirits drain into them:
Receptive they are
As porous earth, parched

And dying for first rain.
Spirit drain into them
And make them pregnant,
Make them sing and cry
in tedious labour of gospel-birth: (24)

The overt sarcasm in the above lines mocks the orgies inherent in the religious and worship sessions in many Pentecostal churches and the spiritual excesses demonstrated by worshippers in the name of worshipping God. The now popular practice of being possessed with the Holy Spirit and the attendant physical demonstrations such as forceful jerking of the body, loud cry and singing are among the issues satirized by the hermit. The subjects of this biting sarcasm are both the religious leader and the follower who are the parties in this spiritual charade. Again listen to the hermit's taunting:

bring your money, sheep
God loves a cheerful giver!
Far, far behind I'm left
far, far behind
in this whitening of the sepulcher,
this ritual that yields
billions of naira,
hundreds of wives and wild oaths. (25)

The reference to "sheep" is highly connotative and of double meaning. First is the biblical inference which requires Christians to be gentle like sheep, while its other meaning which the satirical hermit most likely has in mind derives from the traditional conception of sheep as a stupid animal. Both meanings are tenable here because they make the worshipper who is the sheep to be docile and easily led or misled. Thus it is easy for the religious leader to exploit the sheep materially. Since the sheep is gullible, he/she falls for the wiles of the religious leader who gets richer and goes after other material and immoral pursuits. The hermit's satirical barb in this poem is double-edged as it mocks the cunning of the religious leader as well as the gullibility of the worshipper.

In spite of the religious perversion and moral degeneration, the hermit lays claim to insularity as an untainted human entity.

While engaging the maladies emanating from the social and moral convolutions buffeting the fabric of society, Ukala devises means of weaving allegorical lines to subtly make a significant commentary on Nigeria's political experience. Ukala, as already stated in this essay, does not appear to be concerned with political themes. However, it is difficult to in a space that is so suffused with political tissues. Hence Ukala strains himself to the limit of poetic distancing when he has to make political statements such as the one in "The Tabernacles" where he outlines the socio-political choices before the nation. The voice of the hermit recounts:

At the Freedom Square
we congregated
patriots dream
of morrow's sunshine
and even roads
...
transfiguration !
...
let us make here
three tabernacles
one for agbada
one for khaki
and one for naira. . . (29)

A deceptively simple poem configured around a biblical record the stanzas depict a people united by the hope of a better future. The vivid impression created in the first stanza is that of a disillusioned populace held down by circumstances beyond their control, but have now come to collectively rally for freedom. They base their hope of a new beginning on the anticipation of change that will be engendered by a "transfiguration". As the hope is dreamed of the people are offered three choices namely; "*agbada*", "*khaki*" and "*naira*". The three variables have metonymic significance in this poem when read in consonance with Nigeria's socio-political reality. The first item "*agbada*" represents civil rule, "*khaki*" stands for military rule while "*naira*" denominates

the role which money plays in the nation's political reckoning. The poem is conceived as offering these three choices for the people to choose from as they work out their future. An evaluation of Nigeria's political experience reveals a country that has hovered around two choices represented by civil rule and military dictatorship. Hence, the choices which the people are confronted with can be read as a dilemma occasioned by the phenomenon of political crossroads.

As if to mitigate the gravity of the political dilemma in the above poem, the next poem, "Wait for me" which is couched in the mould of children poetry sings about an existential condition in a deceptively simple and uncomplicated style. The poem's light tone and the characters in it easily diminish its seriousness. The child-persona sings:

Wait for me, O wait for me,
 Little birds with silky wings,
 You fly away when I'm near
 And take me round and round the field.
 Wait for me, O wait for me,
 I just want to play with you. (33)

As simple as the short poem appears it encapsulates an elusive wish which inheres in humanity's existential quest for an ideal that remains an illusion. The child represents humanity while the birds of its fantasy are the ideals that humanity yearns for with so much anxiety. The child complains, but entreatingly requests to play with the elusive birds. This poem is reminiscent of J.P. Clark's "Streamside Exchange" in which a child engages a bird in a simple, but profoundly philosophical dialogue. It is possible to link "Wait for me" with "The Tabernacles" since both poems can be read as depicting humanity's different existential experiences.

The tension created by doubt in a moment of making a choice especially between good and bad also gets illuminated by the poems in this collection. Moral crises often arise from choices which fester into internal personal strife. This perspective is privileged in "burn this mask" an intensely amorous poem which

explores a confused persona as he dithers over what to make of his feelings. He expresses his state of mind as follows:

my mind says
it's a simple smile of raw love
my mask says
it depicts the purity of a dove (41)

Here the persona's mind is troubled by the doubt which arises from the inconsistency occasioned by the opposition between "mind" and "mask". While the former gives hint of an amorous intention the latter points in the direction of a wholesome platonic ideal of love. Further reading of the poem portrays the persona as resolving his dilemma in favour of an amoral endeavour as he says:

there! come on, faster here!
cause an exothermic collision
that „ll burn off this mask i wear
and fuse us with passion's explosion! (41)

The contest between the persona's thought and his action culminates in his yearning for the carnal knowledge of the woman. The doubt in the persona's mind is erased as he earnestly entreats the subject of his love overtures to make haste to him in a manner that is reminiscent of metaphysical poetry especially in the secular poems of John Donne and Andrew Marvel. It is now easy to categorically declare the persona in this poem as duplicitous as he embodies a dual consciousness embedded in both moral and immoral intensions which the "mind" and "mask" represent. The poem's title "burn this mask" which is also repeated in the last stanza is an emphatic call to do away with any restraining index to the persona's intension. The mask is a symbol which conceals his intension and his insistent call for it to be burnt signifies a strong desire to reveal and carry out his real amoral intension.

Ukala's diction in this collection creates some level of ambiguity in the reader's bid to arrive at a meaning. The words are ordinarily simple, but the way Ukala deploys them in some of the poems often leads to loss of meaning. This is the case with the

poem “ceramic cup” which shares the same subject matter with “burn this mask”. This poem depicts the “ceramic cup” as a symbol of beauty which the persona admires and desires. However, he is initially restrained by the Christian moral code “thou shalt not...” Which he eventually violates “but thou didst”. Ukala goes on to deploy simple yet abstruse expressions like “bristle brush/cleansing/your passionate breath/off my teeth. . .” to connotatively imply the foreplay for the act of copulation. In the last stanza Ukala gives a clear hint of the sexual act which climaxes the violation of the moral code as follows:

tonight the ceramic falls
loses lip not life to the sink:
a sign of purity?
or futility? (43)

The above excerpt underpins the rupture of a moral ideal represented by the consummation act. Thus, “the ceramic” which is held up as a symbol of moral perfection is violated. Hence it “falls”. The rhetorical question which ends the poem leaves the reader to decide or pass judgment on the act poetised in the verse. Again, this poem has a strong ring of English metaphysical poetry as its obscure signification is intended to veil the vulgarity sometimes embedded in poems that have to do with sexual acts.

The title poem “In My Hermitage” aptly depicts the solitary and eccentric character of the hermit and his preoccupation. The hermit who doubles as the persona declares in the opening stanza:

I am
a priest in calamine paint
nude and pox-ridden
tremulous by the fire
waiting to get dry (51)

The image depicted above is that of the physical appearance of the traditional priest in many African societies. A similar depiction of the priest is found in Chinua Achebe’s portrayal of Ezeulu the chief priest of Ulu in Umuaro in the novel *Arrow of God*. Ukala’s intension in this collection is to position the hermit as

the moral conscience of contemporary society as the priest is to the traditional society. It then becomes convincing for the reader to not only view the society through the submissions of the hermit, but to also make his/her judgment based on what the hermit says since he as a priest is supposed to give a true and accurate account of the collective social experience. The reader thus takes what the hermit offers as an authoritative social testament.

Not done with the description of the hermit's physical appearance, Ukala further designates him as a poet and encoder of the human experience he observes. Hence the hermit in his lonely hermitage says:

I stand in the eddy of hisses
and beside the dead fire and write
for none but my throbbing eyes:
eat the joy of life
all you over there
drink love on your bed-springs
I am free from the tyranny
of the flesh (52)

The hermitage experience is largely unpleasant as it is constituted by alienation and self-abnegation. While the rest of society engages in all sorts of revelries and physical pleasures the hermit is held up in his solitary abode observing and encoding the social current and nuances of his time and clime. The last line of the excerpt indicates that the hermit has no regret over the path he has chosen as he sees himself as being "free from the tyranny of the flesh". So the hermitic condition empowers the persona with a special status as a priest, a moral compass and an encoder of the tendencies of his age. He can therefore be held as the one who not only sets the standard Ukala advocates in the poems, but also as the embodiment of high moral code which the society stands in dire need of and which inspired the poems in this collection.

Ukala's hermit demonstrates a keen consciousness of the social structure of his time especially its class stratification and the attendant exploitative and oppressive decimals which define it. This consciousness is what the poem "Come Everybody"

foregrounds. In this poem, the hermit declares an overt populist bias as he summons the people thus:

Come, everybody,
 women, men, children, vultures,
 come let's converge
 at the heap
 and share together
 the blessing of the oppressed;
 the dew has made mellow
 the garbage. (57)

In the foregoing the hermit in spite of his alienation takes up the responsibility of mobilizing the people for the task of collective redemption. This act is not only symbolic, but it is also significant in that the hermit deems it necessary to involve everybody including the oppressed and the oppressors whom he calls "vultures". According to Ezenwa-Ohaeto "The role of the poet in any developing society is not enviable because he often functions against the antagonistic attitudes generated by the indifference of those in positions of authority" (27). This summarizes the hermit's condition. The poem has a sharp ironic twist in the line "blessing of the oppressed" which indirectly signifies suffering. This poem is a mitigating relief which signals hope arising from the hermit's redemptive motive. Hence, like the traditional or biblical priest the hermit in *In My Hermitage* has the onerous task of negotiating and re-directing the path of an errant society for its own redemption. It is apt to say that the poems in this collection are engendered by a strong desire to re-order social reality with its attendant decadence which is seen as responsible for the painful retrogression the poems rail against. An appraisal of this will throw up a strong spiritual undercurrent which necessitates the invention of the hermit in the mould of a priest determined to re-order society.

The hope which „Come Everybody" enunciates is given further validation in the poem with the reassuring title "Our Pen Will Not Die" which is dedicated to Niyi Osundare who can aptly be described as the poet of the Nigerian condition. With copious allusions to the titles of poetry collections by Osundare, Ukala

recalls a chilling physical attack which the poet (Osundare) survived. The poem tallies with Theodora Akachi-Ezeigbo's submission on "... a bizarre world of fantasy to embody (...) vision of a fragmented and violent society" (115). The poet's resilience and survival of that brutal attack signals hope that the society will witness regeneration and amity. He submits:

then shall the dancing
feet of the firmament
cripple the arms of the axe
that seeks the dollar
in the folds of the brain (92)

The metaphor of "dancing feet" refers to a celebration arising from a time when the right values would have supplanted violence and crime. This might sound idealistic, but it is the poet's vision of the re-ordered social structure which contemporary society badly needs. As Bernth Lindfors offers, "a seer must not only be able to see; he must also be able to transfer his vision to others." The vision which Ukala's hermit transfers to the readers is that of hope because as Ojaide affirms, "The poet should be an oracle and a healer. All the more reason that our vision should be one of hope: for restoration of the good we have lost, for attainment of a state of well-being. Only hope can save us" (133). Thus one of the roles Ukala foists on the hermit equates Wole Soyinka's opinion of the artist "as the record of the mores and experience of his society and as the voice of vision in his own time" (20).

In this collection Ukala sets out to engage a society that is in need of social and moral redemption and he finds the hermit who is untainted and alienated as a tool for carrying out the task of expiation. Ukala's position is at once unique and going against the grain of the literary depiction of the redemptive praxis in the corpus of African literature. While many writers do not envisage the essence of a redemptive figure as in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are not yet Born*, others like Wole Soyinka throw up sacrificial characters like Emman in *The Strong Breed*, yet the Socialist-Marxist inclined playwrights and poets such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Femi Osofisan and Niyi Osundare opt for collective

revolt as a means of re-ordering society. Ukala does not fit into any of these. Rather, he chooses a hermit who invents his social vision from the point of view of unobtrusive social engagement with all strata of society involving the oppressed and the oppressor.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. *Arrow of God*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988. Print.
- Amali, Idris. "The Poetry of Awareness: Statements on Four Nigerian Poets-Osundare, Ugah, Ojaide and Vatsa." *Writing the Homeland: The Poetry and Politics of Tanure Ojaide* (ed.) Onookome Okome. Bayreuth: Africa World Press, 2002, p. 97-109. Print.
- Armah, Ay iKwei. *The Beautiful Ones are not Yet Born*. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1988. Print.
- Asagba, Austin Ovigie (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2008. Print.
- Eliot, T. S. "Religion and Literature". *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*. Wilbur Scott (ed.) New York: Collier Books, 1974, p. 43-55. Print.
- Ezeigbo, Theodora Akachi. "An Acid in the Feel of Things: The Short Stories of Ben Okri" *LARESS: A Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 14, nos. 1 & 2, 2003, pp. 105-119. Print.
- Ezenwa-Ohaeto. "Niyi Osundare and the Poetic Statement of a Generation", *The People's Poet: Emerging Perspectives on Niyi Osundare*. Abdurashheed Na" Allah (ed.). Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003, p. 27-39. Print.
- Fuller, Edmund. "The New Compassion in the American Novel". *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*. Wilbur Scott (ed.) New York: Collier Books, 1974, pp. 57-66. Print.
- Kehinde, Ayo. "Indigenous Traditions and Modern African Writers", *African Culture and Civilization*. Samuel Ademola (ed) Ibadan: Atlantis Books, 2005, pp. 301-324. Print.
- Lindfors, Bernth. "Wole Soyinka: When are you Coming Home?" *Yale French Studies*.53, 1976, pp. 197-210. Print.
- Ngara, Emmanuel. *Ideology and Form in African Poetry*. London: James Currey, 1990. Print.
- Nnolim, Charles "What Has Criticism got to do With It?: Teaching Theory and Criticism in African Literary Studies". *Teaching African Literature Today*, No. 29, 2011, pp. 20-26. Print.

- Ogude, Steve, et al. *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos, 1999. Print.
- Ojaide, Tanure. *Poetic Imagination in Black Africa*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1996. Print.
- _____. *Contemporary African Literature: New Approaches*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2012. Print.
- Oloruntimehin, Olatunji. *History, Morality and Public Order*. Ibadan: NAL Faculty of Arts, U.I. 2008. Print.
- Onoge, Omafume. "The Crisis of Consciousness in African Literature". *Marxism and African Literature*. Georg M. Gugelberger (ed). London: James Currey Ltd., 1985, pp. 21-49. Print.
- Saro-Wiwa, Ken. *A Month and A Day: A Detention Diary*. Ibadan: Spectrum, 1995. Print.
- Scott, Wilbur. (ed) "The Moral Approach". *Five Approaches of Literary Criticism*. New York: Collier Books, 1974, pp. 23-26. Print.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Art Dialogue and Outrage*. Ibadan: New Horn Press, 1988. Print.

Twelve



Sexual Imageries in Select Works of Sam Ukala

Aghogho Lucky Imiti

Introduction

Professor Samuel Chinedum Ukala, popularly known as Sam Ukala, is a well-known figure not only in dramatic and theatrical practice but also as a poet and a prose fiction writer. Much has been written about this literary icon such that his name has become a household name in Nigeria and the world at large. At 60 years of age in 2008, Ukala's birthday was celebrated with a book, *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty* edited by Austin Ovigwe Asagba. This icon's biography is well outlined at pages 246-248 of that book, thus there will be no much emphasis running his biography here. However, Sam Ukala can be described as an astute scholar, director (stage and film), playwright, producer, an administrator and a literary theorist. No doubt, Ukala is well known in literary circles all over the world with the postulation of his theory of "Folkism", which he defines as "the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture and concerns of the folk (the people in general...) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for performing the folktale" (285).

Like an elephant touched by a team of the blind, Sam Ukala is variously described by colleagues, associates and others who have been opportuned to do so. Benji Egede describes Ukala as "certified multifacetedness – a wearer of multiple labels, which, like a peacock's beautiful plumage, are remarkable for their spread and profundity of assemblage." He further adds that he "has scored significant points as a "scholar, poet, novelist or prose stylist..." (122-145). Jude Aigbe calls him "a versatile playwright and

dramatist ... an academic ... a literary theorist and a liberal bourgeois intellectual of no mean standing” (9). To add to these, one could say, as far as African drama and theatre is concerned, Sam Ukala is a jack of all trade and a master of all.

Ukala has written a good number of dramatic works, out of which he has won various awards. The list of his works include, but not limited to, *The Slave Wife* (1992) *The Log in Your Eye* (1986) *Akpakaland* (1990), which won the 1989 Association of Nigerian Authors Award, *The Trials of Obiamaka* (1992), *Break a Boil* (1992), *The Placenta of Death* (1997) *The Last Heroes* (1997) and his most recent play, *Iredi War* (2014) which won the Nigeria Prize for Literature in that same year. All the plays listed have been subjected to critical academic readership, mostly analysed with his theory of folkism which he advanced for the composition and performance of African plays. Like the Marxists, Ukala’s plays are preoccupied with the quest for justice through revolution. This stand is stretched further by Godfrey Enita who stresses that “Ukala’s themes are familiar ones – treachery and misrule, sexual intrigues, oppression and exploitation...” (54). His plays are therefore, “a clarion call for the oppressed, exploited and down trodden in society to rise up and say no to their oppressors” (Asagba 87).

Similarly, Ukala’s folkism leans heavily on indigenised language, proverbs, idioms, ideophones and imageries. In most cases, the imageries reoccur in his works, such as the images which depict sexual activities. While most aspects of his plays have been subjected to rigorous scholarship, this area has not elicited much critical attention, hence, this chapter will examine some of Ukala’s published plays, with the objective to show that he implores a substantial amount of image of sex in his works as he uses folk materials of the African people which consists of story-telling.

What is Imagery?

From the Classical to Modern period, writers have employed a wide range of rhetorical devices for contrast and emphasis. These include paradox, metaphor, repeated motifs, symbolism, irony,

allusions and patterns of imagery. An online dictionary, *dictionary.com* defines imagery as “the mental pictures created by a piece of writing”. The Random House Kernerman *Webster’s College Dictionary* further explains imageries (plural) as:

1. Mental images collectively.
2. Pictorial images and
3. Figurative description or illustration; rhetorical images collectively.

The *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged*, 12th Edition, 2014 sees imagery as

1. (Literary and Literary Critical Terms) figurative or descriptive language in a literary work.
2. Images collectively.
3. The materials or general processes of the imagination.

The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language 5th Edition defines imagery as: “a set of mental pictures or images. These use of vivid or figurative language to represent objects, actions, or ideas” and “the use of expressive or evocative images in art, literature, or music. *Wikipedia* also defines imagery as “an author’s use of vivid and descriptive language to add depth to their work. It appeals to human senses to deepen the reader’s understanding of the work”.

A thorough look at all definitions, whether defined as mental pictures, mental images or pictorial images, would reveal that there is little or no difference in meaning of the term, imagery. All definitions simply point to the fact of creating an image or picture through the use of words or dialogue in a literary work. The image created could be a known or an unknown one to the reader, but it has an appeal to his/her senses or imagination. Imageries used by an author in a literary work, prose, drama or poem, allow the reader to visualize an action when such a work is read or performed before an audience, and some times, the imageries used seem so obvious that they point to a particular live event which the author wants physically avoided on stage.

According to *Nigel*, imagery could take any of the following forms:

- a. Visual (seeing/eyes), this relates to graphics, visual scenes, pictures, spectacle and any other sense of sight.
- b. Auditory (hearing/ears), this relates to anything sound (ideophone and onomatopoeia), music, noise and hearing.
- c. Tactile (feeling/skin), this relates to physical texture and the sense of touch.

Each of these corresponds to a sense of feeling or action/event. Moreover, strong forms of imageries engage all of the human senses.

Sexual

The adjective “sexual”, according to the online *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, is “an activity relating to, or associated with sex or the sexes”. It further defines sex as “either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male ...”. The definition of sex as the major categorisation of individuals as male or female, boy or girl, man or woman is commonly used in our daily living. A synonym for this is gender. The same online source also briefly defines sex as “sexual intercourse”. *Encarta*, having corroborated *Merriam Webster dictionary* in defining sex as “sexual intercourse” goes further to define sexual intercourse as the “physical sexual activity between human beings that involves the genitals”. Although, it is not explicitly stated in the above definition that the activity of sex is mostly carried out between the opposite sexes, it is a common knowledge and deemed rational in Nigeria and Africa that sexual activity is done between a male and a female. This argument is strengthened by the definition given by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica Student and Home Edition* (DVD) that sexual intercourse is the “reproductive act in which the male reproductive organ (in human and other higher animals) enters the female

reproductive tract....” This type of sex is the concern of this paper not the distinction between sexes.

Sexual escapade is rarely discussed in the open, especially where there are minors. More also, in books written for the general reader, writers try as much as possible to avoid words that relate to sexual intercourse. Even when it becomes unavoidable, part of such words are omitted. Take for instance, “I do this odd thing during s*x and I can’t control it” is a newspaper headline on *tori.ng* on the 27th of August, 2017. A letter was omitted from the word “sex” to show that such words are not allowed. But in literature, writers or authors implore imageries that appeal to the imagination or senses of the reader to describe such activities without causing any harm. Sam Ukala’s works contain a great deal of sexual imageries which describe sexual intercourse or which relates to sexual activity as would be discussed subsequently.

Sexual Imageries in Sam Ukala’s Plays

Sam Ukala’s plays are usually pre-occupied with the quest for justice through revolution by the down trodden or masses. His plays end with a note to the jealous and treasonable villains, who are made to dance to the music of their drumming. It is when treating these themes that he employs his images, to avoid being vulgar, in other to drive home his message. There are several instances of sexual imageries in the works of Ukala, notably in *The Last Heroes*, *Akpakaland* and *Break a Boil*. These images, consciously or unconsciously, reoccur in almost, if not all his plays. However, this chapter settles on just three of his aforementioned plays.

In *The Last Heroes*, (hereinafter referred to as *Last Heroes*) Ukala employs the imageries of the “drilling of oil” to describe sexual activity in the play. The following dialogue ensues between Bayo and Amina in SKONA KOOL SPOT after Amina narrowly escapes the crushing hands of Osawu.

Bayo: I’m not sure I understand it all, though. Her doctor doesn’t think she’s been desexed by the accident. But she insists she

has, and threatens to castrate me if I ever bring my dirty drill near her....

Amina: Dirty drill?

Bayo: Yes. That's what she calls it. You know, like the drills of ungrateful neo-colonial exploiters of primitive oil wells.

Amina: And you're asking me to come sleep under the nose of her jack-knife?

Bayo: She's blind.

Amina: But not deaf also.

Bayo: We'll just sneak in.

Amina: Footsteps. She'd hear my shoes. And the midnight tango of the dirty drill and an oil well!

(Last Heroes 121).

Amina: Please, sit down, let me explain.

Bayo: Explain what? I saw everything. I heard everything. You are his sweet, little, plaything! He drilled you yesternight and will drill you for two full days in Asho. You must be thoroughly rotten inside.

(Last Heroes 126).

Apart from these imageries, there are other instances where actions and words are used to depict this sexual activity. Instances are when Alhaji Danbaba ruffles the backside of Amina:

Alhaji: My sweet little thing! *(Engulfs AMINA in an embrace, kisses her and begins to rumple her bottom before AMINA is able to disentangle herself.)*

Haba! What's the matter?

Amina: We're in public, Alhaji.

Alhaji: Public *(Looks round again.)* I can see no public here. Anyway, don't blame me. I can still feel your sweetness of last night on my palate. Will you come again tonight? *(Last Heroes 122).*

Yet another romantic instance in the play where sexual imagery is deployed is on the return journey of Bayo and Amina back home, where another "drilling" was billed to take place.

Bayo: Trust me. A good kiss will sober me up again, especially if you bite my tongue a little

Amina: Trust me to bite it hard.

Bayo: Now, my bite.
(*They embrace and kiss. A rather long kiss.*)
(*Last Heroes* 133)

In *Akpakaland*, Ukala, uses the imagery of farmland and its cultivator to vividly create the image of sex. In actual fact, the jealousy that led to the whole trouble in the play, *Akpakaland*, was as a result of Fulama's "farm" not being "cultivated" for a long time.

According to Fulama, using a somewhat different imagery:

... The moment the president married the Beautiful One, I, Fulama, the light of his morning, ceased to shine. For weeks, the president slumbered in the arms of the Beautiful One while the joints of my waist grew cold. (*Akpakaland* 12-13).

Another instance of this imagery is found in Enwe's conversation with Idemudia, Unata's father.

Enwe: ...You made her flounce her suppleness before the Great One, ever zealous to cultivate fresh farmlands....
(*Akpakaland* 18).

And yet, Enwe in his advice to Fulama goes further with this imagery.

Enwe: What else could it be? One of you must have been pilfering more than her fair share of your (sic) husband's bed-time treasures...You Know what I mean. (*Laughs*). I have wives and I know what women can do. But that should really be nothing to squabble about. When a man abandons melon soup and begins to eat *okro* daily, chances are that the *okro* will cloy in his mouth and he might return to the melon soup he had earlier abandoned.

Fulama: Perhaps, it's true.

Enwe: It's not "perhaps", my sister. All men know it. Yet we tend to plant in the home the way we do in the farms. If a man has four farmlands, he cultivates one effectively per year. A man, who has four wives, cultivates one effectively at any given season. So it is, my sister. Go reconcile with Unata. After all,

with only a child to your credit so far, you still have a lot of the smell and heat of youth left.

Fulama: Akpaka doesn't think so.

Enwe: Do you expect him to tell you?

Fulama: But he... (*Checks herself*).

Enwe: Don't worry. He'd soon return to your farmland. You'd say I told you...

(*Akpakaland 27-28.*)

This imagery seems to be synonymous with Africans. Ola Rotimi, in *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* also adopts this imagery as he advises that the beautiful Queen of England, without a husband, takes one among her people, as "a woman without a man is like rich farm-soil without the feel of roots" (18). For every fertile farm (woman) needs to be cultivated by a cultivator (man) to avoid being wasteful.

In *Break a Boil*, Ukala uses the imagery of Drum, drumming and drum stick to paint the picture of the unholy sexual intercourse between Uki, Gidi's wife and Uwa, his elder brother. This can be gleaned from the following dialogue, first, between Ison and Nkanka.

Ison: But you didn't witness the crime, Nkanka.

Nkanka: Who did then?

Ison: Eirinma.

Nkanka: How? You mean he went into that room and opened his eyes and opened his ears and opened his mouth while Uki and Uwa drummed into them?....

Ison: He stopped the drumming.

Nkanka: Stopped the drumming. (*Pause.*) I guess he did. He stopped the drumming... Can't someone else tell the king that goats are eating the palm fronds on his head? Can't someone else tell him that so much drumming is done behind his back by an unauthorised drumstick?....

(*Break a Boil 80-81.*)

In a play within the play, Nkanka and Ison, through a lengthy stage direction, demonstrate the act of "drumming" taking place between Uwa and Uki off stage.

Uwa: *(Looking here and there.)* I thought I saw someone here.
(He goes in stealthily ... NKANKA hurries into view from hiding and sticks his ear to Uki's door.... A staccato of drums intermittently. NKANKA reacts to it with a wide giggle and excited, knowing glance at the audience. It is as if he is warning them of an action that is taking place within. ISON emerges from the other door....)

Ison: Nkanka, are they at it again?

Nkanka: At what, First Queen?

... (A staccato of drums.)

Ison: I thought as much. The love lyric opens such a day.

(She jigs her waist suggestively, then the staccato transforms into a regular rhythm of several drums, with a contrapuntal stroke at intervals. ISON begins a dance of wiggling and jiggling... Both engage in a wild suggestive dance, jiggling their waists hard at each contrapuntal stroke....)

Eririnma: *(To NKANKA)* What manner of dance are you doing with the Oba's wife?

Eririnma: I'm looking for Uwa. Did he by any chance come this way?

(A staccato of drums to which ISON and NKANKA jig suggestively.) What's the meaning of this?...

(ISON and NKANKA gesture with pointed lips towards Uki's apartment. ERIRINMA moves furiously within. The regular rhythm returns. NKANKA dances towards ISON, who looks reproachfully at him and swings off with NKANKA apparently ogling her. Soon the drumming stops. ISON also stops at a distance and looks on.)

Nkanka: *(to AUDIENCE.)* Ah! He has stopped the drum.

The physical drumming is also accompanied by the imaginative drumming, taking place inside, being painted by the dramatist. In the stage performance of these plays, there is exaggerated use of waist movement and other parts of the body in depicting sexual intercourse. Apart from this imagery, Sam Ukala uses other dramatic effects to achieve his aim in his plays without causing much harm to his audience.

Conclusion

In the plays discussed, *The Last Heroes*, *Akpakaland* and *Break a Boil*, Sam Ukala employs a handful of sexual imageries. But these were not intended to corrupt the mind of his reader or audience, but to produce a vibrant and graphic presentation of events that appeal to the reader's/audience's imagination while driving home his message without playing to the gallery. These imageries, therefore, help the reader/audience to see the characters and scenes in the literary piece clearly. This Sam Ukala, has done very eloquently.

Works Cited

- Aigbe, Jude. "The Dialectic of Them and Us: Power Play in Sam Ukala's Break a Boil." Ogude, Steve, et al (eds.). *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos, 1999 (22-37). Print.
- Asagba, Austine Ovigie. "Sam Ukala and the New Nigerian Theatre". Asagba, Austine Ovigie. (ed.) *Ukala: His work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2008 (81-92). Print.
- Egede, Benji. "Narrative Style, Symbolism and Tropes in Sam Ukala's Short Stories". Ogude, Steve, et al (eds.). *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos, 1999. 1(22-145). Print.
- Enita, O. Godfrey. "Ukala, Folkism and The Laws of Aesthetic Response". Asagba, Austine Ovigie. (ed.) *Sam Ukala: His work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd, 2008. (48-57). Print.
- "Imageries". Retrieved from www.kdictionaries-online.com. On September 17, 2017.Web.
- "Imageries". *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language*. 5th Edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2016. Print.
- "Imagery". *Collins English Dictionary – Complete and Unabridged*. 12th Edition. 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.harpercollins.co.uk>. On September 17, 2017.Web.
- "Imagery". Retrieved from <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/imageries>. On September 17, 2017. Web.
- "Imagery". Retrieved from www.wikipedia.com. On September 17, 2017.Web.
- Rotimi, Ola. *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*. Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1974. Print.

- “Sexual”. Retrieved from www.meriam-webster.com. On September 20, 2017. Web.
- Thomas, Nigel J.T. in Zalta, Edward N., ed., "Mental Imagery". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford University*. 2011. Retrieved From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagery#cite_note-1. On September 17, 2017. Web.
- Ukala, Sam. “Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy”. *New Theatre Quarterly*. Vol. xii, No. 47, 1996: (279-287). Print.
- _____. *Akpakaland and other Plays*. Agbor: Oris Press, 2004. Print.
- _____. *Two Plays: The Placenta of Death and The Last Heroes*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2007. Print.
- “Sexual intercourse”. *Microsoft Encarta 2009 [DVD]*. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008. DVD.
- “Sexual Intercourse”. *Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica Student and Home Edition*. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010. DVD.

Thirteen



Literalising Indegenious Story-Telling Narrative: Textual Readings of Sam Ukala's Folkism as an Aesthetic Theory

Oghenevize M. Umukoro

Introduction

Africa is a vast continent with multiplicity of cultures. It is a vast land with different socio-economic and political aspirations. However, a common index that plagued the continent is its colonial experience. Colonialism is an oppressive and suppressive instrument used in arresting the development of a people and their indigenous culture. As Ukala (2001) posits, Western education was one of the effective weapons of colonisation as it was used among others to “replace the self-esteem as well as the psychological independence of the African”. Ukala points out that:

Besides religion, no other school subject entrenched this (Western superiority) mentality more deeply than Western literature, which was taught to the African student *as the literature* while most African artistic creations were denigrated or even banned. Traditional dramatic performances were particularly disagreeable to the colonialists partly because they considered them potentially detrimental to the safety of whites and the colonial governments. (29)

With the above denigrating situations, African writers at the attainment of independence sought ways of approaching their literature and arts generally from an African perspective. Adeoye (2010) observes that:

... the Nigerian (African) theatre scholars rejoicing under the toga of new education – a legacy of the Western power and

facing the crisis of identity necessarily raised the following posers:

- A. Do we have theatre in Africa?
- B. Can our theatre pass the acid test of classicism, a banality that should be used for measuring theatre?
- C. Is our theatre not a cultural commodity, a mytho-ritual re-enactment or pseudo (semi-demi) and an un-programmed theatre? (84)

Therefore, over the years, seasoned African literary and dramatic luminaries such as Leopold Senghor, Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, J. P. Clark, and Michael Echeruo had attempted, in several treatises to draw a road map wherewith African dramatic horizon could be located. The approaches these African theorists used in attempting to evolve distinctive critical paradigms for the appreciation of African dramatic order however was no more than either criticising, or comparing Eurocentric conception of drama vis-à-vis African dramatic space. It is obvious that these icons placed Aristotle's dramatic constitution (*The Poetics*), as well as other critiques by Western critics by their side, which they refuted, concurred to or out rightly rejected in varying degrees, as yardsticks for accessing African drama/theatre.

Rather than a conscious attempt at theorising the path of African drama, African critics and dramatists were more concerned with the issue of identity; whether or not Africa has drama and theatre. In effect, they only attempted to wriggle or wrestle African dramatic order from the shrine of African Religion: from the vault of primitivism, or ritual, which Eurocentricism seemed to have shackled it with. The need for an aesthetic mode to access African dramatic order therefore continues to plague the continent. Ukala, recognising this problem, came up with "Folkism" as an indigenous aesthetic theory that can be used to view African drama and thus fill the void, which many African theorists, critics and dramatists have long attempted to fill in vain. The thrust of this chapter is therefore not to join the discourse of what African drama is, or what it is not, but to x-ray Folkism, to see how the aesthetic

theory exhibits indigenous dramatic idioms that could be used to appraise African dramatic/theatrical tradition.

Folkism, as an aesthetic theory was propounded by Sam Ukala. The theory advocates for the use of African indigenous folkloric form as an ideal aesthetic principle for accessing African drama/theatre in order to make them more popular and accessible to the majority of the audience whose traditional dramatic style is folkloric. The theory was propounded in response to the social order prevalent in the African continent in the colonial era. Through the weapon of colonialism, the colonialists jettisoned African indigenous creative arts (including her dramatic performances). These, they saw as fetish and detrimental to their safety. They therefore substituted African literature with their own literature, which they proclaimed was the authentic literature. In order to “belong” therefore, African creative artists abandoned their artistic heritage and created in the mode of the colonialists. This monster hunted African creative writers even until after independence.

Regrettably, the content of the artistic heritage of these “new” or Westernised Africans vis-à-vis the aspiration of the people in relation to their artistic poetics was at variance as they employed symbols that were more familiar to the Whites than Africans themselves. The need therefore for Africans to re-create their own social-economic, political and historical order in their own ways devoid of Western creative poetics became invaluable necessary. This is where the folkist comes in. As an aesthetic theory therefore, folkism is not much concerned with locating the truth; rather, its basic concern is for the creation of drama/theatre (artworks) that is relevant to the socio-cultural and political development of Africa through recognisable and relevant symbols that are indigenous to the African. In essence, folkism advocates for drama/theatre that are devoid of complexities and ambiguities; drama/theatre that are more in tone with the creative sensibilities of the people, and drama/theatre that is integrational rather than segregational.

Given the fact that the arts of a people say much about their history, culture and tradition, and could trigger socio-political development, folkists seem to argue that it is meaningless creating

a work of art for a people who cannot fathom or create meaning out of it. This argument is quite apt given that communication has not taken place if the receiver of the message is unable to decode the signals relayed by the sender. This seems to be the premise on which folkism aesthetic theory rests. Ukala (the folkism aesthetic theorist) notes this quite succinctly that:

Most Nigerian literary plays draw their subject matter from the history, culture, concerns, and aspirations of Nigerians, and therefore achieve relevance. But many are made inaccessible to the audience not only by a difficult diction, but also through highly imaginative yet alienating distortions of their source material, an unusual abstraction of characters, or complexity and strangeness of structure. The audience cannot decode the plays, and, void of relevance, they defy identification and popularity. In all, it seems clear that a thorough going application of the aesthetics of the African folktale may remove or reduce the short-comings of Nigerian literary drama.

With the above in mind therefore, Ukala (1996) conceptualised folkism as:

the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk (the “people in general”...) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing folktale. (285)

In folkism therefore, the essence is to speak the language of the folk, utilize the aesthetic symbols of the folk, and make the folk a collaborator in the creation of those aesthetic symbols. Folkism thus reaches out to ALL folks, not a selected social stratum of society. To make this possible, folkist plays are not concerned with mystified rituals, which are the prerogative of a few; high sounding and complex idioms, which are the prerogative of an elitist few, nor subverted plot structure and characters garnished with Western aesthetics, whose essence are hidden in pregnant symbols that could be deciphered by an infinitesimal few. This, the folkism theorist believes, is the only way of entrenching a true African identity in their artistic creativity.

Thus, for the folkists, it is not a matter of creating drama that may impress the West, but drama that is more relevant to Africans whom it is created for. That is why Ukala (2001: 32) states it succinctly that the difference between the alternative theatre (of which folkist drama/theatre is one) “lies in how familiar the aesthetics feels to the African and how unfamiliar to the English”. Folkists drama/theatre can therefore be seen as indigenous drama/theatre of Africans by Africans and for Africans.

The Performance Structure of Folkism

This section examines the performance structure of folkism: determining how the folkism laws are extolled in the plays discussed.

The Performance Structure of Folkism coalesces in eight laws otherwise known as the Eight Laws of Folkism. These laws are: the Law of Opening; the Law of Joint Performance; the Law of creativity, Free Enactment and Responsibility; the Law of the Urge to Judge, the Law of Protest Against Suspense; the Law of Expression of the Emotions; the Law of Ego Projection; and the Law of Closing. In order to avoid duplicity, these laws would be treated *parri-passu* with the textual analysis.

The Law of Opening

The law of opening shows that traditional African folktales always have a conventional opening. In Isoko land, the narrator starts his story either with “egberiyó” and the audience responds “iyo” or “itaye” and the audience responds “iye” as is revealed in Umukoro’s *Princess Elona*. This conventional opening is aptly captured in Ukala’s *Akpakaland*, *Iredi War*, and *The Placenta of Death*. It is also exhibited in Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers*. *Akpakaland* and *The Placenta of Death* begin with a song, which the playwright reveals is the opening song for an Ika folktale performance. At the end of the song, the narrator gives the opening call and the audience responds:

NAR: (*Hails*) I give you white chalk!

AUD: If you concoct, may it be efficacious!

NAR: I give you white chalk!

AUD: If you concoct, may it be efficacious!

Similarly, in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan begins with the traditional folktale opening call among the Yoruba: “ALO O! And the audience responds, ALO!” In traditional folklore as well as literary folkist plays, the opening performs different functions; first, it enables the audience know who the narrator is, as he is usually the one to make the opening call. Secondly, through the opening call, the narrator seeks the approval of the audience to commence the story. Thirdly, it warms up the audience and puts them in the mood for the joint experience. Fourthly, it establishes the setting; both the locale, and (sometimes) the period. Fifthly, it reveals the major characters and (sometimes) their relationship. Finally, it reveals the main focus of the play.

In Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers*, the narrator immediately after the opening formalities commences an opening song. In the song, the narrator establishes the setting of the play as well as some of the major characters:

A (sic) ancient tale I will tell you
Tale ancient and modern.
A tale of four armed robbers
Dangerous highwaymen. (4)

Thus, the opening has established the time; it is ancient, however it is relevant to the present, hence “ancient and modern”. Also, the story is about four dangerous armed robbers (major characters as well as main focus of the story). Similarly, in Ukala’s *Placenta of Death*, immediately after the opening call, the narrator establishes the setting (place); he says “like a dirge for a nation shredded by riches and strife, such as Owodoland, the setting of tonight’s play... such was the situation when it was proposed that Owodo, the third, marry Ibo (main characters and relationship). The same can also be seen in Umukoro’s *Princess Elona*, when the narrator tells the audience:

ABALO: ...Today, I am going to tell you a story about Princess Elona...A long time ago, there lived one of our great kings

named Odhebe. Odhebe was not a happy king because he had no child” (35).

This opening, apart from introducing the setting (time) and the major character, it also reveals the major focus of the play. In *The Placenta of Death*, the narrator from the opening tells us that the story is about Owodoland:

NAR: ...The nation was rich. And riches beget power and injustice, enjoyment and anguish...Nature welded opposites in order to level them up. But levelling up created charring friction” (13).

Similarly, in *Iredi War*, the narrator reveals from the beginning that “tonight’s tale is not a happy tale”. Thus, the opening of folktales as crystallized in folkism among others reveals the setting, characters and their relationship, the major subject of the story, and it warms up the audience.

The Law of Joint Performance

Folkism professes rich collaboration between the performer and spectator, which is one of the fundamental ingredients of African indigenous performances. Any drama that seeks division between the performer and the audience is un-African. The law of joint performance simply stipulates that there is no dividing wall between the performer and his audience, as the audience at a point becomes a performer. In traditional folktales, the performance itself is communal; members of the community know the story and could call the narrator to order if he deviates from his course. They also co-perform by clapping, singing, dancing, interjecting by asking questions, giving responses etc. They are not docile. In fact, in all, folkism celebrates joint performance as could be seen in folkist plays.

The opening calls and responses of all the plays treated in this chapter set the stage for joint performance. Alo! Aalo! (*Once Upon Four Robbers*); Tohio! Ya, ya ya, ya, Kpo! (*The Placenta of Death*), I give you white chalk! If you concoct, may it be efficacious! (*Iredi War, Akpakaland*), Itaye! Iye! (*Princess Elona*).

In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan leaves the end of the play open-ended to encourage audience's participation.

AAFA (Narrator): (*Walking round the auditorium*) A stalemate? How can I end my story on a stalemate....Which shall it be? (asking the audience) Yes, Madam? Your reasons, please? And you gentle man? Should the robbers be shot? Please, do not be afraid to voice your opinion... (60).

Similarly, in *Iredi War*, Ukala gives the audience the room to judge:

Narrator: (TO AUDIENCE) Now, you be the judge...from what you've seen, ladies and gentlemen, what would you say was the matter with Crewe-Read? (37).

In *Iredi War* Ukala renders some lines in such a way that the audience helps complete them:

Narrator : Advance, strike –
Audience: and retreat (82).

Ukala also used this technique in *Akpakaland*:

Narrator : (Reappearing) The wind will blow---
M.O.A.: And we'll see the arse of the hen! (29)

Thus there is constant interaction between the narrator and the audience. To encourage more audience participation, Ukala in *Akpakaland*, *Iredi War* and *The Placenta of Death* creates two separate audience; public audience and cast audience.

The Law of Creativity, Free Enactment and Responsibility

This law is a tripartite law. Ukala (2001:36) reveals that this law "is the product of the response of the narrator to the story he has chosen to perform". The traditional story –teller must be dexterous in his enactment. If he is not creative enough, the audience at once calls him to order and could out rightly ask someone else who is more proficient to take over.

In literary folk plays, the narrator (playwright) uses language which is simple yet poetic to rouse the interest of the audience. The

introduction of the M.O.A's in Ukala's plays is creativity which is targeted at rousing the audience into more responses to the on-going action. The M.O.A's are made to sit with the public audience. Their responses could be efficacious, thus prompting more responses from the public audience.

Moreover, the use of open-ending by Osofisan in *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Esu and the Vagabond Minstrels* so that the plays could have different ending is creative. This innovation is possible of making an audience who watched the play earlier to see a different ending the next time he watches the play. This is also the case in Ukala's *Iredi War* where the narrator gives room for the public audience to comment on the on-going action. Two productions of the play could show differences in responses as the narrator is made to weave the audience's response into the story.

In language, creativity is again heightened in all the plays under focus. Africa's rich poetic idioms, especially proverbs are creatively woven into the plays. In *Iredi War*, Igboba says "It's like the frog distending her belly in order to measure size with the cow. She will end up busting herself to shreds. (36). Also, in *Akpakaland*, Ide tells Enwe – "the animal that befriends the monkey must fold its thumb (19)".

Free Enactment

In traditional folklore, though members of the audience may know the story, the narrator is given poetic licence to create a "new" story out of the old one that everyone is used to by freely using different symbols that make the story contemporarily relevant. This poetic licence is exhibited in the plays under review. We see the narrators in the plays freely going in and out of roles. In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, the narrator doubles as Aafa.

Responsibility

Whether the story is well told or not, the narrator claims responsibility, for just as he is applauded and thanked for a good story, so too he is criticized for a bad one. It is therefore the content, the style, the language, and the accessibility that

determines which of these “responsibilities” – criticism, applause or hisses the narrator/playwright receives.

The Law of the Urge to judge

The urge to judge could be viewed from two perspectives; the African audience aptly judges a narrator or performer and rewards him accordingly. On the other hand the audience also judges the conduct of the characters in the story. In *The Placenta of Death*, the audience recoiling from the cruelty of the king towards Omon, his queen from the poor background says:

M.O.A.: Oh! That was wicked.

Similarly, in *Akpakaland*, the M.O.A. surprised how the other wives of Akpaka who earlier protested against denuding now take sides with Fulama exclaimed “Foolish People! Do you now support Fulama? (34). Similarly, in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan allows the members of the audience to judge the actions of the robbers as well as the soldiers. It is their verdict that determines the end of the play. Also, in *Princess Elona*, the urge to judge is also exhibited by the audience. When the narrator tells the audience that the little princess escaped from the palace due to her father’s ugly behaviour, a member of the audience responds “serves him right, and I hate the king” (46).

The Law of Protest against Suspense

In traditional folklore, the audience at times interjects to dissuade the narrator from keeping them in suspense. On the contrary, the narrator knowing that suspense is an essential ingredient of a story deliberately weaves suspense into the story. The African audience by virtue of the fact they already know the story are eager to see how the narrator weaves the story to the end. However, the narrator is not unaware of this antic and if he must continue to hold the interest of the audience and end his tale, then he must continually hold them suspenseful till the end. Ukala in a class tutorial calls this ding-dong between the narrator and the audience a “game” that is known to both parties.

The protest against suspense could explain for the early point of attack in folkist plays. For instance, at the beginning of *The Placenta of Death*, when the narrator reveals the friction in Owodoland, the M. O. A. quickly asks “Why?”. That is, “tell us, why is this friction? What monster has wealth created in Owodoland? Similarly, in *Iredi War*, Crewe-Read attempts to escape after all his atrocities:

(Crewe-Read bends low on his bicycle pedalling as fast as he can. Gilpin runs after him. CARRIERS, RUNNERS abandon their loads, except their touches, and run after GILPIN, everyone bent low...).

To the above situation, the audience cannot wait to be kept in the dark. M.O.A. asks the narrator “Will they escape?” This could also be found in *Princess Elona*; Fikime, one of the members of the audience prods the narrator to quickly reveal if the king’s plan to marry his daughter succeeded:

FIKIME: So how was the marriage ceremony? Did she agree to marry the man?

ABALOR (Narrator): Well, coincidentally, Princess Elona had her own plan. When her father refused to kill her, she planned to run away.

ELOHO (Audience): Did she succeed?

Thus the African audience prods the narrator to dissuade him from keeping them in suspense, while the narrator needs suspense to keep his narration alive.

The Law of Expression of Emotion of Grief, Pleasure, Scorn, fear and Sympathy

The audience of folktales have the licence to express their emotions whichever way they deem depending on the situation in the story. In *The Placenta of Death*, the audience (M.O.A.) expresses scorn at Olotu when he lamented that the new breed politicians only think for themselves. They replied him:

M.O.A.: Because you deplete their pockets before you support them (34).

In other words, since Nigerians collect money and other inconsequential gifts like salt and onions from politicians, they should not complain when politicians afterwards fight for their own pockets. This situation is similar to M.O.A.'s response in *Akpakaland* when the narrator talks on the activities of politicians who pay lip service to the problems of the poor and tasks them to be self-reliant. M.O.A. scornfully replies "Are they (politicians) themselves self-reliant? (35). Similarly, in *Princess Elona*, the audience also expresses scorn as it loathes the king's cruelty on his only daughter. Owata and Fikime, two members of the audience say of him:

OWATA: Serves him right, and I hate the king

FIKIME: I hate him too. I pray he shouldn't find her. Did he? (46).

The Law of Ego Projection

As Ukala (2001:38) puts it, the African audience, (by virtue of their pre-knowledge of the story) makes "idiosyncratic interjections aimed at attracting attention to themselves as potential narrators". The numerous interjections cited above are quite self-explanatory. In *IrediWar*, the narrator in response to one of the interjections of M.O.A. I, tells him, "You'll soon find out, my brother". Also, in *Akpakaland*, when the Narrator says "the wind will blow", the audience did not allow him to complete the saying before joining him to echo "And we'll see the arse of the hen". It is as if the audience are telling the narrator "we also know it too". In another occasion, one M.O.A. tests the narrator:

M.O.A.: (Raising hand). Storyteller, I have a question.

NAR: Please, ask it.

M.O.A.: How may the poor seize power?

The question tests the dexterity of the narrator not only to proffer solution to every question posed, but also to remain focused in the story. This is why the narrator aptly answers the M.O.A. and immediately returns back to his story.

The Law of Closing

In African folklore tradition, there is always a closing formality just as they have the opening formalities. In Isokoland, the closing formality is similar to that of the opening. The traditional “Itaye” Iye” or “Egberiyó! Iyo” ends the story. This is exactly the situation in *Akpakaland* where the play ends with the closing formality, thus:

Nar: From there I went from there I returned o!

Aud: Welcome- o!

Nar: With a bow) Ee!

Depending on the narrator, he may choose to give the moral lesson of the story either before this closing call or just after the call. In *Princess Elona*, the narrator ends the play on the moral note.

Features of Folkist Plays

Early point of attack

The point of attack in folkist plays is usually at the beginning of the play. For instance, in Ukala’s *Akpakaland*, immediately after the opening formalities and the introduction of the main characters, Fulama steps in and tells Akpaka “Your favourite wife has a tail”. This sets the ball rolling. Is it true? Is one of the President’s wives with a tail? Can a human grow a tail? What would be the outcome? This early point of attack sets the stage for the intriguing story. Immediately Fulama reveals this, the audience’s response is swift; the M. O. A. asks “A tail?” This response is like saying “you mean the President’s wife has a tail? Tell us more about it quickly. Don’t put us in suspense”.

Similarly, in Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers*, the point of attack is at the beginning. Immediately after the narrator reveals through the opening song that his tale is about four dangerous armed robbers, the robbers enter and the story starts unfolding immediately. In fact, in many folk stories, the narrator, after the opening formalities begins with “the story I’m about to tell is about...” and the action starts unfolding immediately. Thus folkist

literary dramas do not keep the audience waiting for long before revealing the main focus of the story. The narrator only keeps the suspense that is necessary to sustain the audience's interest.

Dissolved time and space

Another common characteristic in folkist literary drama is the dissolved time and space. Like in indigenous folktales that give it vitality, time and space are inconsequential as the narrator could easily within seconds transverse many centuries in one story, and the characters in the story could navigate between the human or physical world and the metaphysical world of the spirits within seconds. The living and the dead can easily relate and even the unborn can speak and sing from the wombs of their mothers. This is why possession is a common element in many an African drama. In *Akpakaland*, Ide hails Enwe, thus:

IDE: To get roots and herbs, Enwe jumps to and fro the land of the dead (20)

Later, the narrator's voice echoes it again: "The plantain had begun to roast. The half-ripe plantain, bathed in herbs from the land of the dead, had begun to roast" (39). In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Alhaja goes into a trance and is transported into the metaphysical world. It takes quite some effort to bring her back to the physical world (52).

Such entwinement and collapse of time and space in folktales is not strange to the African audience whose worldview entails unity, synthesis. In Africa there is no distance between the unborn, the living and the dead. The distance between them is highly temporal. It is therefore not a surprise that Enwe, in *Akpakaland* could transverse both worlds to fetch herbs.

Improvisation

There is room for improvisation. In fact, improvisation is one chief element of traditional African drama. Since texts are not written down, the dexterity to improvise lies on the performer. In *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Osofisan recognises this by creating room for

improvisation in the script. He says “*In production, the list should be made to include the most recent public scandals*” (18). In *The Placenta of Death*, Ukala also makes room for alternative action. He says:

Members of the public audience raise one song after another.
NARRATOR selects a sad song for full singing

NARRATOR: Do most of us know that song?
(*Depending on the reply, narrator conducts the singing **OR** invites the one who raised the song to come out and teach it before everyone sings. The song is sung **as many times as it takes to touch the souls of the singers***). Emphasis, mine (13)

Here, the playwright did not specify how many times the song should be sung or which song. He did not also ask the narrator to teach the song, but creates opportunity for the member of the audience who raises the song to do so, thus further heightening the spirit of collaboration. In other words, the text itself is not fixed. It is this flexibility that accords the African folktale its contemporary relevance, so that in a story told a hundred years ago, a bad king could have sent his touts to steal his people’s farm produce such as yam and plantain while the same story re-told today, the yam and plantain would have been substituted with crude oil.

Simple Characterization

Folkist drama could be seen as drama for social action, hence its collaborative nature. Its main objective is to engage the spectator in collaboratively assessing the social issues articulated in the play. Hence the drama is not concerned with in-depth character development. Rather, the main focus of its characters is to demonstrate prevailing social attitude rather than their personalities or inner lives.

Also, in African folklore, there is a wealth of character types ranging from human, spirit, half-human-half-spirit, animals, human-animal, etc. This is also the case with folkist plays. In *Akpakaland* therefore, we are not surprised or doubt the possibility of Unata and later Fulama growing tails. The focus of folkist

drama therefore is not hinged on characters, but what the characters stand for.

There is also persistent use of foils. Character that contrasts and serves as the conventional antagonist. A character is provided with a contrasting character. For instance Fulama and Unata in *Akpakaland*, the Robbers and the soldiers in *Once Upon Four Robbers*. The essence of this contrast is to emphasize the contrast between virtue and vices, good and evil, poverty and wealth and oppressors and the oppressed.

Fluid plot

The plot of folkist plays is fluid; that is, the plays are structured in such a way that there is no room for unnecessary plot embellishment. With its early point of attack as earlier revealed, the play races non-stop to the climax and the end.

Simple/Poetic Language

Folktales are prerogative of ALL, not few. That is why the language of folkist plays is simple, though garnished with the poetic idioms familiar to all. Africa is home to very rich, robust poetic idioms. Achebe sums it up in his famous *Things Fall Apart* when he says “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” therefore, it is not a surprise that parables and proverbs are freely used in Folkist drama. The most interesting thing about the use of such poetic language is that its meaning is known to all. This is why when the narrator in *Akpakaland* says “the wind will blow”, the audience completes the saying -“And we’ll see the arse of the hen”. The use of poetic language embellishes and enriches the narrative and also brings the narrative to the doorstep of the people’s communication reality. The narrator, using them also projects his ego at his versatility in the language of his people. In *IrediWar*, for instance, rather than just tell Crewe-Read that they will inform the people of his request, the chiefs, through Chief Acholem replies:

ACHOLEM: (Standing) Obi Agun! Long may you live! Your chiefs have conferred already. They’ve asked me to tell you

that the demands of Mr. Ikuru-Iredi are too weighty for the few of us here to dispose of, negatively or positively. They are also too heavy for our lips to convey to the people of Owa... (22)

Similarly, in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Sergeant queries his brother, Hasan for not going back home when things were rough with him rather than take recourse to armed robbery, Hassan answers:

HASA: The family circuit eh? Like a huge female breast eternally swollen with milk. But it's a mere fantasy isn't it? The family breast can be sucked dry, however succulent, it can shrivel up in a season of want (57)

Also, in *Princess Elona*, the king, over-joyed with the news from the oracle that his wife will give birth to a baby boy tells his chiefs:

KING: Did you hear that, my chiefs? A son is coming to inherit the throne of his father's fathers. Ubuluku, the fish, turn wine and drink for water can never intoxicate the fish

Later, when the chiefs see how Ubuluku is turning the wine advice him to go gently on the wine as it is strong. To this, Ubuluku replies:

UBULUKU: Drink wine, Chief Ikre, adultery cannot kill a he-goat. (38)

Songs

Folkist plays incorporate music and songs, most of which are dramatic rather than incidental. Apart from serving to reinforce the theme of the tale, they also reinforce the spirit of collaboration between the narrator and the audience. Hence most of the songs have simple refrains that allow the audience to easily join the experience. For instance in *Once Upon Four Robbers* the refrain of the song at the beginning of the play is simply "ALUNGBIRIN GBIRIN". In other cases, the narrator may prod the audience to raise a song as in *The Placenta of Death*.

Folkism Aesthetic Theory: Matters Arising/Conclusion

Folkism aesthetic theory is quite novel as its universality could be applied to not just plays from the theorist's ethical orientation, but African continent at large as far as the story-telling form of drama is concerned. Its collaborative drive attempts to awaken the audience from its docility to join hands in creating realities that affect their lives. However, there is a limitation to the level of participation that the audience of modern African theatre would collaborate in performance. The African audience in traditional folklore participates to the extent that they already know the story, including its affiliate aesthetics such as music and songs. The story is not an exclusive prerogative of the narrator; it is communal aesthetics deeply entrenched in the oral narrative vault of the people. Ukala (2001) notes this when he posits that:

This Law (Law of joint performance) is difficult to observe in the African English theatre. In the African traditional theatre, its success derives from the typical audience's pre-knowledge of most of the stories as well as its interlocutory skill... The average English-speaking African theatre-goer, who sees the performance of such a play several times, may know the play well enough to sing its songs, repeat many of its memorable lines and interject, sometimes, appropriately. (34)

Ukala also notes that the inability of the modern audience to collaborate include its inability to see a performance more than once due to security and financial challenges. However, there are still other cogent reasons why the modern audience is unable to know the story and participate to the extent that traditional audience does. The audience of traditional folktales is a mono-cultural or mono-ethnic audience, while modern audience is multi-cultural one. The modern African audience by virtue of its heterogeneity in ethnical composition may find it difficult to collaborate much.

For instance, the beginning of *Iredi War* goes thus:

Narrator I: (Rises, and with her right hand, casts imaginary white chalk powder at the AUDIENCE.) E ye m onu nzun! (I give you white chalk)

To this, the audience responds:

AUDIENCE: I gwo, o re-e

The audience's response to the above opening is made possible because it is conversant with the culture. In an actual performance, the audience that is not conversant with the culture will only sit mum, passive.

However, to tackle the problem of cultural pluralism of the modern audience, Ukala in *Iredi War*, *Akpakaland* and *Placenta of Death* creates "Member(s) of Audience (M.O.A.) as characters. The use of M.O.A. as characters is to create the spirit of "joint performance" as is customary in traditional African theatre, when the actual (public) audience is ill equipped to co-join due to cultural differences or other factors.

Secondly, the modern audience today, apart from its heterogeneity is gradually becoming "modernized" not only due to the forces of globalisation/technology, but as a result of our current "urban" freak. The rural communities have lost most of its vital population to the urban centres. One may not be too ambitious to state that in many of these cities, children, some upwards the age of twenty or more may not have visited their communities of origin, or those that have done so may not have done so more than once or twice.

In addition, due to the life of individualism that is now prevalent in our capitalist driven society, which has equally permeated our traditional communities, the art of story-telling that gives vitality to folkism is gradually ebbing into the endangered vault. The implication of the above points is that the modern audience, especially the youth, is not attuned to the story-telling aesthetic idioms of traditional or rural Africa. Osofisan in Justin (2010: 142) notes this when he lamented that:

It is this new generation that worries me especially...there are critical generational problems. The present youth, having been shaped by factors different from those by which we were raised and nurtured, are naturally different from us in their values, their tastes and their habits. No society is ever static...

In this regards however, folkism attempts to rejuvenate and preserve this endangered African folklore culture in literary terms.

Works Cited

- Adeoye A. R. A. (2010). "On theatre Scholarship Controversy: The Case of the Director in the Traditional African Theatre". *The African Symposium: An Online Journal of the African Educational Research Network*. <http://www.ncsu.edu/aern/TAS10.2/TAS10.2Adeoye.pdf>. Sourced on 16/04/2016.
- Justin, A. T. (2010). "Higher Theatre Education in Search of a New Curriculum" in Iorapu, T. (ed). *Nigerian Theatre Journal*. SONTA.
- Nwankwo, I. E. (2010). "On the Difference of the Same: Theatre, Performance and the Tortuous Path of a Nation's Development" in *Nigerian Theatre Journal*. Ed. Iorapuu, T. Abuja: Society of Nigerian Theatre Artist, Vol. 10, No. 1, 22-35.
- Osofisan, F. (1991). *Once Upon Four Robbers*. Ibadan: Heinemann.
- Ukala, S. (1996). "Folkism": Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy" in *New Theatre Quarterly*. Xii. London: Cambridge University Press. 279-286.
- _____(2001). "Politics of Aesthetics", *African Theatre Playwrights and Politics*. Banham, M., Gibbs, J. and Osofisan, F. (Eds.) Oxford: Indiana University Press.
- _____(2011). *Akpakaland in Akpakaland and Other Plays*. Ibadan: Krafgrlots.
- _____(2011). *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Krafgrlots.
- _____(2011). *The Placenta of Death in Two Plays*. Ibadan: Krafgrlots.
- Umukoro, M. O. (2010). *Princess Elona in The Beggars and Other One-Act Plays*. Ughelli: Eregha Press.

Fourteen



Sam Ukala's Perspective of Cultural Collision and Tragic Vision in *Iredi War*

Bassey Nsa Ekpe

Introduction

All cultures change through time. No culture is static. However, most cultures are basically conservative in that they tend to resist change. Some resist more than others by enacting laws for the preservation and protection of traditional cultural patterns while putting up barriers to alien ideas and things that tend to abuse existing cultural patterns. When barriers are put up to protect inherent cultures and a change is forced on the people, one of the resultant effects is tragedy; which Miller described as “the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly” (3). In the tragic vision, something or someone dies or lapses into a winter of discontent. A universal tragic vision cannot exist in a vacuum; nor is it an intellectual abstraction, unrelated to the reality of man's cultural life. According to Agovi, “tragedy must always define those who espouse its vision; it must reflect their real life concerns and involvements; it must embody their fundamental assumptions about life and existence, including their attempts to preserve the integrity of their culture” (38).

When a society is helpless to resist massive cultural invasion and strong pressure to abandon traditional cultural patterns in favour of alien ones, there is usually considerable psychological stress. There is nearly constant culture shock in response to the new reality and disorientation from the failure of traditional skills and values in dealing with the rapidly changing situation. Under these circumstances, it is common for conscious, organised attempts to be made in order to revive or perpetuate selected

aspects of the indigenous culture or to gain control of the direction and rate of culture change. This process and resultant effect is what *Iredi War* dwells on.

Sam Ukala embarks on a journey of evaluating the causes and effects of cultural collision in *Iredi War*. He highlights those factors that could have rendered the situation less tragic; not leaving out the over ambitious nature of some human beings who tend to force the wind of culture change in favour of the colonial masters. *Iredi War* recounts a historical occurrence that condemns not any cultural giving but indirectly appeals for a more humane and considerate nature when trying to introduce alien culture to a set of people. It calls for understanding and respect for individual culture and discusses the tragic vision in forceful cultural incorporation.

Iredi War

The Play is based on the 1906 uprising of the people of Owa Kingdom (currently in Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria), against British oppressive colonial rule as championed by Assistant District Commissioner O.S. Crewe-Read (whom the Owa called Iredi), and the quelling of it by the British Army. *Iredi War* discusses the high-handedness of O. S. Crewe-Read coupled with his displacement of traditional values in the Owa kingdom. It highlights the struggle for cultural dominance by the British and the struggles by Owa for cultural sustenance and respect. The tragic incidents and brutality of reprisal attacks by both sides are also discussed.

Ukala describes the play as a „folkist“ play or „folkscript“ because it is constructed using the principles of folkism, which he defines as “the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk (the „people in general“...), and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale” (*Nigerian Dramaturgy* 285). He adds that, in folkism, the dramatic recreation or adaptation of a story is faithful to the original, not slavishly, but enough for the owners of the story to recognise it and identify with the recreation or adaptation.

Cultural Conflicts in *Iredi War*

Mazrui describes the „us/them“ confrontation as the most persistent theme in world order perceptions. He adds that:

The dichotomy can take a variety of forms- the native versus the foreigner, the friend versus the foe, the familiar versus the strange, the Orient versus the West, the North versus the South, the developed versus the developing countries, and so on; this dichotomous framework of world perceptions amounts to an iron law of dualism, a persistent conceptualization of the world of us and them (214).

In the case of *Iredi War*, one would tend to ask: to what extent is this mode of thinking a product of culture and to what extent is cultural dualism intensifying hostility between the Owa and the colonialists? Ukala deals with the issue of cultural dualism in an atmosphere fuelled by Crewe-Read's insensitivity which Ukala described as “power-hungry and power-drunk... young and inexperienced” (38).

In *Iredi War*, we see an Owa community responding to adverse changes brought about by colonial invasion. Not only is the community faced with adverse cultural changes but also have to endure devastating blows on its heritage and people. Igboba (the Obi of Owa Kingdom); a wise man whose status in the society places him above others, struggles to understand and find a common ground with the white man, his friend Mr Chichester (District Commissioner). Mr. Chichester had entered the Owa kingdom with respect for existing cultural practices but the overzealousness and high handedness of Crewe-Read (sent to replace Chichester) set the community ablaze and things fell apart.

Ukala presents the collision between Owa and the colonial masters with resulting destructive outcomes. The impact of the collision climaxed in the murder of Crewe-Read and the mass execution of key players in Owa Kingdom. However, respect is given to the African tradition as the sacredness of the Kingship stool is emphasised and the power of self is accrued to persons of high traditional offices; defining the immunity of traditional heads in a typical African setting. Some of the symbolic elements in the

play include: Lawani shooting at Iwekuba and having the gun go dumb; Igboba using his astral body to spear Lawani in the chest thus resulting in Lawani's death; Nneke stretching out her right hand to draw indigenous arsenal (*uta mgba*) from the air and casting it at a soldier's flank. Only supernatural eyes see the sharp pebbles, pieces of irons and big needles as they stream from Nneke's hand into the soldier's flank. Another instance is when Rudkin's soldier tried to shoot a gun at Igboba and his men but ends up having his hands hang in the air without anyone attacking him physically.

The fact that Igboba could not be arrested but willingly gives himself up for the sake of his people shows that no degree of force would have granted the colonial masters complete power over the Africans if the Africans did not find a reason to give in willingly. The pre-existing system of government which vested supreme power in the Obi and helped checkmate activities of the villagers prove a point contrary to the much talked about belief that Africans had no system of government before the coming of the Europeans.

Even with smears of dissimilarities, Ukala tries to establish a common point in the religious belief of both the Owa and the Europeans. Both parties believe in the supremacy of God but what they term as God and approaches to worshipping Him set the pace and establish the difference. The difference is capitalised on by Crewe-Read who at one instance causes uproar about libation being poured to bless the items of refreshment his host (Igboba) brought out to welcome him. The clash is heightened with Crewe-Read's consistent degradation of the Owa culture and total condemnation of their way of worship.

In terms of governance, both parties believe in the rule and judgement of their head. While Owa look up to Igboba as the Obi, the colonial masters and converts believe in the power of His Majesty King Edward VII, King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominion. In terms of religious differences, they believe strongly in the supremacy of a God figure. The people of Owa find the Almighty God, Crewe-Read talks about to be strange. Igboba expresses this when he says "Mr DC, we do not know your god. Our fathers didn't introduce him to us. That's why we don't offer

him kola and palm wine" (Ukala 16). To this, Crewe-Read replies "Chief Igboba, your fathers were primitive, ignorant and uncivilised barbarians" (Ukala 16).

An overview of colonialization process in some ancient kingdoms in Nigeria reveals a common thread for cultural clashes. An instance could be drawn from that of the ancient Benin kingdom as Yerima noted:

Consul Galway had established a cordial working relationship with Oba Ovonramwen and his people...In December, 1896, Consul Galway being away on leave, his overzealous deputy, Vice-Consul Phillips, decided to provoke a confrontation with the Benin Monarchy over the free trade issue, in order to use it as a pretext to conquer and occupy Benin Kingdom (10).

The tragedy in *Iredi War* is also caused by the overzealousness of Assistant District Commission (ADC) Crewe-Read who took over from District Commissioner (DC) Chichester. Whereas Chichester had built a foundation of friendship with Owa, Crewe-Read was out to destroy anything and anyone who stood in his way of taking control and administering the kingdom. The colonial masters did not only introduce Christianity and improved technology but also had brought cultural conflict within the people of Owa. This is seen more clearly as the acting DC seeks the displacement of established cultural offerings rather than trying to create an alignment.

Crewe-Read seeks to militarily dominate Owa in the culture contact situation that presented itself, he describes the Owa culture as being inferior and for a people with a well-defined cultural pattern, a clash was inevitable. Crewe-Read spares no words when communicating with the people of Owa as he constantly reminds them that their culture is a joke to him. He does not also take kindly to the polite traditional reception afforded him at the Igboba's palace. He outrightly condemns all the greetings and religious offerings and causes quite a stir with his bombastically portrayed prayers laced with loud choruses of „Amen“ from his party while Igboba pours libation. His refusal of kola which

signifies friendship says a lot about his refusal to find common grounds with the people of Owa.

Crewe-Read fails to realise that all cultures change with time, that none remains static. But as Hasselbein puts it, “culture does not change because we desire to change it. Culture changes when the organisation is transformed; the culture reflects the realities of people working together every day” (6). Crewe-Read is not concerned with transforming Owa but requires an overnight change dispelling all previously structured organisations and beliefs. He does not also recognise that both cultures have a unifying bond, just as Emeka argues “culture, no doubt, may vary but that is only at the peripheral level; the underlying principle that establishes every society is similar, if not the same” (9) Crewe-Read believes in the supremacy of God Almighty so also do the people of Owa believe in their god. The British had a system of government with respected hierarchy, so also with Owa. It takes patient and peaceful unveiling of the peripheral differences to come to a unifying conclusion and acceptance of other cultures.

Tragic Vision: Reflections in *Iredi War*

According to the *Guide for the Study of Literature (GSL)*, in tragedy, there seems to be a mix of seven interrelated elements that help to establish what is referred to as Tragic Vision, they are:

1. The conclusion is catastrophic.
2. The catastrophic conclusion will seem inevitable.
3. It occurs, ultimately, because of the human limitations of the protagonist.
4. The protagonist suffers terribly.
5. The protagonist's suffering often seems disproportionate to his or her culpability.
6. Yet the suffering is usually redemptive, bringing out the noblest of human capacities for learning.
7. The suffering is also redemptive in bringing out the capacity for accepting moral responsibility.

The Catastrophic Conclusion: In tragedy, unlike comedy, the denouement tends to be catastrophic; it is perceived as the concluding phase of a downward movement. Frye adds that there is the unhappy ending – the hero's or heroine's fall from fortune and consequent isolation from society, often ending in death. In *Iredi War*, the protagonist (Igboba) falls from fortune and is consequently displaced as the number one figure in his community. He faces a punishment prescribed by a foreign law; he stands his ground as the defender of his people to his very end, even as he says to Chichester:

... Listen, if my people deserve to die by hanging because they dared to defend their fatherland against oppressive aggression from you and your people, I desire to die with them because they ran my errand. Take me to them. If I must live, even in exile, my people must live also. Exile will end one day, whether you like it or not, and I'll need my subjects, for what is a king without subjects? Owa will need them, for what is a kingdom without people? (Ukala 95).

Igboba accepts a catastrophic end in solidarity with his people. He chooses to die with his people rather than live to bear titles while his people are done away with.

The Sense of Inevitability: To the audience of a tragedy, the catastrophe will seem, finally, to be inevitable. According to Emeka, tragedy cannot simply be identified with uncontrollable disasters, still there is the feeling that the protagonist is inevitably caught by operating forces which are beyond his control. Whether grounded in fate or nemesis, accident or chance, or in a causal sequence set going through some action or decision initiated by the tragic protagonist himself or herself, the operating forces assume the function of a distant and impersonal power.

Igboba and the people of Owa are caught in the wind of culture change, being a community that holds firm to its belief and strives to maintain some degree of control over what the people represent. It is a tragic fight trying to sustain control over the religious, governmental structure and communal relationship in the Kingdom. On the other hand, Owa is liberal in embracing persons

of other culture without any premonition that the embraced culture will subsequently overwhelm their own culture and their persistence to maintain their established identity will meet a catastrophic end.

Ifedi posits that our culture can offer genuine and lasting solutions to our pressing problems and provides us with respect, sense of purpose, direction, fulfilment and pride which only our indigenous system can bring about. This view is shared by Igboba and the people of Owa; in the process of colonisation, Crewe-Read tramples on their respect, abuse their sense of purpose, condemn their direction and crumples their pride, thus motivating them to fight the imposed system resulting in an inevitable tragic end. One of such condemning utterances of Crewe-Read is when he says: "I'm not concerned about your culture, which is uncivilised, anyway. I'm concerned about protocol in the Southern protectorate under His Majesty King Edward VII, King of the United Kingdom and the British Dominions, in whose service I am" (Ukala 19).

Crewe-Read contributes greatly to the inevitable tragic end because, unlike, his predecessor (Chichester) whose approach to bringing about change in the community was laced with understanding, respect and building of relationship with the people; Crewe-Read out rightly disrespects the communal hierarchy and even attempts to publicly beat up the elders of the kingdom. He says: "Chief Igboba! Call your chiefs to order or I'll have them flogged" (Ukala 18).

Human Limitation, Suffering, and Disproportion: Ultimately, perhaps, all the instances that we find in tragedy of powerlessness, of undeniable human limitations, derive from the tragic perception of human existence itself, which seems, at least in part, to be terrifyingly vulnerable, precarious, and problematic. And it is precisely because of these human limitations that suffering also becomes basic to the tragic vision. Tragedy typically presents situations that emphasize vulnerability, situations in which both physical and spiritual security and comforts are undermined, and in which the characters are pressed to the utmost limits - overwhelming odds, impossible choices, demonic forces within or without (or both). Against the tragic protagonist are the powers

that be, whether human or divine, governed by fate or chance, fortune or accident, necessity or circumstance, or any combination of these. The more elevated, the more apparently secure and privileged the character's initial situation, the greater is our sense of the fall, of the radical change of fortune undergone, and the greater our sense of his or her suffering. Tragedy testifies to suffering as an enduring, often inexplicable force in human life.

In the suffering of the protagonists, there is frequently, something disproportionate. Even to the extent that there is some human cause, the eventual consequences may seem too severe. In Igboba's case, his tragic end is defined by both human factors and extraordinary circumstance. Human factor in the case of the overzealous, self-centred and overambitious nature of Crewe-Read who was described as being under qualified to take up a job that required so much consideration and understanding of human nature. Chichester emphasises Crewe-Read's under qualification and generally makes remarks on the calibre of people saddled with the responsibility of colonising the Blacks, when he says:

... The bane of His Majesty's Service – as of Her Majesty's Service a few years back – is shortage of staff. Acute and chronic shortage of matured, experienced, well-trained staff. Such people prefer to remain in posh offices in the United Kingdom...Only the very adventurous, the young and inexperienced, seeking an inlet into any respectable employment, only they cast caution to the wind and chose to confront the deadly mosquitoes of the rainforest: the antelopes, the Ologboseres, the Ekumekus, the Igboba (Ukala 60).

Narrator I also reveals Crewe-Read's status when she says: "Though he sometimes claim(ed) he was a captain, British records show that he was only a yeoman in the Wiltshire Imperial Yeomanry during the 1900-1901 war in South Africa" (Ukala 38).

The supernatural aspect of Igboba's tragic end is seen in the response of the gods. Their reactions and incomprehensive responses spelled an unavoidable tragic end. When consulted, the gods either said nothing or made unclear remarks such as: "Cripple

in a desolate place!” (Ukala 77) or “Greet your Obi!” (78). All these added up to spell an avoidable tragic end for the kingdom.

The Learning Process and Acceptance of Moral Responsibility: Despite the inevitable catastrophe, the human limitation, the disproportionate suffering, the tragic vision also implies that suffering can call forth human potentialities, can clarify human capacities, and that often there is a learning process that the direct experience of suffering engenders. Indeed, tragedy provides a complex view of human heroism, a riddle mixed of glory and jest, nobility and irony.

For tragedy presents not only human weakness and precarious security and liability to suffering, but also its nobility and greatness. Tragedies do not occur to puppets. While the "tragic victim" is one of the recurring character types of tragedy, tragic protagonists more frequently have an active role, one which exposes not only their errors of judgment, their flaws, their own conscious or unwitting contribution to the tragic situation, but which also suggests their enormous potentialities to endure or survive or transcend suffering, to learn what „naked wretches“ feel, and to attain a complex view of moral responsibility.

Tragic vision insists upon man's responsibility for his actions. This is the essential element of the vision that permits us to deny access to its precincts to puppets, who by definition, have neither free will nor ultimate responsibility for their existence. Tragedy acknowledges the occasional disproportion between human acts and their consequences, but imposes or accepts responsibility nevertheless. In this way, pain and fear are spiritualized as suffering. Igboba gladly embraces his moral responsibility. He stands as a representation of his people making himself a tragic victim. He expresses the acceptance of his tragic fall and describes his circumstance as an act which other leaders will benefit from.

The Notion of Cultural Conflict and Tragic Vision in *Iredi War*

Ukala reveals that the quest for development through colonial efforts did not only increase the tensions between cultural interpretations and cultural bonding, but also gave rise to collision

of interests between subjectivity and objectivity. Most times, conflicts induced by cultural differences are not necessarily resolved by subjugating the realm of particular cultural values to the purportedly universal values represented by alien rulers. Also, allowing communities to isolate themselves from the society as a whole will not necessarily resolve these conflicts either. In the case of *Iredi War*, cooperation and tolerance instead of repression would have helped in narrowing the gap between the colonial masters and the local authorities.

The cultural conflict and tragic vision in *Iredi War* is interwoven with a common thread; individuals from both parties became willing participants in the war upon learning about their in-group member/s harmed by the other party, this leads to the act of exacting revenge on the out-group perpetrator or any member of the out-group. Such occurrences are peculiar in cultures where people are largely interdependent and the group is the basic unit with which people identify. As a consequence, harm to anyone in the group affects all group members and motivates vicarious revenge - this is the basis for the tragic events in *Iredi War*.

According to Boer, "the tragic perspective on cultural conflicts entails that contending cultural paradigms will always threaten to oppose their contrary – hence their polarization. It equally entails, however, that those who adhere to contending cultural paradigms can – and must – try to resist this polarizing dynamic by all means" (30). A less tragic end would have been the case of Owa if the colonial forces had recognised that the negative elements it assigns to the people form the basis of their existence thus the repression of these elements, necessary as it may be, tends to entail their re-emergence as a force that perverts its proper paradigm even more because every culture contains essential and secondary elements, strengths and weaknesses, virtues, defects, positive and negative aspects as well as factors for progress or for regression.

Conclusion

Like all literary forms, tragedy seeks to answer some basic questions about human existence. Increasingly, it seems to be the most apt summation of Africa's colonial story especially in Nigeria. The Obi of Owa kingdom is portrayed as a man with deepening conflicts, even as the Owa religion is looked down on and also considered as a joke by Crewe-Read. The process adopted by Crewe-Read disrupts religious practices and other inherent modes of cultural operations, the high point of which included the burning of shrines; and disruption of the pre-existing judicial system.

Although, in the play, Igboya is defeated in battle by the British, he wins the moral victory over a system Crewe-Read presented as a reprobate. Crewe-Read continuously accords little respect for, and makes no attempt to understand the Owa culture. Igboya wins his fight of morality by his defiance and strict adherence to his cultural ties even in the face of death. In *Iredi War* we are confronted by the re-enactment of the adversity a great African ancestor suffered in an unjust war he was compelled to fight with the British.

In the play, there is an obvious dominance of the tragic mode, considering that the play depicts the essence and existence of cross-cultural communication and differences in an unpredictably uncertain environ. It also depicts the dynamism, complexity and ephemeral nature of human life, as it presents the story of a protagonist locked in fierce struggle against forces that are bent on bringing him firmly under their control, however feeble or aggressive his resistance against such forces. At the end of it all, the tragic hero refused to succumb under the immense weight of the colonial forces.

Works Cited

- Agovi, Kofi. "The Vision of Tragedy in Contemporary African Theatre." *African Theatre Review* 1.2 (1986): 21-40. Print.
- Boer, Karin. "Hegel Today: Towards a Tragic Conception of Intercultural Conflicts." *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 3.2 & 3 (2007): 19-33. Print.

- Miller, Arthur. "Tragedy and the Common Man." *The Theatre: Essays of Arthur Miller*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1978, pp. 3-7. Print.
- Emeka, Odoh Onyeka. "Towards a Universal Tragic Vision in J.P. Clark's *Song of Goat*." *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics* 32 (2017): 48-57. Print.
- English Department. *A Guide to the Study of Literature: A Companion Text for Core Studies 6, Landmarks of Literature*. Brooklyn College, 2009. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. New Jersey: Princeton University, 1957. Print.
- Hasselbein, Frances. "The Key to Cultural Transformation." *Leader to Leader*. 12 (1999): 1-7. Print.
- Ifedi, Chuma. "Nigeria: Cultural Policy and National Development" *All Africa*. 24 Sept. 2007. Web. 3 Nov. 2017.
<<http://allafrica.com/stories/200709240854.html>>
- Mazrui, Ali A. "The Moving Cultural Frontier of World Order: From Monotheism to North-South Relations." *Culture, Power, and Global Transformations*. Lisbon: World Order Models Project, 1980. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Iredi War: A Folkscript Drama*. Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2014. Print
- _____. "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy." *New Theatre Quarterly* XII.47 (1996): 279-287. Print.
- Yerima, Ahmed. *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*. Ibadan: Kraftgriots, 2007. Print.

Fifteen



Sam Ukala's Drama and the Trend of Conformity: A Study of *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*

Uche-Chinemere Nwaozuzu

Introduction

In this chapter, conformity is taken to mean the conservative tendency in a creative work which appears as a continuum (*Chambers* 257). We may note some resemblance between literature and other institutions which typify conservatism such as law and religion. Like them, literature is a sphere in which the linguistic transactions of the past are stored up reverently for their value to posterity. Apart from creative literature, scriptures and statutes are the other kinds of text which are preserved for future ages, word for word and sentence by sentence. They are more than historical documents surviving as static exhibits in museums and libraries. They remain alive from generation to generation, and speak in an authoritative voice to one age as to another. Related to our vision of conformity is the ideal of the folk, which for emphasis we will define as the survival of tokens of a culture such as language, performance and beliefs, harvested into the dynamics of performance rubrics of the present. This is a time-defying phenomenon which is very evident in Sam Ukala's plays. In this chapter, two of his works, *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland* will form the focus of our investigation. Specifically we shall examine how tokens of folklore such as narration, song, idioms, morals and other traditional motifs are employed to orchestrate a conformity that draws a parallel between the present times and past traditions. We shall begin with *Akpakaland*.

Akpakaland: Summary and Analysis

Akpakaland opens with the narrator leading members of the audience in an Ika folktale song performance which rises to a crescendo. This is followed by a brief invocative prayer that ushers in Akpaka, whose appearance and defence mechanism establishes his role as the leader of a nation. In this scene, his five wives file out along the lines of social status and ethnic inclination. They are depicted as representing the different regions of the country symbolic of their husband's name, Akpakaland. The spatial relationship between Akpaka and his wives right from the beginning of the play suggests palpable tension in the polity. Akpaka who has remained seated all the while, could be noticed to be figuring out how to surmount some of the challenges confronting his polity.

Fulama, the eldest of his wives and from the region of the rich, makes a comeback and announces that one of the wives of the king has a tail. Members of the Audience ask for clarifications and are told that the tail is like that of a cow. Akpaka is sad on hearing the news wondering how such a development could have arisen in the midst of ravaging hunger and emptiness in the land. Fulama thus, refuses to leave on the prodding of the king, insisting that the king must investigate the matter. She accuses him of neglect and abandonment, as evidenced by the consanguineous relationship between him and his youngest wife, Unata. She alleges that the latter has bewitched him with the tail. As he tries to ward her off, the other women come in demanding his mercy. Akpaka's efforts to find out the particular person who has this tail does not yield any fruits as Fulama suggests that the president and a few of his ministers undress the women to identify the culprit. Akpaka is disturbed by the suggestion. He decides that the whole Akpakaland would witness this parade of nudity. This unsettles the two women from the poor zone as a date is picked for the public inspection. Akpaka announces that the woman who owns the tail will cleanse the land with her blood as it is an abomination. This is followed by an announcement to the citizens. Soon after, Unata takes ill with an object protruding from her anus. There is suspicion among the wives, but it is Iyebi who gives her support, though Fulama has

equally taken to being – friendly and concerned. Unata, with the help of Idemudia, her father does everything to rid herself of the strange attack. This is followed by Fulama eating the smoked plantain given to Unata by Enwe, the native doctor, which ironically transfers the cow tail back to her. The day of reckoning arrives and the women dance and sing to prove their innocence. Fulama is found to be with the obnoxious tail. She is led away to face a gruesome fate.

The play *Akpakaland*, is also a statement on bad governance which manifests itself through weak leadership. Early in the play, Akpaka is shown to have taken to drinking. He finds comfort in the bottle amidst the empty treasury and general state of insecurity in the land. It is this situation and what Enwe, the medicine man suggests as Akpaka's penchant "to cultivate fresh farmlands" (20), that irks the most senior wife, Fulama,

Your favourite wife has a tail ... you remain tethered to her tail because she has charmed you. She has wrapped you into her wrapper, alongside her tail. (14-15)

The pseudo courage which Fulama and Iyebi exhibit in flippantly talking to the king is unsettling. The seeming audacity of the two women highlights the stratification of Akpaka's wives along social classes. For instance Fulama rants,

You chose not to see it because she is not Fulama. If she were Fulama, you would have said, "Execute her! Execute the long-tailed iguana. (15)

Iyebi is from the province of the poor like Unata. In the State House, her voice cuts the role of the revolutionist but with her kind (Unata) being reclusive and timid, does not achieve much in the play. She is a character who would have been flat but for her challenge of the atrocities and oppression going on in the State House. Thus she is able to speak for the advancement of the cause of the maligned,

I'd rather die, than parade myself naked before every skunk in Akpakaland ... why Iyebi? Why Iyebi and Unata, the two wives from the province of the poor? Why must we begin

instead of those who have been practicing striptease for almost a week now? ... why not Fulama? She brought about this matter. Now you shield her under your wing and order Iyebi to show her bottom first. I'm not showing. If you were to share treasures, you would not give Iyebi first. Let Fulama go and show. (45)

Her courage to revolt is typical of folktale narrative as ably scripted by Ukala. In oral tradition, truth is gold, no matter how brutal it is. So, Iyebi in her actions and speeches confronts Fulama, Akpaka and all oppressive systems. She does well in the play to stand by Unata, a woman cast as fragile, innocent and accommodating. In her attack of the debasement going on in the house, Iyebi scorns Fulama, "I guess, Mrs. President, that you have completed arrangements to expose your tail tomorrow, your warty iguana tail? (40). Her poise unsettles Fulama, who after Iyebi had left, remarks that, "the wood pecker that pecks a stone will lose its beak" (40) without elaborating. As Fulama later senses the riveting aroma of a roasted plantain, she demands for it. Here, one is forced to say that Fulama is greedy; though rich, she is ready to dispossess the poor of her belongings. But the irony of the „plantain“ is that it is a medicinal remedy from Enwe, for it is often said that, "a persistent beggar can only be got rid of by a donation". Suddenly, the senior wife is with the tail having started scratching her buttocks. All efforts by Unata who now feels a wave of peace to know what is wrong with her is rebuffed.

Akpaka in the play is presented as a ruler, who pays more attention to sexual pleasure than real affairs of state. That is why he has to accept Fulama's suggestion that the women strip in public knowing the implication of that act of debasement. Also, Fulama's culpability stares us in the face as her shameful behaviour is what Iwuchukwu Rebecca Chinelo describes as women, being "oppressors of themselves" (58). According to her, "women, most often contribute effectively to their own oppression" (58).

Akpakaland captures the futility of self-aggrandizement and hatred. The fate of Fulama and her co-travellers at the end of the

play speaks powerfully on the need for humility and understanding in all human relations.

The Slave Wife: Summary and Analysis

The Slave Wife dramatizes the vicissitudes of man when confronted with his past. The play which starts like a folk tale opens in the palace of Oba Ogiso, who summons his chiefs to express his personal worry and anxiety. He has no son, and apparently no heir who would succeed him when he dies. He has also invited the spokesman of the oracle, Obu, whom he suspects of conniving with the gods to feed him lies and tales. The other chiefs seem to acquiesce themselves to Ogiso's negative disposition towards Obu except Ezomo and Eteruma, who call for caution, reminding the Oba of Obu's usefulness in times past, particularly during wars. Ogiso, Iyase, Ologhoshere and Obaseki doubt Obu's divination capability alluding to the fact that he was failing in his duties to provide a knowing eye for the kingdom in matters of oracular consultations and communion with the ancestors.

Eventually however, Obu consults the oracle and advises the Oba to ask his six wives, including Igbon, the slave to eat from a bowl of mashed yam into which would be inserted a seed of alligator pepper. The wife who eats the alligator pepper would be the one chosen by the gods to bear his heir. On the day of reckoning, Ogiso having inserted the alligator pepper, gives the bowl to Alahin, the first wife who summons the other wives for the royal meal. Igbon arrives dirty and tattered from fetching firewood after the other wives had struggled over the mashed yam. This development gladdens Alahin and the other women, except the 2nd woman who implores them to allow Igbon some breathing space. Alahin, then, motions the slave wife to the floor which is littered with a few crumbs that fell from the bowl as they hurriedly ate it up. Igbon feeds from the crumbs and has the fortune of eating the tiny alligator pepper inserted by Oba Ogiso. Soon they all become pregnant with Alahin being the first to boast of carrying the heir apparent. They are all sent to their respective father's homes to deliver their babies. Igbon, the slave wife, having nowhere to go

to, delivers in the forest with the help of an oldman/spirit. The other women deliver all manner of monstrosities such as, snail, millipede, gourd and a banana stem while Igbon gives birth to a baby boy. The day of their rendezvous reaches and each woman arrives at the cross road to announce what she gave birth to. In a display of utter envy and rage, Alahin and the other wives forcibly take Igbon's child from her and throw him into the Ikpoba river. They attempt strangling her but on the advice of the 2nd Woman compel her not to tell anyone, even the Oba.

On their arrival, the Oba is distraught that none of his wives bore a human baby. The plot of the play progresses in despair as Ogiso descends into a psychological and emotional wreck making enemies of all, and banishes Obu. Years later, a young man appears claiming to be the lost son of the Oba. The Oba summons all his wives who all claim to be the mother of the boy. To find out who the real mother is, he subjects them to a test. Whomsoever the mystery boy eats his food would be deemed his rightful mother. Rejecting all the women, the mystery boy eats Igbon's food. After narrating his ordeal to his father, Oba Ogiso passes the death sentence on the head wife, Alahin for her wickedness and also metes out punishments to the other wives.

Ukala's *The Slave Wife* is a metaphor for unbridled oppression whose repercussions keep tossing up like the proverbial „Abiku or Ogbanje“. The narration which the Praise-Singer hints at early in the play returns us to this concern of murderous acquisitions of thrones and slaves. *The Slave Wife* mirrors the past and uses the actions and inactions of Oba Ogiso to draw attention to issues of inordinate ambition and greed. We are told that it was from the invasion of other kingdoms that Igbon and the praise-singer, now eunuch, were brought. This is why the Praise-Singer exploits the oracular proclamation to highlight the brutish past of the Oba and his kingdom, "I was not born a eunuch. The marks on my cheek show that I am not an Idu, although I can speak Idu now" (9). The above revelation underscores the anguish and identity crisis the slaves are subjected to. The Praise Singer also reveals that he was castrated to be a praise singer in the Oba's palace. He makes allusion that Ogiso's travails are a result of years

of war and plunder which has left in its wake a trail of blood, anguish and destruction. He rhetorically asks,

And Ogiso who did this harm
To procreation wants an heir
Are the gods senseless? (9)

The above lines highlight the fact that one can never escape the consequences of his actions. His utterance is a prayer to the gods to vindicate him and punish his oppressor. He laments further,

... Ogun was
Sleeping with women when we fell;
Sango's bolt's were exhausted when we fell. (10)

The Praise Singer's lament draws the audience's empathy and understanding in believing that the gods must have had a hand in what befell them. The Praise-Singer can do nothing but to resign himself to fate. He urges us to see through his narration how Ogiso could kill and love at the same time. The comparison he makes with his songs and drumming reveals the anguish of a man who is kept against his will to be at the beck and call of the very sovereign that has enslaved him.

The tragic end of the main female character in this play has much implication for the artistic design which has come to be associated with the playwright. We shall discuss this in our examination of tokens of conformity in the two plays.

Trends of Conformity in *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*

We shall begin our discussion on conformity with *Akpakaland*. The analysis will dwell on issues of theme, plot, characterization, language and other artistic designs such as song and dance. The first element of conformity that confronts us is character and thematic concerns.

In *Akpakaland*, Ukala uses the narrator and the M.O.A. and the sequence of the storyline which is the plot to express his folkist idea. The „happenings“ technique which he employs allows the audience a participatory role in expressing their feelings and conveying the emotions of the characters. It is epic also as the

story deals with the state of Akpakaland and the misfortune that befalls the president and his home. It illustrates the falling of Fulama, who is of noble birth in the play, having come from the rich zone, and who though good to some extent, as she looks after Unata and does not allow Loma fight Unani, is however, flawed by arrogance and a pseudo display of wisdom. *Akpakaland* is a parabolic mockery of the misuse of power by those in government. From the foregoing, we see several instances where the playwright employed traditional motifs such as narration, song, idioms, sententiousness and participatory designs to achieve conformity with what obtains in indigenous African performance genre.

The riveting ego of male dominance, where women are seen as conquests, sex objects and only good for procreation are what the playwright seems to highlight in the portraiture of the six wives of Oba Ogiso in *The Slave Wife*. The six wives of Oba Ogiso suffer much degradation as the women in *Akpakaland*. This can be seen when Alahin retorts,

There is Obobo in here for us to eat. In it is a seed of alligator pepper slipped in by my husband's very hands at the instance of the oracle. (11)

The women are made to squabble and fight in order to eat the alligator pepper. The issue of bearing a male child which commands a place of importance in traditional African society is highlighted here. This concern finds a good parallel in James Ene Henshaw's *Children of the Goddess*, where King Amansa threatens all his wives because of their inability to bear him a male child. Also in Asare Konadu's *A Woman In Her Prime*, the heroine, Pokuwaa, agonizes over what she went through in Brenhoma, a community that places the importance of a male child well above her wellbeing. Even her mother, the Old Lady does not help matters as she insists and drums it into her ears the need to carry out repeated sacrifices. The decision of the women to throw Igbon's baby into the Ikpoba River highlights the extent to which women can go to do harm to their kind. This scenario finds adequate parallel in *Apkakaland* where women such as Fulama and Iya Fulama serve as agents of female subjugation. In *Akpakaland*,

Fulama serves as a kind of devil's advocate in her relentless taunt of the king to humiliate the other wives,

FULAMA: You're charmed darling, and it should be said. You are charmed; you remain tethered to her tail because she charmed you. She has wrapped you into her wrapper, alongside her tail, and there, you sweat and swoon for one daughter in eight - (*AKPAKA lashes at her*) Hnn! Kill me. Kill me for the beautiful one with a long tail. You say you're impartial. You see a long tail every night and you say you do not see it. You choose not to see it because she's not Fulama. If she were, you would have said, "Execute her! Execute the long-tailed iguana. (15)

Fulama's goading of her husband merely serves to discredit her co-wife Unanta whom she suspects the king has a soft spot for.

Apart from females, the men folk in these plays also had condescending attitude towards women. For instance in *The Slave Wife*, Ogiso's role in denigrating the place of women in society is encapsulated thus:

The slave you asked me to marry I have married
The blood of my body has fattened he buttocks
not her belly. No heir has been born. (5)

In terms of selfishness, Alahin and her co-wives are comparable to Fulama, Unata, Yeiye, and Seotu in *Akpakaland*. Again, the play demonstrates markedly the complicity of the gods or supernatural forces in directing man's affairs. Early in the folktale, the eunuch notes:

But Ogun will not sleep for ever.
He will make the pursuer the pursued;
He will make the first the last. (10)

This finds eloquent realization in Fulama in *Akpakaland*, where her plans against Unata return back to her, through the help of Enwe the traditional native doctor when she eats the ritual plantain prepared by Enwe.

As folkist plays, both *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*, advance the ideal of poetic justice with an African hue. In fact, the

treatment of this ideal in these plays shows that it is an artistic ingredient native to African performance. In traditional African performance aesthetics, issues bordering on the fight between good and evil always has good triumphing over evil. The evil man is punished for his deeds while the innocent or good man is rewarded with success. This feature also celebrates other virtues such as faithfulness, humility, honesty, kindness, chivalry and love of neighbour.

Alahin the wicked head wife of the Oba in *The Slave Wife* is punished for her infraction, alongside the other wives to varying degrees, depending on the level of their complicity in drowning Igbon's child. Conversely, Igbon the honest and oppressed slave wife is rewarded with a son and a seat at the right hand of the Oba. By the same token, in *Akpakaland*, characters such as Fulama, Ogunpa, Iya Fulama, Seota and Yeiye are disgraced for harbouring tendencies and values at variance with traditional morals. They are self-centred and support falsehood hence it does not end well for them at the end of the play while Unata the honest and maligned wife is rewarded. This moralist trend commands a lot of visibility in the two plays studied here

The plot design of both plays is episodic. It unfolds through the instrumentality of the Narrator who most often serves as the mouthpiece of the author. The narrator gives us a lot of background information on the events that lead to the dramatic situation. He helps channel the attention of the audience towards issues and situations the playwright considers important and weighty. These issues include antecedent events, character motivation and dilemma, motivations and choices made by the main characters. Ukala most importantly however, uses the Narrator in these plays to orchestrate tempo and archive the epic dimension through the evocative use of song, music, dance and bold movements.

Language in *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*, is immersed in indigenous African lore. The playwright uses images and idioms to explore themes and arguments in a very evocative manner. We can cite some instances here,

OGISO: Obaseki, do you water your seed until harvest time?

OBASEKI: Nobody my lord, but a good blacksmith stays by the bellows while his iron is black in the fire. So does a good farmer water on until his seed becomes a plant and his plant shows signs to grow unwatered to maturity. One who has not found fire to roast his first rat, does he say do not allow the second rat to escape elders? (19).

The lines above between Oba Ogiso and Obaseki illustrate the texture of language in *The Slave wife*. The polemic bordering on giving Ogiso's wives more time to bear him a son is conveyed figuratively through the use of proverbs and imageries.

Enwe's encounter with Idemudia in *Akpakaland* is another highlight of this structure of language,

ENWE: You can go and commit suicide if it pains you that much. I coil here because I am the viper. What the viper eats walks on its own into the viper's mouth. I eat out of the misfortune of others... well, who doesn't? I buy your yams because I have the misfortune of hunger. I waited for years for Unanta, your daughter to ripen. You proceeded to suck me dry. Then came the national festival I'll never forget in my life. You made your daughter join in the breasted cultural dance...you made her flounce her suppleness before the Great one, ever zealous to cultivate fresh farmlands... (20)

From the two examples above we see that opinions and thorny issues are encapsulated in traditional idioms and figurative language which evoke vivid imageries of deep significance. There is an organic trend in the texture of the language of both plays which employs features found in the people's environment and cosmic experience to communicate meaning.

Corollary to language is the playwright's use of narration and sententious inclination which is emblematic of his folkist tendencies. The element of narration is used consciously in the two plays to orchestrate the folkist design of story-telling and audience involvement.

NARRATOR: Our story flies, it flies. It perches on Akpaka and his ministers. Akpaka told them of the allegation that one or two

of his wives had a tail. That shocked them. But it shocked them more to hear of the impending public striptease of the president's wives. "it is unprecedented, it is scandalous" they cried. "It is an abomination". Bur Akpaka couldn't be stopped. So it was agreed by the ministers, except Aseki, that the President's wives will walk naked on Sunday. Everyone sharpened his eyes against that day,

M.O.A: Hm! They'll see pictures , I swear!... All to show that they had no tails? (29-30)

From *The Slave Wife* comes the Praise Singer's monologue addressed to the audience,

Ladies and Gentlemen, you're duly welcomed to our theatre, if of course you have paid your gate fee. There is a saying which goes so, „A free thing bites the stomach. As you know, I'm the Producer/Director of the play you all will be seeing soon. The man who wrote it is my friend. He was a member of my cast, but when he started imposing his will on me, I paid him his royalty and fired him... you see his mother told him a folktale, and he went on and made it a play. But the way he couched it shows that he wanted to deceive you the audience. He wanted you to think that everything is real and happening right here in your presence... I act the part of the Praise Singer, a captive and eunuch. That is why they call me Producer, Director, and Actor. Great you must agree... (3)

Narration in these plays follows a pattern that tries to diminish the schism between the material performed and the audience receiving it. It strives consciously to emulate the indigenous art of the solo story teller of moonlight provenance. One would say that Ukala in the two plays studied here achieved much success in this artistic design.

Ukala's employment of comic automatism finds vivid expression in characters such as Ezomo and Enwe. The former is a stammerer and the latter, a fountain of what one may call native intelligence. Important dramatic situations are cast within the ambience of comic automatism. In *The Slave Wife*, this manifests when the Praise Singer prances around Alahin and when the wives

struggle for the alligator pepper in the mashed yam. The scene of eating the ritual plantain and observing the sudden protrusion of a tail behind her by Faluma and the final ordeal of unmasking of the culprit, are major highlights of this feature in *Akpakaland*.

The last strand of conformity that would be examined in this chapter is song and dance. Songs and dances play important roles in *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*. These two elements of drama play very important parts in the structure of the plays. Their usage help to create mood, comment on the dramatic situation as well as further the plot of the plays.

Conclusion

Commenting on playwriting with emphasis on Ukala's works, Femi Osofisan, describes Ukala's technique thus:

The technique that Ukala uses is by now quite familiar on the African stage, that is a transference to the modern proscenium context, of the narrative strategies of our traditional folklore. The significant elements here are the use of the narrator-reconteur, of a proverb-enriched diction, of multiple setting achieved through improvisation and suggestion, of a simple, linear plot, with actions that are morally symbolic, played out through the medium of dance, music, dialogue and song, and finally with the active involvement of the audience (Thus, for instance, one of the Ukala's characters" is M.O.A; that is, Members of the Audience, called upon to join in the singing, encourage players, or even pass comments. (x)

Also commenting on Ukala, Steve Ogude observes that,

What distinguishes him from other users of myths and legends of our past is his application of the traditional performance idiom and structure in the re-enactment of tales and parables. He recreates the entire performance environment of the traditional folktale with the sense of artless spontaneity (4).

Osofisan and Ogude's views emerge from the visages of Ukala's conformity in the use of traditional elements in his drama. His idea of folkism, one may say, further reinforces this proclivity to recreate recognizable indigenous forms and use them as potent

elements to comment on contemporary topics such as individual and collective chicanery, blind ambition, domestic and political conflict and other moral issues. Elsewhere I have argued for more research and scholarly rigour by African playwrights towards appropriating features of our indigenous orature in their dramatic writing (2001). Ukala's method presents us with fitting example to further investigate the use of indigenous elements of structure in dramatic composition.

Works Cited

- Chambers Concise Dictionary*. London: Chambers and Harrap Publishers, 2009. Print.
- Egede, Benji "The Slave Wife: A Critique". *The Observer, Sunday*, September 21. Print.
- Iwuchukwu, Rebecca C. "Towards Emancipating Women from Obnoxious Biblical/Societal Prejudices that Undermine the Dignity of Womanhood". *Journal of the Humanities*, Imo State University, Ed. Okeke V.O. Owerri: Global Press Ltd., 2004. Print.
- Nwaozuzu, Uche-Chinemere. "The Concepts of Play and Playwriting in Nigeria: Towards a Redefinition". *Castalia*, 2000. (1-6). Print.
- Ogude, Steve. "Introduction". *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ogude, Steve, Benji Egede and Amen Uhunmwangho (eds) Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. Print.
- Osofisan, Femi. "Introduction", *5 Plays: ANA/British Council 1989 Prize Winners*. Ibadan: Heinemann, 1990. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and Other Plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2011. Print.
- _____, *The Slave Wife*. Ibadan: University Press Ltd., 1992. Print.

Sixteen



Art and the Exemplification of People's Power in Sam Ukala's Theatre: *Akpakaland* and *The Placenta of Death*

Idaevbor Bello

Introduction

Sam Ukala as a playwright and theorist of African literary drama has received several accolades for his creative ingenuity and output, the recent being the prestigious Nigeria Prize for Literature, sponsored by the Nigeria Liquefied Natural Gas Limited for the play, *Iredi War*. This is not surprising as his theatrical practice has been geared towards blending the African experience of folk art performance with the European dramaturgic art form to direct social and political discourse in his society. This he has done by anchoring his creative discourse on his theoretical framework of *folkism*. And this according to him is "... the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture, and concerns of the folk ... and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale" (285). And this, in the opinion of this writer, is in tandem with O. R. Darthon's position that "the direction of development [of modern African drama] would be in the resuscitation of folk forms" (309).

In the context of the above, it is basic to state that Ukala's theoretical postulation in *folkism* is anchored on the intrinsic value and nature of the folktale as distinct from the other forms of traditional African oral art. His adoption of the folktale is immediately obvious as the art form, like all other oral literary forms in Africa, is anchored on the immediacy of performance and the performer-audience relationship on which that immediacy of performance relies. The difference in the folktale performance,

however, is that neither the performer nor the audience-performers, that is, a reference to that point that members of the audience become involved in the performance not just as listeners/watchers but as co-performers with the storyteller and actively involved in the creation and enactment of the performance; in essence the relationship in the folktale is more integral and more mutually beneficial to the performer and the audience.

In sum, Ukala is of the belief that one way to arouse the interest of the African audience to begin to appreciate literary drama is to anchor the drama on the African notion and vision of performance in which the performer and the audience are united in a communal display, and wherein both are creators and watchers at the same time. It is to underscore the contributive essence and that intrinsic relationship between the storyteller and the members of the audience that Austin E. Anigala says they "... participate in the narration, singing, laughing and criticizing each other, they derive entertainment and imbibe ethical values" (129).

Ukala's dramatic creative effort has received some scholarly attention; this is not however to say that the intricacies of his theatre and the dramaturgical engagements have been fully explored. A lot still needs to be done if we must fully appreciate his theatre practice. Howbeit, the interest in Ukala's literary creativity has yielded two books of essays already and research essays in our universities, some of which have found outlets in journals and other sources. It shall therefore be necessary to examine some of the relevant scholarship on his plays that will aid this researcher in taking a stand in his reading of the plays before proceeding further.

For instance, in his study of one of Ukala's plays, Jude Aigbe Agho establishes that the dramatist "encourages the oppressed and exploited peoples of the earth to strive to unsettle their oppressors as a first step towards achieving for themselves freedom and respect" (9). Agho captures for Ukala's readers the vision in his theatre to mean that the playwright aligns with the exploited masses as he envisions that for order to prevail in the chaos that the ruling class has created in the world, using his Nigerian society

that is the canvass of his plays, the working people must be united in resisting their parlous conditions.

In his own contribution to the study of the dramatist's theatre, Kingsley I. Ehiemua argues that "... a dimension in Ukala's drama is that the forces of tyranny finally lose grip and get dethroned and consequently, there is an enthronement of the will of the mass of the oppressed people" (52-53). If Agho's position is that the playwright mobilizes the exploited people of the world to stand together and resist the exploiter, Ehiemua establishes that in the theatre, the playwright deliberately empowers the people, and through concerted effort, the people are able to overcome their exploiters to decide their own fate. In essence, therefore, Ukala envisions hope and victory for the deprived of the world in their confrontation with the exploiter class.

It is because of the immediacy of this hope which is meant to invigorate the people beyond the practice of art that Austin Ovigwe Asagba says that "[i]n Ukala's vision of a new society built on democratic principles, values and justice, the process of retributive justice is immediate, not a futuristic phenomenon" (90). What this does communicate to students of Ukala's theatre is that no one goes unpunished for the evil that they commit against the people. The question of retributive justice that springs from the wronged characters' response to those who reduce their humanity and that of society, and the support they get from the mass of the people in the plays runs through Ukala's theatre, including the plays that are the focus of this study.

Wale Awosika has also engaged a scholarly discourse of Ukala's theatre and posits that Ukala's sentiment is with the exploited mass who are daily exploited by the machinations of the ruling class. The critic observes: "The downtrodden are shown, in spite of their bruises, as possessing a tough resilient moral faculty, which represents at least the promise of a future moral revolution" (75). And he goes further to say that in the plays, "... the oppressed stubbornly refuse to adjust into the humiliating role that royalty and society at large urge upon them, and by that stubborn refusal, sow the seeds of revolution" (81). Awosika's observation here appears to mean that an exploited people would never be free

from exploitation if they cower at the threat of the temporary pain that may attend their striving for freedom. In essence, for true and meaningful freedom, the exploited and the deprived must be ready to endure the temporary setbacks that may occur in their march to freedom.

In a study he entitled "Sam Ukala: African Tradition in His Plays," Idaevor Bello observes that Ukala, as a playwright, "... combines the folk materials of the African people which consists of story-telling, audience involvement in the enactment of the action etc, with his European experience of drama, such as stage arrangement, lighting effects etc, to make comments on contemporary issues" (116). The researcher's interest here is an engagement with how the dramatist has deployed the performance techniques of his African heritage to engage the issues that confront the people in their daily lives within the Nigerian milieu that gives being to his theatre.

In her own contribution to the scholarship on the playwright's theatre, Ruth E. Ekpochi-Olise tells her readers the anchor of Ukala's plays thus: "As a reformer the collapse of the various strata of society alarmed Ukala, that is why he is obliged to participate in reinstating the society's direction and purpose through his socially committed work of art to reach out with affable forms, themes and resolute relevance to stimulate the masses and draw their attention to the sociopolitical situation in Nigeria" (142). In the opinion of this writer, Ukala's vision of where his society should go from where it is presently and how that should be realised goes beyond just merely that of a reformer as it shall be shown in this study. It suffices at this point to say that like the socially committed artist that he is, the dramatist has shown himself to be of the Marxist ideological school of writing as in his plays, he explores the contradiction that class relations throws up in the society.

Arising from the preceding observation, the preoccupation in this study is an examination of two plays from Sam Ukala's repertoire, namely *Akpakaland* and *The Placenta of Death*, from a Marxist theoretical perspective with the objective of showing that in his theatre, the playwright engages the class divisions that

engender the perpetual struggle of the oppressed class, the proletariat, to free themselves from the stranglehold of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels espouse in the opening sentences of *The Communist Manifesto*:

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of contending classes. (79)

In his theatre, Ukala's sentiments lie with the oppressed class; and he puts in their hands the ultimate victory that can only come about in their unity. In other words, in the plays that engage attention here, the struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor does not end in the ruination of society but in the defeat of the oppressor class, and thereby result "in revolutionary reconstruction of society."

Udenta O. Udenta has also observed that in Marxian engagement of literary interrogation, the Marxist writer, whom he sees as a democratic one, aligns with the oppressed as Ukala has demonstrated in his plays. Udenta puts it thus:

The world is always a stage of confrontation between two opposing and irreconcilable and antagonistic classes: the oppressor classes and the oppressed classes. A democratic [literature] pursues the cause of the latter in its totality. It sees the world the way a worker sees it; and it interpretes (sic) the socio-natural phenomena the way a worker interpretes (sic) it. Its goal is to bring to light, to make manifest, in both in its individuality and typicality, the essence of the working people's struggle for democracy, their failures and triumphs, their setbacks and achievements. (30)

To, therefore, undertake the interrogation of the plays for study in this paper, it shall be necessary to examine the art and the manifestation of people's power as exemplified in them.

Ukala's Dramaturgic Art

As it has already been observed, Ukala's theatrical practice is anchored on *folkism* wherein the dramatist depends on the resources of the African oral performance, with specific attention on the folktale, in the construction of his plays. In this regard, he depends on the entirety of the histrionics of African oral art to make his literary plays an ensemble of performative enterprise beyond the western conception of the dramatic form on the proscenium stage. In his theatre, therefore, Ukala deploys songs, dance, instrumentation, the practice of arena performance in Africa, and, more specifically, the performer-audience relationship as used in African oral performance art.

Ukala depends directly on the folktale form in crafting his plays, and generally on the performance techniques of the folk. He explains the whole essence of *folkism* in an interview to Asomwan S. Adagbonyin thus:

... in folkism, this creation, this literary play, is composed as much as possible with compositional technique of the folk, the techniques that they apply in the composition of the folk tale. The play is also performed with the performance techniques of the folk; that is, the folk performance structure is applied, which structure allows for the collaboration of the performer with the audience. (195)

And on the nuances and the nature of the form of his plays and accessibility of the language he deploys in his theatre practice in the same interview, the playwright further explains as follows:

The language that you apply is such that reflects the thought patterns and the speech patterns of the folk. The characters in the play must speak in such a way that they will be identified by people in the living culture that is portrayed by the play itself. If you are presenting an Edo character and that Edo character is not speaking English [language] that reflects the speech patterns or the thought patterns of the Edo people, then it would not be hundred percent a folkscript. The diction must also be as that employed in the performance of folk tales – simple and artistic, garnished with proverbs, imagery, ideophone, etc. Those are the elements of folkism. You base

the play on an oral source, traditional source, cultural source – and then you do it according to the performance and compositional techniques of African oral tale. (196)

From the forgoing, it is safe to say that Ukala's theatre is the people's theatre as he craves to evolve the theatre that would be of appeal to his immediate audience, the Nigerian theatregoers. This is not surprising because in his view, the reason that the people could not identify with the works of earlier Nigerian playwrights is because those playwrights either did not explore the African heritage of performance, or when they did, they did not probe deep enough into the resources of that oral performance to craft their plays to appeal to the theatrical sensibility of the people.

He believes that most of the earlier playwrights were "... inaccessible to the audience not only by a difficult diction, but also through highly imaginative yet alienating distortions of their source material, an unusual abstraction of characters, or complexity and strangeness of structure. The audience cannot decode the plays, and, void of relevance, they defy identification and popularity" („Folkism"... 285). In other words Ukala, as a theatre practitioner and a theorist of the art form, sets out from the outset to deliberately covet the interest of the people to his plays. He equally believes that material taken from the culture of the people should not be distorted to the extent that they become alien to the same people that owned them. Thus, he shares in Darthone's conviction that "traditional material helps to give historical depth and a time perspective to drama, even though it has been recorded by the imagination of an individual playwright" (323). For the playwright, the excursion into the resources of "traditional material" in African literary theatre practice cannot be halfhearted; the dramatist who sets out therefore to explore these materials must be holistic in deploying them in his theatre. For according to Ukala, again, "[p]lays are ultimately realized in performance. It is therefore desirable that they be reasonably clear, since because of their temporal nature performances do not allow audience time to check their dictionaries or reconstruct strangely structured sentences" („Folkism"... 280).

In his plays, the playwright uses the narrator, songs, proverbs, ideophones, and, in faithfulness to the performer/audience relationship in African oral art, creates MOA (Member of Audience) characters whom he makes to sit with the audience as he performs his role. This way, the audience is involuntarily drawn into the action on the stage without probably initially realising that the playwright has deliberately wooed him into his creativity. Ukala's dramaturgy in this regard does not in any way reduce the quality of his art; if anything it enhances it and gives it authenticity and has the potential to galvanize both his African and non-African audiences to fully appreciate his plays. After all as Abdullahi S. Abubakar has argued, "[t]he heritage of two performance cultures no doubt has made African playwrights inventive as they strive to be contextually relevant without losing touch with universal trends" (175). The inventiveness of Ukala in his dramaturgy has made him take his experimentation of infusing the African heritage of performance to a level where his plays have assumed a life of their own and an identity that is essentially *Ukalaesque*.

The Nature of the Conflict in the Plays and the Exemplification of People's Power

The plays under study here, *Akpakaland* and *The Placenta of Death*, are engaged with power and its abuse by those who wield it, the ruling class. In the two plays what is made manifestly clear is that the ruling class, at each point, works at protecting their class interest when threatened. This is especially so if those interests are pitched against those of the less privileged, the working people.

In *Akpakaland*, the conflict arises from the accusation by President Akpaka's first wife, Fulama, that one of the President's wives has grown a tail. She tells him thus:

FULAMA: Your favourite wife has a tail (*Akpakaland*, 14).

Meanwhile, as the audience is to find out later, she had, with the assistance of Enwe, inflicted a tail on the last wife, Unata. From the beginning of the play, the issue of class division in *Akpakaland* is clearly laid out. As the audience is told by the Narrator, "... the first three [wives of Akpaka] were married from the province of the rich ... and the last two from the province of

the poor” (13). And this division is further underscored when Fulama, in response to Yeiye’s question as to whether she is the wife with the tail, tells her:

FULAMA: No, it’s not you. It’s no one from the province of the rich. (*Akpakaland* 16)

Being from “the province of the rich,” therefore, when in the end it is found that Fulama who is the talebearer is the real tail bearer, President Akpaka tries to subvert the course of justice; and it is this attempt at subversion that leads the people to revolt against him and the members of the ruling class, knowing that if indeed it had been Unata of “the province of the poor” who had the tail she would have been executed as earlier decreed by the President.

In *The Placenta*, it is the same attempt at shielding members of the privileged class, even when they belong to different social caste systems in the society. In other words, the point that Ukala seems to make here is that the unity of the bourgeois class is underlined by the acquisition of capital in a society and not the social caste system that may exist within the society. It is no wonder therefore that Owodo III, the Oba of Owodoland, attempts to punish Omon, his second wife who in retaliation at being fed a vulture by Ibo, the first wife of the Oba, feeds the Oba and his guests with her baby’s placenta. It is in respect of the traditional naming ceremony of the baby that the vulture is supplied in place of the customary requirements that the Oba had directed to be sent to Omon. It is this responsibility that Ibo had subtly taken over because she has ulterior motive of sending dried vulture meat in place of the goat and tubers of yam that custom demands of a father to his newly born baby.

Omon, a free citizen of Owodoland, is the daughter of poor subsistent parents who are hardly able to cater for their needs. Given this situation, Omon’s mother, Iziegbe, sees their daughter’s marriage to the Oba as a positive movement up in their economic status; the audience is not then surprised that even when her husband, Osaze, is not positively disposed to the marriage, she works in concert with the Iyase at ensuring the marriage takes place. On the other hand, Ibo, the first wife of the Owodo, is the

daughter of parents of means but who are seen as slaves in Owodoland. For Ibo and her father, therefore, the marriage to the Owodo from the outset is meant to sire a son who, would take over from his father as the Owodo, because the succession to the throne is by primogeniture, he would see to it that the social stigma against the Dein as slaves in Owodoland is overturned. So when Omon emerges as the second wife of the Owodo and gives birth to a son, Ibo seeks to destroy them so there would be no contestation for the throne from the son of Omon, because tradition would most likely support Omon's son, even though junior to hers, as the child of a freeborn.

Thus in the two plays, the conflict arises in each case from the desire of a senior wife to protect her privileged position and situation from a rival wife using means not so orthodox. If in *Akpakaland*, Fulama's action is based on the objective, as Charles Nwadigwé argues, "... to maintain her dominant position in the State and in Akpaka's heart" (336) as it appears that her standing in Akpaka's affection has been taken over by Unata, in the case of Ibo in *The Placenta*, it is not so as Omon has not significantly intruded into their husband's affection as to affect her situation negatively. In essence then, Ibo's actions are clearly meant to protect the future of her son and the freedom she expects for her people when he assumes the throne. On this point, while addressing her son, she tells the audience thus:

IBO: (*Addressing her baby.*) The whole of this courtyard is yours. From here, you will sneeze and the whole of Owodoland will quiver. Here you will sit and you make the captive the captor, the enslaver the slave. King-from-the-sky, come. Come sit on your throne ... (*Seats baby on throne.*) Eh-hen! Akamkpo! That's what I call you. The tough maize that teeth cannot crack! Soon your head will tower up and you can look directly into the centre of the grey hairs in council with you. ... (*The Placenta 34-35*)

These are the words of a woman who has witnessed the pain of social stratification that her people had lived in through the ages and thus surreptitiously planned, in collaboration with her father to

marry into the royalty of Owodoland with a view to sire an heir to the throne that would free his mother's people, as it were, from their rejection and be fully accepted as free citizens of Owodoland. It seems obvious to conclude that Ibo's marriage to the Owodo in the first place has nothing to do with love for him but love for her people's freedom.

However, it is not only Ibo who has designs as to expectations from the next king of Owodoland. Omon's mother, Iziegbe, equally believes that her grandson would be the one to liberate them from the shackles of poverty when he succeeds his father as Owodo III. She consoles Omon as follows while reflecting on the seeming neglect of the Owodo in sending the traditional gifts after the birth of his son by Omon:

IZIEGBE: Eat, my daughter, eat. You've not done the abominable. It's Owodo who has done it. You've born him a prince, just as Ibo. We were right to expect his gifts – the type he sent to Ibo. But the rich know only how to look after themselves. Don't worry. Our time will come. My grandson will rule Owodoland. He is the weapon by which we will make the rich to eat sand. (*The Placenta* 44)

In essence, therefore, from the outset of the birth of the two princes, designs have been mapped out for them, the one by the mother and the other by the grandmother. The two will therefore grow up to fight battles they may know nothing about. However, Omon disagrees with her mother and tells her: "My son will not be a weapon of oppression" (*The Placenta* 44). The humanity and humility of Omon shine through the entire play and the audience cannot but identify with those traits she displays.

In the desire to liberate her people, however, Ibo does not seem to realise that her actions against Omon would have adverse consequences, or she probably does not care; she does not take her humanity into account. She treats Omon with disdain being of poor parentage; and it is her undisguised snobbery of Omon and the servants in the palace that makes it difficult to sympathize with her. Even though she is bitter, and rightly so, about the social stigma that is attached to her people; she however does not show

any regard to those beneath her. She has the same mentality with Fulama in her dealings with the ordinary people and she treats them as dregs; and it is this that unites them against her and her privileged class. It is no wonder then that they, Fulama and Ibo, help to create the situation that leads to the people standing in unity to defend their fellow oppressed in the hands of their oppressors and overthrow them.

In *Akpakaland*, the ruling power, prompted by Iya Fulama, decides to subvert the course of justice in their class interest. In an attempt to prevent her daughter, Fulama, from taking part in the public inspection of their bottoms to find which of Akpaka's wives has a tail as decreed by the President, she tells the audience and the ruling power who Fulama's father is:

IYA FULAMA: Abomination! (*Tears her way to the centre of the gathering.*) If the President has chosen to scrub the floor with the daughters of peasants and petty contractors, he cannot do that with my daughter. Is human memory so short? Have you all forgotten who her father was? I am talking about the President of the Fifth Republic, Danmali, the Great. A Field Marshal. Owner of houses of gold, whose father went to his farm in a space ship. Danmali, the Great. The nightmare of students, journalists and other "troublemakers". Have you all no fear? (*Returns to her seat.*) (*Akpakaland* 50).

Thus Iya Fulama reminds all of the enormous powers that reside in Fulama's father's hands, and, for that matter, the ruling class generally, and how that power is deployed in suppressing the people and in denying them a voice to express their plight in what one may term evil reign. It is therefore the acquiescence of the ruling class in defending their own that unites the people in the play to rise in their own defence as what is made manifest to them is that the rules for them are different from those for the ruling class.

The President along with his cabinet upturns the decree he promulgated once it is found the violator of the decree is a scion of the ruling class! The members of the cabinet receive inducement from Iya Fulama who had earlier bullied them with a reminder of

who Fulama's father was; the premise upon which Umal, a character who shows an uncommon predilection to preserving the interests of the ruling class, submits as follows:

UMAL: Mr. President, it is an intricate matter. No doubt, Fulama is roundly at fault and should be executed (COMMONERS jubilate.) But we plead with the President to exercise his prerogative of mercy in view of Fulama's parentage. Commit her sentence to imprisonment for three months. (*Akpakaland* 54)

It is only one of the cabinet ministers, Perede, who stands out to be counted on the side of true justice; he sarcastically tells Akpaka, after Umal's submission, as follows:

PEREDE: Mr. President, I find it difficult to support what has been said so far. If Fulama cannot be executed in accordance with her own decree on whoever was found with a tail, then she should be set totally free. If public execution is not for the great ones, imprisonment shouldn't be for them. (*Akpakaland* 54)

Of course, President Akpaka having apparently taken a stand with those in his cabinet who support the execution of justice along class lines dismisses the deeper presage of Perede's observation and rules:

AKPAKA: Well, Perede, Fulama does not make decrees for Akpakaland, I do. And you have heard the executioner say that we don't have the wherewithal to execute Fulama. We must make do with what we have. Fulama is hereby sentenced to a three-month house arrest with her tail. Enwe shall be summoned to remove the tail after she would have served the sentence. (*Akpakaland* 54)

This shows contempt for the people; Akpaka and the ruling class thus show to them that they do not count much in the scheme of things. In a manner of speaking the wools are pulled from their eyes and they can see clearly now that they count for nothing in the estimation of the ruling class.

Once this judgment is given the people are immediately united in their own defence. They realise that their freedom lies in their own hands and as such they must affirm their own humanity and dignity of existence. Spontaneously, the working people queue behind the wives from their province and Enwe, through whom Fulama procured the tail in the first place with the objective of ruining the innocent Unata, becomes their voice of resistance. While members of the ruling class celebrate another victory over the people, Enwe tells Akpaka:

ENWE: (*Dashing forward.*) Mr. President, Sir, Fulama will die with the tail. No traditional doctor cures self-bewitchment. (*Akpakaland 55*)

And Idemudia, Unata's father, who, in order to drive reproach from his daughter, had earlier sought Enwe's help, and thereby the reason we come to know the source of the tail in the first place, comes out in defence of her daughter and the working people in general:

IDEMUDIA: (*Also dashing forward.*) And I dare to say that if my daughter were found guilty, the executioner would have had the wherewithal to execute her. If he has no guns and bullets to execute Fulama, we have our hoes and machetes. (*Akpakaland 55*)

Thus begins the groundswell of the people's opposition to the highhandedness and discriminatory practices of the ruling class against the people. The people immediately break into songs of resistance and in unison demand that the decree as promulgated be given full effect. So when Akpaka and his cabinet who hadn't the wherewithal to execute Fulama attempt to deploy the usual highhandedness to deal with, in their opinion, the nuisance of the proletariat, they meet a people who are resolved to resist them and in the ensuing confrontation, the working people overcome the ruling class and impose their will on things. Fulama is killed by the executioner, Afianmo, even if accidentally, and the people seize the means of oppression, arms and ammunition, from the ruling

class and turn same in their own defence upon which Akpaka and his fellow travellers submit on their knees.

The working people in *The Placenta* are mobilised into a revolutionary situation which they grab immediately when the Owodo attempts to punish Omon for revenging against him. The Owodo is vicariously responsible for the inhuman treatment of Omon by Ibo in feeding her and family with smoked vulture flesh. Omon's response to this abominable act of Ibo is to in turn feed the Owodo and his guests with the placenta from her child. The action of Omon causes ripple effects that necessitate a gathering of the tribe to resolve the calamity and the abomination which Omon has supposedly committed against the throne.

The Owodo, on getting the news that Omon had put to bed a baby boy, instructs one of the palace messengers, Izagodo, to take the customary requirements to her father, Osaze, to commemorate the arrival of the new baby. But Ibo, desirous that Omon's son shall not be treated in the same manner as hers, even though her father rejects the Owodo's customary gifts, prevents Izagodo from carrying out the Owodo's directive. She thereafter surreptitiously manipulates the Owodo into giving her the responsibility to decide the gifts that should be sent to Omon and her family. Thus the Owodo surrenders his responsibility to cater for a wife and child into the hands of another but manipulative wife whose desires and designs for her co-wife are not in the least humane.

In place of the traditionally sanctioned items for a new mother and her family, the knowledge of which the audience learns from the Owodo himself, Ibo, through Izagodo sends a parcel of dried bird flesh which is later discovered to be nothing but the flesh of vulture! Omon is initially disconcerted at this mindless treatment from her husband as she assumes; she however does not wallow in self-pity for long. She is finally stung to act, and she tells her parents:

OMON: Eeuu! Why is my head so bad? (*Suddenly fierce.*) No! This will not go unavenged. Owodo has sought my trouble long enough. Now he will have it. I must avenge ... (*The Placenta* 48)

The stage is thus set for that final confrontation as Omon's resolution is no empty threat. Even for those with inelastic patience, there is that point at which one would snap, and Omon has certainly got there. It is through the Narrator that the audience is told what Ibo and Izagodo have done with the gifts that the Owodo intended for the Omon:

NAR: Brothers and sisters, it has begun to froth and swell like powerful palm-wine. Ibo and Izagodo had secretly roasted the he-goat that should have been sent to Omon. They had quartered and smoked it over Ibo's bedside fire. They had made *ngwongwo* pepper soup with its head and entrails. Occasionally, Ibo gave Izagodo a huge chunk to drink *gari* with, and painted before him the picture of freedom under the owodoship of her son. ... (*The Placenta* 48)

Ibo in her quest to establish her son as the heir apparent to the throne of Owodoland, a land in which her people, the Dein, are seen and treated as slaves and do not have equal rights as the Owodo people, her meanness knows no limit. She sees Omon, a mere daughter of a pauper, and her son as stumbling blocks that must be uprooted. But unfortunately, she does not reckon with what an abused co-wife, even if poor, is capable of.

Omon immediately swings into action with her plans to avenge the wrong done her; she decides to feed Owodo with the placenta from her baby. The Iyase becomes an active collaborator in her mission of vengeance. One difficulty in that mission is the fact that the Owodo's food is prepared by a woman. The goodness of Omon's heart however paves the way for her to carry out her plans as she is able to get the Owodo's cook out of the way in order to carry out her plans. The Owodo himself invariably aids the duo in their mission by a baseless accusation of the two being engaged in adultery on the basis of the false information by Izagodo who had sneaked in on the conversation of the duo. Owodo's action in this scene drives any sympathy that the audience may have had for him in his handling of the affairs of Omon.

And once it is found out, through the curiosity of Okobi, one of those whom the Iyase had procured to work in the Owodo's farm, that a placenta has been added to the royal meal, Owodo immediately summons a communal gathering to probe the source of such an abomination. Interestingly, at this communal gathering, the class distinction clearly plays out as Omon and her parents are excluded from the royal seats:

OWODO: You've been interdicted and can't seat here. (*The Placenta* 63)

And this is before the truth of what transpired had been established. The audience is informed further of developments at this gathering through the stage direction:

(Suppressed mockery from some persons as OMON goes back to stand by her parents. Enter EMENI, quite flamboyant. He moves up and sits beside IBO.) (*The Placenta* 64)

What this communicates is that even though Emeni and her daughter, Ibo, are of the Dein tribe, a people who are said to be of inferior caste and are seen as slaves in Owodoland, they are however superior to Osaze and his household because they are of inferior material standing. It is obvious then that class stratification in the society does not discriminate on the basis of birth but on the material possession of the individual. From the outset of the communal gathering, therefore, the stage is set for that inevitable confrontation between the bourgeois and proletariat classes.

In the end, after Ebuzun, the head cook of Oba Owodo, denies knowledge of how the placenta came into Owodo's soup, Omon, in a song, informs all:

OMON: Alas, townsmen
Samarhan
Alas, women
Listen, listen
Samarhan
He who listens hears words
Samarhan
Ibo gave birth

Owodo sent a huge cow
Samarhan
Then I gave birth
Samarhan
Qwodo killed me a vulture
Samarhan
Owodo had guests
Samarhan
I put placenta in his soup
What Owodo did to me
Samarhan
Is what I've done to Owodo
Samarhan
Alas townsmen
Samarhan
Alas, women
Samarhan.

(General tumult.) (The Placenta 67-68)

Omon's narration of what transpires unites the people and they stand together against Owodo. Iyasere however stands up in defence of Omon against Owodo and in his eloquence, Iyasere establishes Owodo's guilt in Ibo's feeding Omon and her family with vulture flesh. Owodo, obviously caught in a web, attempts to divert attention from himself and rules as follows:

OWODO: *(Rising, pacing as in a trance, speaks to no one in particular.)* I thought I saw goodness in his eloquence and intelligence, his bravery and outspokenness. And I leapt, blindly to make him my Iyasere. Now he has turned his endowments into spikes against me. All because of his lustful interest in Omon ... *(Severely.)* I will show you, Iyasere, that I am the fire that burns both land and sea. I will show you that a snake that would measure its length against a river's will stretch itself to pieces. I pronounce that Omon must die for poisoning the Oba and his guests and for killing Odogbo. *(Uproar. OSAZE signs to OMON to be calm, dashes out of the courtyard.)*
I pronounce that Iyasere must die for conspiring with Omon against the palace.

(More uproar.) (The Placenta 72)

But of course he does not reckon with the united masses who are determined to stand in defence of Omon, and, of course, the resilience of Iyasere who challenges the Owodo:

IYASARE (sic): (To OWODO.) Go ahead! What does His Royal Majesty pronounce against himself, the sacred one, who committed the initial conspiracy and connivance? What does he pronounce his diabolical queen, who misrules Owodoland on his behalf? Against his unscrupulous, disloyal servant, who for the sake of food served poison to a new- and free-born prince of Owodoland, what does the Oba pronounce? Citizens of Owodoland, are those not the truly guilty ones? (*The Placenta* 73)

They unanimously declare support for the position he has canvassed and hold Owodo and his favourite wife and his gluttonous servant as the truly guilty ones. In the ensuing confrontation, Owodo, Iyasere, Ibo, and Emeni are all killed thus freeing the proletariat class and the weak of the Dein people. And Olotu surmises the objective of the play in a conciliatory quip to Osaze:

OLOTU: The slave and the poor are one, Osaze. (*The Placenta* 74)

Conclusion

It has been shown in the study that Sam Ukala as a playwright engages the social and political disparities between the ruling and the working classes in the Nigerian society that provides the canvas for his dramatic production. He shows that the ruling class holds the working people in contempt. In the plays that are examined in the study, the playwright encourages the people to be united and stand up in their own defence as they count for less in the equation of the ruling class.

In crafting his plays, as it is has also been shown, the dramatist explores the resources of the African oral art form as encompassed in the folktale performance to give authenticity to his dramatic art. He exemplifies his theoretical postulation of *folkism*

in his plays; the theory which is anchored on the histrionics of the folktales performance aesthetics in Africa. In essence, the playwright demonstrates by praxis his theory in his creativity. It is equally the observation in the study that Ukala has left his identity in his theatre that is not found in the earlier plays that ensued from his social milieu thus leaving indelible footprints in the annals of Nigerian theatre. And as S. E. Ogude has rightly observed of the playwright's theatre, "even when Ukala's plays have recognizable modern or contemporary themes, their idiom of expression and setting remain traditional, perhaps, to enable them perform the roles of folk art" (3).

Works Cited

- Abubakar, Abdullahi S. "A New Concept of Actor/Audience Interaction and Audience Participation in Modern African Dramatic Theatre: An Example of Osofisan." *Research in African Literatures*. 40:3 (Fall 2009): 174-185. Print.
- Agho, Jude Aigbe. "The Dialectic of Them and Us: Power Play in Sam Ukala's *The Placenta of Death*." *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Eds. Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhumwangho. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. 9-21. Print.
- Anigala, Austin E. "The Story-teller in Sam Ukala's Dramaturgy." *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ed. Austin OvigieAsagba. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2008. 129-141. Print.
- Asagba, Austin Ovigie. "Sam Ukala and the New Nigerian Theatre." *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ed. Austin OvigieAsagba. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2008. 81-92. Print.
- Awosika, Wale. "Seeds of Revolution in Sam Ukala's Plays: *Break a Boil*, *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*." *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Eds. Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhumwangho. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. 75-83. Print.
- Bello, Idaevbor. "Sam Ukala: African Tradition in His Plays." *Journal of Pan African Studies, JPAS*. 6:5 (Oct 2013): 115-131. Print.
- Darthon, O. R. *African Literature in the Twentieth Century*. London: Heinemann, 1974. Print.
- Ehiemua, Kingsley I. "Crises of Selfhoods and Alternate Reality: Toward a Post-Structuralist of Sam Ukala's *The Placenta of Death* and *The Last Heroes*." *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*.

- Eds. Steve Ogude, BenjiEgede and Amen Uhunmwangho. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. 52-63. Print.
- Ekpochi-Olise, Ruth E. "A Sociological of Sam Ukala'sAkpakaland." Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty. Ed. Austin OvigieAsagba. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2008. 142-148. Print.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels.The Communist Manifesto. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1988. Print.
- Nwadiwe, Charles. "Akpakaland."Masterpieces in African Literature vol 1.Ed. Ebele Eko. Ikeja: Mace Books/Sunbird Africa Media, 2014. 336-342. Print.
- Ogude, S. E. Introduction. Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala. Eds. Steve Ogude, BenjiEgede and Amen Uhunmwangho. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. 1-5. Print.
- Udenta, Udenta O. Revolutionary Aesthetics And The African Literary Process. Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1993. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. "Creative Truth is Immutable." Interview with Asomwan S. Adagbonyin.Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala. Eds. Steve Ogude, BenjiEgede and Amen Uhunmwangho. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers, 1999. 180-222. Print.
- _____. "„Folkism": Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy." *New Theatre Quarterly* XII:4 (Aug 1996): 279-287. Print.
- _____. *The Placenta of Death*.Two Plays. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2007. 9-76. Print.
- _____. *Akpakaland*. Akpakaland and other Plays. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2012. 9-56. Print.

Seventeen



Dramatic Aesthetics in Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*

Oluseyi Abiodun Ogungbesan

Introduction

One of the major influences on Nigerian playwrights is the African philosophical thought, and Sam Ukala as a playwright is no exception to this influence. These influences reveal themselves in the themes, plots, languages and general over view of the written works. It is essential to add here that irrespective of the generation to which the playwrights belong, they are all essentially theatre practitioners whose word on the page takes a secondary place to the work on the stage or in other media of performance as they combine a knowledge of world theatre practice with a sound knowledge of Nigerian traditional and modern drama and theatre. From Wole Soyinka whose work is inspired by the paradox of the qualities of creativity and destruction inherent in the Yoruba mythical god Ogun, Wale Ogunyemi whose childhood influences and doctrines in the worship of Ogun and Sango also in turn affect his penchant for plays awash in ritual and ceremony, whether they be historical, mythical or cultural, to Zulu Sofola who from her youth had been exposed to the traditional dramatic and proto-dramatic traditions of her native surroundings and Ola Rotimi whose writings even though in sharp contrast in analogy to Soyinka, is modeled after the Western concept of tragedy. Femi Osofisan and Ahmed Yerima also employ the use of myths and oral histories and other African oral forms to relay their messages. Such is the position of Sam Ukala in his play *Iredi War* in continuing this trend of tapping from the well of African's rich culture and oral tradition with his use of the full accompaniment of songs, dances, music and audience awareness forcing them (audience) to be part of the flow of the play and also reason out its

situations using the story telling techniques. In his words, Ukala (2007: 33) attests that “African plays should surface in a folkloric form” as it goes to show the Africanist in the work and further exposes our peculiarity in our style and use of language. To Ukala “this is to define a style of playwriting that is true to Africa”.

Concept of Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of art, beauty, and good taste, with the creation and appreciation of beauty. It is more scientifically defined as the study of sensory or sensori-emotional values, sometimes called judgments of sentiments and taste. It has also been defined as “critical reflection on art, culture and nature”. The word “aesthetics” derives from the Greek “aisthetokos”, meaning “of sense perception”. Along with ethics, aesthetics is part of axiology (The study of values and value judgments). In practice, there are distinctions between aesthetic judgment which is the appreciation of any object, (not necessarily an art object) and artistic judgments (the appreciation or criticism of a work of art). Thus aesthetics is broader than the philosophy of beauty, in that it applies to any of the responses we might expect works of art or entertainment to elicit, whether positive or negative.

Aestheticians ask questions like “What is a work of art? “What makes a work of art successful? Why do we find certain things beautiful? How can things of different categories be considered equally beautiful? Is there a connection between art and morality? Can art be a vehicle of truth? Are aesthetic judgments objective statements or purely subjective expression or personal attitudes? Can aesthetic judgments be improved or trained? In very general terms, it examines what makes something beautiful, sublime, disgusting, fun, cute, silly, entertaining, pretentious, discordant, harmonious, boring, humorous or tragic.

History of Aesthetics

Ancient Greek philosophers initially felt that aesthetically appealing objects were beautiful in and of themselves. Plato felt

that beautiful objects incorporated proportion, harmony and unity among their parts. Aristotle found that the universal elements of beauty were order, symmetry and definiteness. According to Islamic belief, human works of art are inherently flawed compared to the work of Allah, and to attempt to depict in a realistic form any animal or person is insolence to Allah. This has had the effect of narrowing the field of Islamic artistic possibilities to such forms as mosaics, calligraphy, architecture and geometric and floral patterns. Indian art evolved with an emphasis on inducing special spiritual or philosophical states in the audience, or with representing them symbolically. As early as the 5th Century B.C, the role of the arts and humanities, especially music and poetry, in broadening human nature could not be denied. Even though Mozi (470-391 B.C) argued that music and fine arts were extravagant and wasteful, benefiting the rich but not the common people, he could not deny their value in the ordering and development of society. Western Medieval art, at least until the revival of classical ideals during the Renaissance era, was highly religious in focus and was typically funded by the church, powerful ecclesiastical individuals, or wealthy secular patrons. A religiously uplifting message was considered more important than figurative accuracy or inspired composition. The skills of the artisan were considered gifts from God for the sole purpose of disclosing God to mankind. With the shift in Western philosophy from the late 17th Century onwards, German and British thinkers in particular emphasized beauty as the key component of art and of the aesthetic experience, and saw art as necessarily aiming at beauty. For Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), aesthetic appreciation of beauty is the most perfect reconciliation of the sensual and rational parts of human nature. Hegel held that art is the first stage in which the absolute spirit is immediately manifest to sense- perception, and is therefore an objective rather than a subjective revelation of beauty.

Aesthetics in the African World view

In the thought of the African, art is not something that can be dealt with as a separately existing subject. In the daily life of the people, art is not an autonomous area of its own, but permeates all areas of

life and specifically, moral behavior. This is due to the fact that in the typical African society, as far as they stick to their traditional way of life, a separation of art from other areas of life does not quite take place. This conception is more adequate to the traditional way of life in these societies than the earlier position of cultural anthropologists. Kofoworola cites Hegel that aesthetics is a form of beautiful experience by which the rational is rendered sensible, the sensible appearance being the form in which the rational content is made manifest (3). To Nwala, the African artist is not left out of his communal way of life. He posits that,

... the urge to create ... might be basic for individual artists; but the urge is inseparable from the social and communal motivations which depend on the function of traditional art, since the artist does not create for himself alone but rather serves as the bearer of communal value. (38)

Synopsis of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*

The play *Iredi War* centres on the conflict of interest between Obi Igboba, representing, Owa kingdom, and the arrogant and power intoxicated Assistant District Commissioner (ADC) of Agbor Sub-District, Crewe-Read. The play opens with a story-telling session being anchored by Narrator I and Narrator II who interchangeably also participate in the events of the story as it unfolds. Light opens with a meeting in the Owa palace with the Igboba sitting in Council. Present are the kingmakers, youths and warriors of Owa Kingdom, guards of the palace and attendants, Crewe-Read, Gilpin, and other assistants. The reason for the meeting is that Crewe-Read needs more carriers. He says that the Empire is expanding so he needs more carriers to help carry gifts, loads and also run errands for the white man. He also requests every adult citizen of Owa to pay a levy of two shillings only. The Igboba in consultation with his chiefs asks that Crewe-Read should come and address the people of Owa Kingdom himself since he has refused to take their "No" as the "No" of the people. With this agreement, a meeting is fixed for 5pm with the people. However, Crewe – Read plays a fast one on the natives, as he sets his soldiers and warriors to go burn the various gods and deities of the people of

Owa Kingdom unknown to them. This is the beginning of the crises as the people of Owa Kingdom retaliate. Crewe-Read then instructs Gilpin to send a telegram to the Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, Asaba and also copy the officer commanding Army command at Asaba requesting for reinforcements, arms and ammunition and also permission to be allowed to march on Owa immediately even against the advice of Gilpin- court clerk. The stage is then set for war and both sides begin preparations in earnest. In the ensuing battle between the warriors of Owa Kingdom on one side and the Crewe-Read led soldiers on the other, we find treachery, complacency and betrayal playing out in both camps. This eventually leads to the death of Crewe-Read in a gun battle as a warrior of Owa Kingdom fires a gun through his heart. He slumps to the ground and dies. Afterwards the involvement of Mr Chichester and Captain Rudkin further elongates the War leading to more deaths from the two camps. Eventually reason prevails as a make- believe meeting turned court trial is organized by Chichester and Rudkin involving Igboba, Nneka, Nwobi and Iwekuba. Ultimately, Igboba agrees to go on exile but with his Prime minister, other chiefs, subjects and warriors who were already tried and convicted in the open court and in the glare of commoners and have been sentenced to prison, exile or death.

Reflections on *Iredi War*

In the words of Ukala (2014), "*Iredi War* is a "folkist" play or a "folkscript" because it is constructed by the principles of "Folkism" (6). There is, therefore, the need for producers to carry out their creative process while maintaining as much as is possible a balance with the dramatic recreation of the original piece. Ukala attests to this when he states that "In Folkism, the dramatic recreation or adaptation of a story is faithful to the original, not slavishly, but enough for the owners of the story to recognize it and identify with the recreation or adaptation"(6). Again, Ukala says "*Iredi War* is based on the history of the 1906 uprising of the people of Owa Kingdom, currently in the Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta State of Nigeria, against British

oppressive colonial rule, as championed by Assistant District Commissioner O.S. Crewe-Road (Whom the Owa called Iredi), and the quelling of it by the British Army” (6). The ignorance and rudeness of the whiteman Crewe-Read to the African religious belief of the people of Owa Kingdom sets the tone for what is to happen next.

Crewe-Read: Jujus! That’s what they are! On my first visit, I rejected your kola and palm wine for the same reason. Perhaps, you were too insensitive to notice...for Christ’s sake, can’t you pray to God Almighty, the Alpha and Omega, the Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient? (15)

The above statement eventually leads to the command issued by Crewe-Read for every shrine in Owa kingdom to be burnt down. It shows deceit perpetrated by the colonialists and the playwright brings to the fore the different ways and manners with which they tried to force their religion and way of life on the Owa people, just as he did with Ovonramwen of Benin and Nana Olomu of Isekiri. One thing to note here is that the colonialists never acted in isolation. There was always one black brother or the other who helped them carry out their dastardly acts as the excerpt below informs.

Narrator I: Our black brothers, who according to the DC, had “seen the light”! Our own kith and kin. They spat and farted on our gods and ancestors, and set them ablaze. Only a white man was with them, one white man, silently masterminding twenty Blacks. (24)

Igboba: Yes, Sergeant?

Iwekuba:(*Disdainfully*) What’s he sergenting? Doesn’t he know how to greet the King?

Acholem: I wonder.

Nwobi: Why should he greet your king? The little bird dancing by the roadside has drummers underground.

Ekome: (*To LAWANI, conciliatory*) You are our own brother. Greet him “Obi Agun” or “The King shall live forever!”

Lawani:(*Expansively*) There is only one king in United Kingdom and British Dominions, including Owa. His name is His Majesty, King Edward VII-

Dramatic Aesthetics in Sam Ukala's Iredi War 245

Nwobi: (To ACHOLEM, as EKOME returns to his seat) Didn't I tell you?

Igboba: I warn you, Sergeant; Don't ever say that again.

Lawani: You can't warn me. By the authority of that one and only king of United Kingdom and British Dominions, I have come to arrest you, Chief Igboba. So therefore, you are under arrest. (34-35)

It is important to note also that despite the black man's loyalty to the whiteman, he still suspects and keeps him at arms-length. The playwright also comes to show here the distrust that occurs in a war situation from both parties where it is all safety first before anything. He buttresses this assumption in the dialogue that ensues between the loyal Mr Gilpin and Mr Chichester on one hand.

Chichester: Mr Gilpin!

Gilpin: Sir!

Chichester: Are you Ekumeku?

Gilpin: That's luxuriantly ludicrous, Sir. But, if I were, I won't say "yes". No serving Ekumeku owns up.

Chichester: Be straight, Mr Gilpin! We don't have time. Are you Ekumeku?

Gilpin: No, Sir!

Chichester: Gilpin....is that your true name?

Gilpin: Yes, Sir.

Chichester: From where? One word!

Gilpin: Koko.

(Chichester rushes to the map on the wall to locate Koko)

Chichester: Koko, the place of Nana of Itsekiri?

Giplin: Yes, Sir! No Ekumeku there, Sir.

Chichester: Go.

Gilpin: You can trust me, sir. What's more, my grandfather was British like you, one of the early traders across-

Chichester: I said, Go!

Gilpin: Yes, Sir! *(Exits)* (69)

The narration of Jamba (Narrator 1) and Afopele (Narrator II) on the other hand also comes to play.

Jamba: What's that?

Afopele: What?

Jamba: What are you doing?

Afopele: Resting

Jamba: Resting!

Afopele: Erh-o! Resting

Jamba: The DC said the telegrams must get to Asaba tonight- o

Afopele: Let them get to Asaba now. Am I stopping them? I must rest-o. Or did the Almighty DC say that Afopele, the son of Imaran, must die for the telegrams to get to Asaba? (*Pause*)
Come Sidon, jor! Because DC don talk, we dey rush like dog wey death dey call. (54-55)

Multi Dramatic Aesthetics in *Iredi War*

The playwright exposes us to his multi dramatic aesthetic use in the play which shows in such features as dance, song/music, spectacle/special effects and double role interchangeably.

- **Aesthetics in Dance:** By definition, dance is the rhythmic movement of the human body in space and time to make statements. The use of dance in the play shows the culture and belief system of the people of Owa Kingdom. The scene of celebration at Igboba's court at the arrival of the warriors from the war with the whitemen also buttress this notion, especially when Nwoma casts away her outer wrapper to reveal her maiden dancer's costume. She takes to the dance floor, dazzles everyone with her virtuosity and becomes the cynosure of all eyes. In another scene, the use of dance also exposes us to the picture of agony, pain and the groans of the prisoners in chains as they cross the arena, almost in silhouette escorted by inscrutable but well-armed soldiers.

- **Aesthetics in Music:** Music ranges from strictly organized compositions, through improvisational music to aleatoric forms. But whatever the conflict and variance in thought and disposition, a common front to the definition of music is that of being an art form whose medium is sound and silence. These sounds, however, must be organized and pleasant to the ears as portrayed by the playwright in this work. Music may be classified as a performing, fine and auditory art. It may also be divided among "art music" and "folk music". In *Iredi War*, the playwright

uses folk music to embellish the totality of the work. Right from the opening of the play, he uses Narrator 1 to set the audience into the mood of the story telling session as she raises a song after her initial greeting.

Narrator 1: (Rises, and with her right hand, casts imaginary white chalk powder at the Audience)

E ye onu nzun! (I give you white chalk!)

Audience: I gwe, o re-e! (If you concert, may it be efficacious!)

(The above arousal call and response is done thrice as

Narrator1 approaches the performance area) Once there, she raises a song.)

Luni ilu	Tell a tale
Ilu I-gboba	Tale of I-gboba
Do n`udo	Tug at the rope
Udo Kpirikpiri	It`s unsnappable (11)

The playwright also at another time, using songs and music sets the reader/audience into the expected mood of the scene as to what to imagine and anticipate. This is seen in the ritual procession involving the corpse of Uzun whom the white man killed.

Iredi do, do do	Iredi greetings
Iredi- o	Iredi
Onye gbu nw`eworo	Killer of lion`s cub
Cheri nne-o	Wait for the mum
Ebelebe	Ebelebe (40)

With the above war song and cries, what to expect afterwards is quite predictable as the warriors dance on stage poised for war and action.

- **Aesthetics in Spectacles:** Spectacle refers to an event or happening that is memorable for the appearance it creates. Spectacle has featured in the theatre from the very beginning but became more prominent in 17th century English drama. In the play *Iredi War*, the playwright “plays” with a lot of spectacles to depict mood, tempo and further add colour and panache to the flow of the story. This he achieved with the use of flute, suggested lighting effects, colours, elaborate costumes, setting and properties. All

these when creatively used together would create a special ambience and razzmatazz that would be thought provoking.

- **Aesthetics of Double Role:** This is when a person is playing two characters or roles interchangeably. It is a style used by the playwright to also involve the Narrators in the happenings of the events they are narrating as they unfold. From their narration, we come to the understanding that their grand fathers were part of the events being narrated. Hear them:

Narrator II: Our grandfathers were part of it. Mine was a carrier and a runner. He carried the whiteman`s loads. He even carried the whiteman himself, if the journey was long and the terrain tough. He ran swiftly across long distances....

Narrator I: (*Thumbing her chest*) My own grandfather was a soldier in the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). From Benin to Calabar, anywhere any native community raised its ugly head of protest against whatever the white man wanted, my grandfather and others like him were quickly drafted there to pour fire on that community! (13 & 14)

The playwright later introduces the Narrators as the Whiteman`s carriers/runners with the names Afopele and Jamba

Crewe-Read: Jamba!

Jamba: Sir! (*Runs from among the carriers/runners to Crewe-Read. She is actually Narrator I thinly disguised as a man*)

Crewe-Read: Afopele!

Afopele: Yes, Sir! (*Also emerges from among the carriers/runners. He is Narrator II also thinly disguised.*)

Crewe-Read: Get ready to run like a mad dog.

Conclusion

In highlighting the multi dramatic aesthetic in the play *Iredi War*, what comes to the fore here and its dominant force is the fact that the style of an individual playwright distinguishes his works from others. This can be seen in the way Ukala creatively crafts his work in his use of the total theatre technique and taking cognizance of the African value system and doctrines, especially with the use of dance, songs, music, mime, pantomime, and various acrobatic

displays. All these, to a very large extent, bring out the dramatic techniques in the play *Iredi War* especially from the African folkloric example.

Works Cited

- Kofoworola, Z.O. "Aesthetic of Performance and Exploration of Concepts in African Theatre". *The performer: Ilorin journal of the performing arts*. 2004. Print.
- "Living with Art: The African Aesthetic World View as an Inspiration for the Western Philosophy of Art."
<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf>. Retrieved on 15th September, 2017. Web.
- Nwala, T.U. *Igbo Philosophy*. Lagos: Literamed, 1985. Print.
- Ogunba .O. & Irele .A. (eds) *Theatre in Africa*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1978. Print.
- Rasaki, B.O. *Rudiments of Choreography*. Lagos. Dat & Partners logistics Ltd., 2004. Print.
- Ukala, S.U. *African Theatre: Beast of No Gender?* (Inaugural Lecture).Abraka: Delta State University, 2007. Print.
- Ukala S.U. *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2014. Print.

Eighteen



Historical Realities: A Study of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*

Anthonia E. Ezeugo

Introduction

All works of literature are identified with people whether real or imagined. An artist's mind is shaped by the social, historical, or economic forces which surround him or her. Drama, more than other genres of literature, is an artistic union of facts capable of decoding human activities in space and time. To this effect, it can reflect history, and Sam Ukala's *Iredi War* is a dramatist's mode of interpreting history. It is a dramatic record of historical events captured for contemporary enjoyment and edification. This proves that drama is an intellectual, imaginative and a realistic activity which can draw its source materials from history. Peter Aniago explains that:

By source materials we mean the basis of a given story as well as that of the objects and subjects represented in the story. The idea here is that a given story must have existed somehow either as wholly or partly, as a past occurrence or combination of past occurrences, or past happening or idea in the consciousness before it is narrated by the narrator (189-190).

By way of definition, *The New Webster's Dictionary of English Language* defines history as a record of past events usually with an interpretation of their causes and assessment of their importance. It explains further that it can as well be a narrative of real or fictitious events connected with a particular person, country, objects etc. In his own contribution, K. G. Clark submits that history is "the record of anything that has ever happened in the past, however long ago or however recently". Our view of history

shapes the way we view the present, and therefore dictates what answers we offer for the existing problems. It is expected that we have good understanding of the past in order to know how to deal wisely with the present. Our heredity, our past experiences are all important determinants and clues to our present conditions. History directs our world view by making us to avoid, accept, or even discontinue certain practices which are retrogressive and foolish. It suggests that the goal of history is to tell a story about the past which captures the essence of an event while side-tracking irrelevant details.

To tell a story, the story teller chooses his/her preferred mode such as prose, poetry, or drama. Ukala's choice, drama, has its basis as story-telling but the entire story is presented in dialogue. This explains why some people find it difficult to read plays because one is required to read the stage direction for him/her to understand the story. In spite of this, drama remains the most appropriate because of its pragmatic nature in representation of human experiences. Life is all about imitation and imitation is drama's strong pedestal.

History as Source Material in the 21st Century Drama

Research proves that many playwrights are informed by many source materials nowadays such as, community existential struggles, feminist agitations against aspects of culture and patriarchy, Niger Delta Crisis etc. Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, however, assert that,

Certain well-established and highly important dramatic tendencies have re-surfaced in the 21st century and have given some sharpness to the creative vision of present day drama. These include historical reconstructions and adaptations which have complemented the natural understandable propensity to capture contemporary realities (177).

In his own observation, Ameh Dennis Akoh remarks that history "remains a consistent source material to playwrights of all generations"... (and they) have responded differently to historical materials available to them" (112).

Nigerian dramatists make their choice in their attempt to re-enact the Nigerian experience using historical sources. Some deviate entirely from the historical source while others are devoted to the historical credibility. Ako reiterates; that some dramatists “have tried not to deviate from the course of historical events, others have consciously „forced“ on the material, artistic vision (122). Onukaogu and Onyenirionwu claim that the Nigerian “... dramatist has approached the issue of history from the tangential points of two significant historical phases of the country; ... captured and creatively reconstructed historical events of the pre-colonial/colonial and post- colonial Nigerian times” (177). They note that among the most impressive dramatic renderings of the Nigerian pre-colonial/colonial experiences, Isiaka Aligan’s *Oba Mama* stands out” (177). This is a re-enactment of the reign of Oba Abdulsalami Mamoloshu, the 5th Emir of Ilorin between 1891 and 1896. But Ahmed Yerima remains “the leading name in the historical circus of contemporary Nigerian drama” (Onukaogu and Onwenionwu 178). Yerima’s most popular historical play is *The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* which is created from incidents that occurred during the British attack on the ancient Benin Kingdom during the reign of Oba Ovonramwen. Yerima’s other historical plays include: *Sultan Attahiru*, which recasts European conquest of Sokoto caliphate and *Ameh Oboni the Great* which on its part embodies the experiences of the Igala people. There is also an earlier version of the Ovonramwen story written by Ola Rotimi simply titled *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi*. Some historical plays though written by different authors but point to the events of the Ijaiye wars which occurred in South-West Nigeria are Ola Rotimi’s *Kurunmi*, Wale Ogunyemi’s, *Ijaiye War* and of course Emmy Idegun’s *The Legendary Inikpi*. Other historical examples abound. Hope Eghagha’s *Onowawi Shall Rise Again*, a story of Regent Ozighe, a tyrannical king in Okpe-Urhobo in the Niger Delta; Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* which is inspired by a British colonial officer’s interruption of a traditional ritual suicide of Olokun Esin Tinadu in 1945; Emeka Nwabueze’s *The Dragon’s Funeral* which reflects on Aba Women’s Riot.

Helon Habila's *The Trials of Ken Saro Wiwa* in Otiono and Okenyodo's *Camouflage*. It handles the killing of Ogoni human rights activist, Ken Saro Wiwa. Perhaps the latest among the above works is the most recent work by Sam Ukala: *Iredi War*, winner, the Nigeria Prize for literature, 2014 which contains a serious mature handling and a convincing blend of the history of Owa kingdom currently in Ika North-East Local Government, Delta state. By epitomizing the historical details of Owa in the colonial period in drama, Sam Ukala has succeeded in bringing back to memory lane some crucial points of that history, though with its pains, which form the warmest ideology for building the future.

It is quite apposite to say that there is some strong relationship between history and drama. Drama helps in the documentation of true life action for performance before the present and future members of the society. But in doing that, Ahmed Yerima suggests that:

The relationship between history and drama is one in which the playwright attempts through his play to offer explanation to a historical event while forcing on the historical event his thematic pre-occupation history is an integral part of the soul of the community. And like myths and folk stories, they form that rich aspect of the cultural heritage which serves as material source for the playwright (6).

In a historical play, though the actual plot may be fictionalized, it remains imperative that there exist in the drama significant factual events and characters synonymous with the particular people of the story in relation to universal truths. Hence Chidi Amuta submits that:

The historian is concerned with empirical data, operating as much as possible at the level of facts in pursuits of specific truths. On the other hand, the literary artist is concerned with historical data to the extent that they provide him with experiences that constitute the content of his art He mediates facts in pursuit of both specific and universal truths (87).

Every human endeavor has its goals. The crux of every playwright is hinged on his/her aims. For instance, Femi Osofisan as a revolutionist reconstructed the story of the Agbekoya Farmers of Ibadan's violent protest against the colonial government's imposed taxation to become *Morountodun*. He overhauled the story to become that of the suffering of the peasants and the poor, to achieve universal truths. He turned the imposed taxation to become torture against the down trodden. This is why Ademeso observes that Osofisan applies history source material "in a subversive manner by exploiting considerable potential of tradition with positives on contemporary Nigerian life" (57) by "subtly calling on the members of the audience to challenge injustice and oppression" (Saint Gbilekaa 78).

Sam Ukala's Use of History in Crafting *Iredi War*

In the study of the Crewe-Read (Iredi) war, Sam Ukala makes a display of a clear understanding of the society and the folklore of the people whose historical reality he recreates in *Iredi War*. This owes to his acquaintance and intimacy with innumerable facts of the Ika people of Delta State who he has studied for a long time. His knowledge of the Ika people has equipped him with information about the historical, political, social and cultural perspectives of their lives. This is evident in the socio-political and the conceptual frames within which *Iredi War* is crafted. This, of course, is foregrounded in his theory of folkism. The root of his folkism theory, according to Ukala, is from:

The research of folktale performance of several African peoples carried out separately by among others, Dan Ben-Amos, Ruth Finnegan, J. C. de Graft, JP Clark, Efua Sutherland and me provided the impetus for the theory of folkism, which combines the aesthetics of African folktale composition. (*Nigerian Literature 21st century conversation* 369)

Sam Ukala notes that in folkism, the dramatic recreation or adaptation of a story is faithful to the original, not slavishly, but enough for the owners of the story to recognize it and identify with

the recreation or adaptation (*Iredi War* 6). In essence, the playwright acknowledges the fact that drama is a medium through which one extends the knowledge of a people and their experiences to another group of people elsewhere because drama, more than any other genre of literature, “talks and moves about before the eyes of its audience”(Nwabueze 122). From Ukala’s point of view folkism, as “moral instruction comes with entertainment” (*Iredi War* 7). As a result he presents his play in a “run-on like the folktale, not structured in Acts and Scenes and with no stoppages for scene changing”. To create a forum for his desired entertainment, he makes the staging „simultaneous“ and makes the performance structure to allow for robust audience participation and extempore response of the narrator..... (*Iredi War* 7). Still on the significance of drama, Ahmed Yerima asserts:

Drama must be entertaining. The first role of drama is entertainment. The first function of drama is entertainment... We must be able to tell stories; we are story tellers but at the same time we are also commentators on the social movement of life (Interview with Onyerionwu, *21st century Nigeria Literature* 176).

Sam Ukala as a committed artist uses drama to hit the crucial targets of the past reality to enlighten the people and make them aware of the past situation in society. As earlier mentioned, the playwright applies his knowledge of Owa people and uses their past historical incident as a source material. According to the playwright: “Iredi War is based on the history of the 1906 uprising of the people of Owa kingdom, currently in Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta state of Nigeria, against the British oppressive colonial rule as championed by Assistant district commissioner O. S. Crewe-Read (whom the Owa People called Iredi, 6).

The Plot

The plot of *Iredi War* is organized in three significant movements: the beginning, the middle, and end. In the initial scene, the play’s story opens as Narrator1 rises and with her right hand, casts

imaginary white chalk powder at the audience declaring “E ye m onu ozun! (I give you white chalk)” (11). She raises a folkloric song to create the ambience of an Ika folktale session. Some performers soon accompany the singing with drums and other instruments while others dance. This infects the audience too till Narrator11 reveals the mood of their story with proverbs: „„one does not stay in his house and crush his scrotum in the process but Obi Igboba of Owa was sitting in his palace and crushed...” (12). The narrators declare that the performers are summoned from their bowels, their minds, and heads to enact the illustrations of their story because their grandfathers were directly exploited by being the white man’s carriers; they carried the white man himself and his loads and ran his errands. The narrators reminisced about the dark period of their history, about June, 1906, about Obi Igboba and Offley Stuart Crewe-Read, the Assistant District Commissioner(ADC) of Agbor sub-district who they pronounced as „Iredi” or „Ikuru-Iredi”. The playwright fashioned the play in such a way that the performance which starts in Owa palace court with Obi Igboba, his chiefs, Crewe-Read, his sergeants, and his constable ended by 12 noon the next day with fire on every god and their shrines. Iredi and his men answer Igboba’s puzzle by fire! This is promptly followed by Owa people’s retaliation and casualties on both sides: attempts to arrest Obi Igboba, cutting of Lawani’s hand, the killing of Uzun, the youth leader, and dragging of Onyeala to Agbor prisons by Crewe-Read. Here Crewe-Read is portrayed as power hungry and power drunk which de displays in his pomposity, low opinion of the blacks, and his inexperience (38).

In the middle movement, Crewe-Read, who triggered the war, dies while Chichester and the rest of the white troops continue with many casualties from both sides. Lawani, Rudkin and others from the white troops arrive Igboba’s palace. Igboba uses his astral body to spear Lawani. Igboba and his royal court are arrested and brought to Agbor to a colonial court presided over by Chichester. Ukala tries to present unambiguously the cause of the conflict. The MOA1 confesses that Iredi is power drunk (38). The probable consequence of his poor leadership is war which consumed him.

Igboba's reason for the cause of war is: „„it was Iredi who grew fangs and like a mad hyena started biting and killing my people” (91). Ukala succeeds in taking slices of the focal aspect of the history because it is impossible to present everything that transpired during the war in one play.

Characters

Sam Ukala builds his tale on his three main characters that he uses as demonstrative symbols. His number one character is Obi Igboba. This character is the traditional ruler of Owa people during the 1906 Iredi War. He is referred to as Ewero! Meaning: the “lion” (48). This expression symbolically stands for a man of strength and courage. That he is called a lion is also a common symbol for his royalty, stateliness, and fierceness. These attributes of the Obi imbue an unmistakable presence of nobility on him. He moves with the unruffled calmness of a cat and the dignified gait of someone in command. In order „to make white the black nose of a dog”, Crewe-Read says he sent preachers to Christianize them. To this, Obi Igboba says he asked them a simple question which they refused to answer; this question is:

IGBOBA: If a stranger entered your house, would your children adopt him as their father and throw you out of the house? (16).

When Crewe-Read requests for more carriers; to prove the lion in him, an exceptional leader and a person who cannot be easily intimidated, Igboba refuses to supply another batch of carriers to Crewe-Read until the batch sent to him before are back. He simply said, “I saw the footmarks that went into the lion's den but didn't see any that came out of it. Until I see the footmarks returning from the lion's den, I'm not ...” (18). As a leader that carries his subjects along and cares for their well-being, he sternly warns the Crewe-Read's men that “any hand that flogs any chief here shall swell up to the neck of its owner and strangle him. Don't say you were not warned” (19). In his ferocity he warns the Whiteman:

You see, Mr. DC, you cannot shut my chiefs up because I value their views on issues. And in our culture, the Obi owns the land and the land owns the Obi. (19)

Ukala presents him as a patient, tolerant, disciplined, a confident man in charge, he raises his hand at his people to calm them down:

My people, please, be patient let's hear DC out. I am the snake on the palm tree. I won't attack the palm tree climber at sight because I can't tell immediately whether he's going about his own business or coming after me. (20)

When the Christian soldiers set their shrines and their gods ablaze, he threatens: ... "will the goat dare to eat the palm fronds on a lion's head?... (25). He laments that the white man like a treacherous snake struck them and slid off. He encourages his people saying: "Henceforth, we must all stand like the ears of the hound. If we sleep at all, we must sleep like the cat" (29).

When he heard that the white man's army is marching furiously to Owa in retaliation for killing Crewe-Read, he uses his sense of confidence that percolates throughout the kingdom and says.... "Let them come. Owa will finish what's left of them. Is the finger nail scared of scabies?" (71). For the love and welfare of his wives and children he warns them to run away at the face of war, but to reciprocate Obi's love, Nneka says:

Me run away and leave you alone love? ... why should I do that? What life do I have that I want to protect? Anxiety over you would kill me faster than the white man's gun ... wherever you are, there I will be with you. (87)

In love for his wives, he is ardent and spontaneous. His wives look as if they are objects and wonderfully in intense desire for him. Even when Nwoma wants to stir up jealousy because Igboba is enjoying his dialogue with Nneka she couldn't go any further because of Igboba's fair mindedness and anti-mundane nature. He simply dismisses Nwoma. Igboba simply says: „,there she goes again! People are saying what they are saying and lizard springs up to say her daughter has no buttocks““. To show that he isn't

oriented for minutiae of mundane issues, he sneers at her and moves towards the door behind the throne.

Sam Ukala crafted in Igboba a symbol of a leader who serves and saves with the power entrusted to him. He is composite of intelligent and conscientious leadership, humility and selflessness in leadership. Igboba portrays these traits towards the end of the play as he addresses Chinchester who cunningly set up a trial court against him:

IGBOBA: I am not a baby, Mr. Chinchester, I know the end of this trial.... No matter my plea, guilty or not guilty you'll banish me from my Kingdom as you did Oba Overamwen of Benin.... If I must live even in exile my people must live also. Exile will end one day, whether you like it or not, and I will need my subjects, for what is a king without people. (95)

Sam Ukala symbolically crafted him to emphasize patience and tolerance, a good coach with self-confidence, intelligence, fearlessness, proper judgment, and discipline which are qualities needed in an impregnable sage. He's personified integrity, distinct and uncommon character which results from nature and nurture gives him the impetus to challenge "Iredi" and Chichester and overcome them.

The second important character Ukala creates in *Iredi War* is Offley Stuart Crewe-Read, the Assistant District Commissioner (ADC) of Agbor sub-district referred to as "Iredi" or "Ikuru Iredi". Like Igboba, he is also the leader of the white men in Owa. Ukala destroys him from the beginning of the play with human flaws and imperfections. He symbolizes an egomaniac, power drunk, self-centered, and politically inefficient leader. He says he needs more carriers, chief Iwekuba objects that another group of able-bodied men he is demanding again are the ones who produce the yams, palm oil and palm wine they (white men) carry away each time they came. Crewe-Read insolently says; "Chief Igboba! Call your chiefs to order or I'll have them flogged" (18). He addresses Owa as a teeny-weeny part of the British Dominion where king Edward rules and Obi Igboba is a chief not a ruler. In response to his arrogance, Ekoma prays: "May we not sit in our own home and in

sitting, crush our scrotum” (20). Crewe-Read addresses the blacks as: “primitive, excessively emotional, and unreasoning” (21). He leads the white men to burn all the shrines in Owa. The totality of what he stands for is described below:

MOA I: I think Crewe-Read was power hungry and power drunk.

MOA II: Crewe-Read was pompous. He has a very low opinion of blacks. He seized every opportunity to tell them how inferior they were to the white man.

MOA III: He is a racist.

MOA IV: He is young and inexperienced (38).

He pretends to be tough but at the news that Owa youth are coming after their camp he cries like a baby: “what do we do Lawani?” (57). Again only one shot fired by a warrior makes him slump and die. Chichester his master commented on him: “Iredi” showed signs of being overzealous, self-centred, and even ambitious (60).

Again Gilpin exposes „Iredi“s character deficiency: “... insurrection is often induced by racism, arrogance, high handedness and insensitivity Crewe-Read was guilty of all-... he knew everything and never considered anyone’s advice” (73). This suggests that Crewe-Read would have applied a little bit of humility and should have known the limit of his capabilities and of course the consequence of his thick headedness and arrogance. If Chichester didn’t hand over to him, which he regretted, his catastrophic diplomatic deficiency which consumed him would have been averted.

Conclusion: Inferences and Propositions

Language is one of the essential techniques in writing and analysis of any dramatic text. A playwright through language communicates his ideas and manipulates it to suit his goal. He must also think in terms of characters’ distinguishing nature; for instance in speeches, setting, age and incorporate them in his use of language. This is exactly what Ukala achieves to ensure proper dialogue among his characters. In assigning the language of Obi Igboba and in fact all the characters in the work, he portrays the

accurate use of language according to emotion of the characters. His language also suits and portrays that *Iredi War* is a “folkist” play or a “folkscript”; he therefore tilts the play’s language to base on the “history”, culture, and concerns of the folk” (6) to convince the reader/audience.

Moreover, the language of the characters in conversation depicts their inner intention. Hence Kempton asserts: “dialogue reveals the characters’ motives and opposing agendas” (4). The anger in Obi Igboba’s dialogue between him and Crewe-Read below reveals much about his stand and the ADC’s request for more carriers.

Igboba...When tortoise was asked to visit the lion who was ill, he said, “I saw the footmarks that went into the lion’s den, but didn’t see any that came out of it. Until I see footmarks returning from the lion’s den, I’m not... (18).

In the above expression, the tortoise is wise and as a cunning animal, stands for Igboba. Crewe-Read symbolizes the lion while the den is his camp in the forest. The footmarks represent the legs of young men of Owa who were given to Crewe-Read as carriers before his present request. In response to the white man’s demand that Igboba should come down from the throne because only one king rules from England, Ekome, a palace chief prays:

Ekome: May we not sit in our own home and, in sitting crush our scrotum (20).

When Ebie and the youths come back rejoicing over the death of Crewe-Read, Igboba says: “... You’ve proved that the tiger doesn’t give birth to a toad ...” (63). When he advises his wives to run away in the face of impending attack from the colonial masters and they refuse, he simply says: “Don’t say I didn’t warn you my Queen. It’s the fly that didn’t heed advice that followed the corpse into the grave” (87).

From the speeches above, one deduces that Obi Igboba chiefly uses proverbial sentences in addressing issues. His form of language suits his age and status as the custodians of his people’s culture. This proves that Ukala has perfect knowledge of the Iredi

War that he reconstructed and this is portrayed in his use of language which also reveals the period of the war. The language use also helps the reader/audience have access into the character's thoughts and their inclinations. There is also synchrony between language and setting where the characters perform. The length, breadth of the play celebrates the ultimate triumph and the struggle of the Owa people to protect their scrotum from being crushed.

Ukala does not rely on fictional names in his work. Instead, he uses some original names of the real persons involved in the war such as Crewe-Read and Chichester. He also uses the actual names of places such as Owa and Agbor which help to project the reality of the historical era. The entire story symbolizes the black man's struggle against colonialism and the pain he went through because the white man considers himself to be more advanced and, therefore, uses his supposed advanced status to become more barbaric than the person he considers barbaric.

Finally, Ukala uses the Obi of Owa and his palace chiefs to display the black man's courage in the face of conflict, through resilience, fair play, committed and selfless leadership.

Works Cited

- Ademeso, Adebola. "The Drama and Theatre of Femi Osofisan: A Critical Appraisal." *The Crab: Journal of Theatre and Media Arts*. No 5, 2009. (1-35) Print.
- Akoh, Ameh "Towards a Historiography of the Text: The Plays of Ahmed Yerima." *Muse and Mimesis: Critical Perspectives on Ahmed Yerima's Drama*. Gbemisola Adeoti (Ed.) Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 2007. (110-122) Print.
- Aniago, Peter "The Context and Typologies of Literary Source Materials in Cyprain Ekwensi's *Burning Grass*: Focus on the Actual and Typical Realities." *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*. Vol. 2, No 11. 2012. (188-194) Print.
- Clark, K.G. *The Critical Historian*. London: Heinemann 1967. Print.
- Habila, Helon "The Trials of Ken Saro- wiwa (or Saro Wiwa's Ghost)." *Camouflage*. Eds. Nduka Otiono and Odoh Diego Okenyodo. Yenagoa: Treasure Books., 2006. (147-156) Print.

Historical Realities: A Study of Sam Ukala's Iredi War 263

- Nwabueze, Emeka. "Drama and National Consciousness." *Visions and Re-Visions: Selected Discourses on Literary Criticism*. Enugu: ABIC Publishers, 2003. (121-132) Print.
- _____. *The Dragon's Funeral*. Enugu: ABIC Publishers, 2005. Print.
- Ogunyemi, Wale. *Ijaiye War*. Ibadan: Orisun Acting Editions, 1970. Print.
- Onukaogu, Allwell and Onyerionwu, Ezechi. *21st Century Nigerians Literature: Introductory Text*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2009. Print.
- Onyerionwu, Ezechi. *Nigerian Literature: the 21st Century Conversation*. Ibadan: kraft Books Ltd.
- Osofisan, Femi. *Morountodun*. Ikeja: Longman, 1982. Print.
- Rotimi, Ola. *Kurunmi*. London : Oxford University Press, 1971. Print.
- Soyinka, Wole. *Death and the King's Horseman*. London: Eyre Methuen, 1975. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2014. Print.
- Yerima, Ahmed. *Trials of Oba Ovanramwen*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 1998. Print.
- _____. *Attahiru*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 1999. Print.
- _____. "Historicism, Sultan Attahiru, the European Conquest and Dramaturgy." being a paper at the International seminar to Commemorate the Centenary of the Decline of Sokoto Caliphate at Usman Danfodiyo University Sokoto Nigeria, 2003.

Nineteen



Language as Stimulus: Rhetorical Rendering in Sam Ukala's *Skeletons*

Benedicta Adeola Ehanire

Introduction

This work explores, from a literary perspective, the rhetorical devices deployed by the Nigerian writer, Sam Ukala, in his rendering of human experiences in his collection of six short stories titled *Skeletons*. The stories which are: “Embrace of a Mirage,” “The Certificate,” “Money, Guns and Justice,” “Take Me to Mpitime,” “Masquerade Music” and “Murder at Wilmer” are so aesthetically narrated to elicit the reader’s pathos.

Although the stories are not cited in the order of their listing in the collection as the text-by-text approach is followed, they are explained and evaluated using, first, the pragmatic literary theory which emphasizes “the artistic strategies by which an author engages and influences the responses of readers to the matters represented in a literary work” (Abrams and Harpham 69). Pragmatic scholars like Wayne C. Booth, David Daiches and James Reeves believe, for example, that figurative language use is of the essence in a literary work. It is in this sense that Daiches elaborates that “the true creative writer drops his words into our mind like stones in a pool, and the ever-widening circles of meaning eventually ring round and encompass the store of our own experience” (32). On his part, James Reeves opines that “skill, patience and experience” with which a writer handles language determine his or her success in the composition of “everyday prose” (23). Thus, the two pragmatists cited above emphasize the centrality of imaginative language and the elicitation of the expected reader response.

The stories in Ukala's collection are also evaluated along the line of rhetoric (made popular by classical rhetorician, Aristotle), and which, in the general sense is viewed as the use of language to elicit the reader's persuasion or acceptance of a particular course of action (John Henry Freeze vii).

It is in the realm of readers' response that a third theory, the psychoanalytic literary theory is also deployed in the exploration of Ukala's experimentation with language that stimulates and titillates the reader's imagination. In this regard, the collection of stories unveils a more profound part of the author not commonly acknowledged by readers and critics of his artistic creations. Patrick Colm Hogan argues, although in another context, that "to a remarkable degree, the stories people admire in different cultures follow a limited number of patterns determined by cross culturally constant ideas about emotions" (17). The simple explanation of Hogan's psychoanalytic disposition is that people easily react to and are moved by ideas or stories which bear semblance to their own experiences or the experiences of those around them. This is made more succinct by Aristotle in his *Art of Rhetoric*, and as translated by Freeze, that: "[A]ctualization (putting things before the eyes) consists in representing things in a state of activity (e.g. representing inanimate things as animate). It is produced by metaphors, similes, which must be taken from things that are familiar..." (9). There is no gainsaying the fact, therefore, that the events captured in *Skeletons* and the strategies in presenting them evoke the feeling of familiarity and excitement.

Sam Ukala is easily associated with folkism which is his own dramatic aesthetic creation. He is also renowned for his plays and poems many of which are revolutionary in nature. But in more than the two literary genres mentioned above, his style in the rendering of the six stories in *Skeletons* holds the ace in further projecting the author as a writer who is committed to art and its ideology of teaching and pleasing (as expressed in the discourse on the functions of art by Abrams and Harpham 312).

Set against the backdrop of the Nigerian socio-political and economic space, the stories in the *Skeletons* are everyday stories of everyday people. What elevates the stories above mere banality,

however, and the features that place the author on a pedestal of literary accomplishment in the short story sub-genre are the strategies he deploys to stimulate the reader's interest and to render his message persuasive. The strategies which are, in the larger perspective, rhetorical figures, examined in this paper are: Anaphora, Metaphor and Simile as well as Metonym.

I. Anaphora

Anaphora refers to the repetition of key words in a phrase or sentence to draw attention to the expression being made. Ukala makes ample use of the figure in order to confer on the expressions a certain degree of rhetorical significance. Part of the significance of this strategy is to heighten the narrative and to make the actions memorable. For example, in "Money, Guns and Justice", the author tells the story of the corrupt Medical Director who pretends to side with the Chief Mortuary Attendant, C.M.A, in the latter's zeal to expose the nefarious activities of his subordinate in the sale of human parts in the hospital's mortuary. The story records thus:

Consequently, the Medical Director's interest in the C.M.A.'s written report grew. He phoned the C.M.A. to check the progress of the report. He phoned to ask if he could help with troublesome spellings and constructions. He phoned to tell him that the M.D.'s secretary was at his disposal if the typists at the typing pool were, as usual, reluctant to work. The M.D. phoned every now and then to show his kindness (61).

The repetition of the phrase, "[H]e phoned, capped with "[T]he M.D. phoned" adumbrate the mischief in and insincerity of the action of the M.D. who is an active collaborator in the on-going obnoxious sale of human parts supposedly preserved in the hospital's mortuary. The repeated phrase captures succinctly the betrayal of professional trust by the M.D. as his conduct exposes the underbelly of what happens in such medical facilities in many societies including Nigeria. The phrase also serves the rhetorical effect of imprinting on the reader's mind the fact that such practice of sale of human parts by mortuary attendants thrive because of the active connivance of those at the helm of such facilities.

The same persuasive effect is created when the wife of the detained Chief Mortuary Attendant, faces the reality of her situation in the absence of her husband. She is further harassed by agents of the same forces that are responsible for her husband's predicament. The narrator states that:

Clara scurried into the corridor like a hare and locked its door.
A louder kick at the front door.

"Open this door or I break it," the voice thundered.

Clara scurried into her bedroom, locked its doors and moved towards the bed. Then a voice hit the window by the bed: "And if he broke it, terrible thing go happen."

Clara banged her face into the bedroom door before she remembered that she had locked it. (64)

Not only is the repetition of "Clara scurried" and then, "Clara banged," for emphasis, the style captures Clara's state of mind at the time the incident in her home occurs. Faced by the imminent threat of night marauders and potential rapists, her realization that she is helpless, is captured by the writer who uses this form of anaphora to depict Clara's state of confusion. It is in the light of the stylistic effects of pattern repetition that Kofi E. Yankson opines that "it represents the writer's search for appropriate words to express the ineffable" (67). This is exactly what is perceived in Ukala's use of the anaphora in his short stories. The events the stories render, though simple, take on the unimaginable at various times that the author, just as the reader, cannot but gasp at the incredulity of the occurrences.

In the story "Masquerade Music", Roselyn's vengeful killing of Adafo, her late husband's lover, results in untold misery in the cuckold husband and widower, Uyo's, homestead. The author captures this when he writes that: "Nweke began to cry. Yes, Nweke, his son. He cried, he cried, but couldn't call "mother!" He recognized his mother's body.... He screamed.... Uyo shouted, shouted, shouted. Nweke cried, he cried" (90). The scene of sorrow and pain is captured vividly and successfully by the author's use of the anaphora.

More anaphoric expressions occur in the story in the scene recalling the military coup which sweeps away Roselyn's corrupt brother, Lazarus, from his customs job in Lagos. The author expresses, in a series of repetitions, the deceptive courtesies of the military boys who are usually deployed to evict serving military officers from their positions in times of crises like coups. He puts it this way:

It was, indeed, the habit of these soldiers to salute people. They saluted the president before they killed him. They saluted the ministers before they chained or killed them, seized their long cars and heavenly houses. They saluted many people. When they got to the Customs Office, they indeed saluted Lazarus and cleaned him away from his job like early pus on a boil.... (110)

The phrase, "they saluted" is repeated four times in the above passage to emphasize the soldiers' action and to convey to the reader that their action was not to be interpreted on the face value. The rhetorical effect of the foregrounding of expressions is captured by Geoffrey Leech thus:

... repetition is a fundamental if primitive device of intensification.... By underlying rather than elaborating the message, it presents a simple emotion with force, it may further suggest a suppressed intensity of feeling – an imprisoned feeling, as it were, for which there is no outlet but a repeated hammering at the confining walls of language. (78-79)

A simple understanding of Leech's postulation is that repetition helps the writer to hammer home the message he desires to convey to the reader about the scene and situation he is depicting in the narrative. This hammering-home effect is a reflection of what Tony E. Afejuku describes, although in another context, as the "use of language that is very rich and effective in heightening meaning and in recreating remembered scenes" (267).

Although Afejuku's reference to remembered scenes is with regard to the ability of language use to create vivid and lasting memories in the mind of a reader, modern rhetorician, Sonja Foss

makes a case for the importance of word clusters as means of attracting the reader's attention. Foss believes that the regular occurrence of specific words in a discourse, including "analyses of main ideas in a text,"... aid the writer/audience connection and thus serve the purpose of persuasion" (n.p.).

By his ample use of the anaphora, Sam Ukala displays his mastery of and knowledge of language as something that must be euphonious in terms of "volume, harmony and rhythm" (Freeze 347). He treats the rhetorical figure of anaphora as a powerful tool that could be deployed in such a way that is "so vivid and memorable that they haunted the listener long after he lost interest in the events they were employed to describe – or they may, on the other hand, have given him a greater interest in the events" (Daiches 22). The "greater interests" in events narrated in a story are further aroused by the deployment of metaphors and similes which form the next segment of this discourse.

II. Metaphors and Similes

Metaphors and similes are rhetorical figures of comparison which draw a similarity between two objects. In most cases an abstract image is likened to a concrete object in order to paint a clearer picture in the mind of the reader. The difference in the two rhetorical figures is explained by Martin Gray when he writes that: "[S]imiles always contain the words „like“ or „as“. Whereas [METAPHOR] merges the two things being compared into a new non-literal conceptual compound" (189). Essentially, the two rhetorical figures paint vivid pictures in the reader's mind. Metaphors and similes are deployed by Ukala in his short stories under investigation for poetic and rhetorical effects as they confer deeper meanings on the author's expressions and enhance persuasiveness.

In "The Certificate", the frustration of job seekers who daily throng the Ivory Soap Company is captured after they report late for the recruitment exercise and are locked out of the company's gate. It is through simile that the author expresses the situation. He writes: "When the narrow corridor, created by the gate railings was full, a security man locked the outside end of the gate and all those

who had not entered the corridor sighed away like the five foolish virgins” (34).

The comparison of those who are not fortunate to enter the recruitment corridor with the biblical “five foolish virgins” is to capture the intensity of dejection experienced by the applicants. They are “like five foolish virgins” because of their folly in not arriving early and, therefore, prepared like the others who are lucky to go in. The comparison is persuasively done by the author because it enables the reader to visualize the applicants’ situation and to elicit some form of pathos or emotion towards them – emotion of pity or disdain if the job seekers are evaluated by the reader as truly “foolish”.

In “Embrace of a Mirage,” it is the issue of appearance that draws attention to the simile where Uje, the village boy who is determined to change things about his life, likens his appearance to that of the “devil’s high priest” (11). The author, by the simile, deepens the meaning of Uje’s dissatisfaction with his circumstance thus striking a chord of empathy with the reader. It is his dissatisfaction with his appearance, compared to “a devil’s high priest” that leads him to day-dream about life in Lagos. In the course of his search for a better life the boy is first jolted by the reality of life in Lagos. Again, appearance is foregrounded as the author uses a metaphor to paint the picture of Uje’s “supposed uncle” that he runs to live with in Lagos. The little village boy renders his experience thus:

“Uw’oma, Sir,” I greeted, prostrating myself as Bola and the other uniformed man had done, not because that represented Mbiri culture, but because I thought it was the least of the sacrifices that were usually made to the monstrous god before whom I stood. (18)

Uje is so awe-stricken by the huge appearance of the man he assumes to be his uncle that he describes him metaphorically as a “monstrous god.” Using the man’s size to compare him with “a monstrous god” buttresses Aristotle’s postulation that “metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else, the transference being either from *genus* to *species* or from *species*

to genus or from species to species or on grounds of analogy” (21). The metaphor of the “monstrous god” makes the picture of the man very clear. The rhetorical use of language is supported by Aristotle’s view (as expressed in Freeze’s translation of the *Art of Rhetoric* that “we must give names to things that have none by deriving the metaphor from what is akin and of the same kind, so that, as soon as it is uttered, it is clearly seen to be akin, as in the famous enigma” (359). The picture of the “monstrous god,” from the above reasoning “is akin and of the same kind” as Uje’s supposed uncle.

The other stories in the collection are of no less significance in Ukala’s deployment of similes and metaphors in heightening the rendering of the stories. In “Money, Guns and Justice”, the reader learns that “Clara sneered as though at shit” (70). The comparison of Clara’s reaction, her sneering, with shit is to portray the extent to which she detested Chief Jato’s proposal that she sleeps with him in exchange for the fifty thousand naira needed to bail her incarcerated husband. It is the same situation of a woman’s vulnerability in a time of crisis that Festus Iyayi explores in his novel, *Violence*. The simile of Clara’s “sneering as though as shit” is appropriate and captures her mood perfectly.

So does the metaphorical rendering of Mr. Okpoko’s dangerous liaison with Adafo, another man’s wife, draw attention to the action of the two lovers in “Take Me to Mpitime”. According to the story:

Mr Okpoko swore before Mkpitime, widely renowned for swift action. But the charm of Adafo, Uyo’s wife, had blinded Okpoko and her sweetness had continued to thrill the gum of his molars. So on one Afo day, when most honest men and women were leaving for their farms, Okpoko feigned ill. (76-77)

From the above excerpt Adafo is said to possess some charm which blinded Okpoko to continue to covet her in spite of having sworn before the community’s deity to let go of her after they were first caught in an illicit affair and disgraced. She is also attributed to have “sweetness” which “had continued to thrill the gum” of

Mr. Okpoko. In the last part of the passage, the writer presents a metaphorical idiom of sweetness that thrills the gum to elevate the narrative and also to titillate the reader.

Similes and metaphors are also ingeniously deployed in “Masquerade Music” and “Murder at Wilmar”. For example in “Masquerade Music”, Sam Ukala’s thematic concern with corruption finds expression in the writer’s metaphorical reference to the conscience of Pa Peter as being “reduced to a skeleton in the grave.” Here is an old man who witnesses an act of corruption and a wicked cover-up between his son and the police. Ordinarily, he should have objected to it as he had been portrayed earlier as a morally up-right man. He is tongue-tied because of the involvement of his son and because the actions are taken in order to free him from police cell. His dilemma, therefore, is appropriately captured by the writer’s comparison of his conscience with the skeleton in the grave. A skeleton in the grave is dead, it does not talk, it does not feel. Skeleton, therefore, from which the collection of short stories gets its title, becomes a metaphor for a dead conscience.

There is no doubt that Ukala’s artistic deployment of poetic language in his prose narratives lifts the stories to a pedestal of high rhetorical consideration. A third category of rhetoric figure, the metonym, engages this writer’s pre-occupation in the final segment of this chapter.

III. Metonym

One of the rhetorical figures used by Ukala to attract the attention of the reader and induce reader response is the metonym. Metonym is a type of metaphor and involves the art of using a part of someone or something to describe or define the person or thing. According to Eugene O’Neill, Metonym is similar to metaphor but differs because in metonym the “detailed characteristics of individuals and places are carefully sifted for representativeness” (70). The explanation for O’Neill’s position is that, out of all the details of an object or person, a striking feature is gleaned and given prominence.

This figure is prominently deployed in Ukala's short stories under consideration and it functions as part of the writer's innovative style in African prose fiction in the inducement of sarcasm. Benji Egede opines that behind Ukala's "profundity in linguistic exploration is the assorted bags which the author wears, which contain a variety of condiments: humour, irony (sarcasm), oblique references and so on, all of which lend vigour to the linguistic texture of his works" (138-139). These qualities define the metonymic foregrounding of certain images in the short stories and serve the function of drawing greater attention to the narrative.

In "Embrace of a Mirage," the run-away village boy, Uje, describes some of the traders he encounters in Lagos after his attempt to link up with his "uncle" fails. After a detailed description of the apparel of one of the traders, he caps it with: "One of them had changed into a red, polo-neck pullover upon a pair of white, khaki trousers" (30). From this point on, that particular trader becomes for Uje, "polo-neck". He says at various times in the story: "... as soon as the polo-neck man returned" and "the voice of the turtle-neck man was now as fierce as it was in the morning" (31). Polo-neck, a part of the particular trader's dress becomes his representation. The author's style has the capacity to elicit laughter from the reader. It portrays the little boy, who is the narrator, as someone who still has his wits and sense of humour intact in spite of going through a shocking and harrowing experience.

In the equally shocking and harrowing occurrence, although of a different kind in "Money, Guns and Justice", the human parts merchant is described, at first, by the narrator, by his huge body size thus: "A stumpy, pot-bellied man in a voluminous agbada..." rolled like a pregnant porpoise to the boot of the car, on which the man with the dark apron had dropped the long box" (54). From that point on, the man is addressed as "porpoise." The metonym of representational references forms part of tropes and an invaluable rhetorical figure as it describes "salient or picturesque features of the object referred to" (Abrams and Harpham 133). The objective is to make the persons, objects or scenes vivid and memorable.

Metonyms function too to elevate a writer's narration and to deepen the meaning of the narrative. That is the feeling conveyed in "Murder at Wilmer." One of the women politicians, Mrs. Udume, is described as rolling out words "over her moist, slippery, blood-red lip." Again, in line with Ukala's rhetorical style, subsequent references to Mrs. Udume are in the light of her "bloodied lips." For example, the narrator states that "Alhaji was literally pulled towards the blood-red lips...." Also, "[T]hat picture of bloodied fangs continued to haunt my dreams..." and "Mrs. Udume's lips were as bloody as ever. Mrs. Aro's were strangely as bloody too." Furthermore: "The bloody lips were probably going to tell Alhaja Kudirat, who lived off Wilmer bus stop...." And lastly: "We puffed thick smoke into the dark clouds and peered silently through our dark glasses through the smoke, at the bloody lips" (120-123). The continuous reference to the conspicuous part of the women is significant in drawing the reader's attention to them as married women whose appearance and conducts were morally questionable. More than that, the author uses the metonym to foreshadow the bloody massacre of the women that is perpetrated by the thug, Bullet, shortly before the narrative ends. Their bloody red lips is foreboding, especially with the regularity of the reference.

Metonym is, no doubt, an important rhetorical figure in literary stylistics. It serves the writer's purposes of creating memorable scenes, drawing attention to certain qualities in a person or something as a way of poking fun at the person or something. These purposes are inherent in Ukala's short stories just analysed.

Conclusion

To state that the six short stories in Sam Ukala's collection, *Skeletons*, are riveting is to state the obvious. More than the story line, the lexico-semantic deployment of the anaphora, metaphors and similes as well as the metonym, which is a type of metaphor, are gripping and successfully stimulate the reader's interest in the human angle stories that *Skeletons* render. Ukala's literary style is refreshingly innovative and is enriched by the author's mastery of

the art of sarcasm, humour and innuendoes even as he passes on messages of serious social concern.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th edition. Wadsworth: Centage, 2012: Print.
- Afejuku, Tony E. "Language as Sensation: The Use of Poetic and Evocative Language in Five African Autobiographies." *Neohelicon*, Vol. XIX/1 (1992): 267-282. Print.
- Aristotle. *Art of Poetry*. Trans. Ingram Bywater. Oxford: Clarendon, 1920. Print.
- Booth, Wayne C. "Distance and Point of View. An Essay in Classification." *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*. Editors, Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy. 2nd Edition. Durham Duke UP, 1996. Print.
- Daiches, David. *The Study of Literature for Readers and Critics*. New York: Norton, 1964. Print.
- Egede, Benji. "Narrative Style, Symbolism and Tropes in Sam Ukala's Short Stories." *Eagle in Flight. The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Eds. Steve Ogude et al. Ibadan: Safmos, 1999, 122-142. Print.
- Foss, Sonja. "What is Rhetorical Criticism? Definition and Methods. Related Study Materials". Copyright, 2013-2016 Study. com. Mon.19 Dec., 2016, 15.36. Web.
- Freeze John Henry. Trans. *Aristotle: The Art of Rhetoric*. London: Heinemann, 1926. Print.
- Gray, Martin. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Harlow: Longman, 1984. Print.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm. *The Mind and its Stories – Narrative Universals and Human Emotions*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.
- Leech, Geoffrey. *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*. London and New York: Longman, 1969. Print.
- O'neill, Eugene. "Metaphor and Metonymy." *Practicing Theory and Reading Literature: An Introduction*. Ed. Raman Selden. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Skeletons. A Collection of Stories*. Ibadan: Kraft, 2001. Print.
- Yankson, Kofi E. *An Introduction to Literary Stylistics*. Obosi: Pacific, 1987. Print.

Twenty



Oppression, Gender and Resistance in Selected Plays of Sam Ukala

Cindy Anene Ezeugwu

Introduction

The hallmark of Sam Ukala's growth as a literary artist is his enormous capacity to feel and interpret the intricate and the changing heartbeat of the people in a most dynamic way. Thus a remarkable feature of his literary career is his dogged impressive adherence to the avowed commitment to instruct us on the relevance of folkist aesthetics in contemporary Nigerian drama. By means of vivid characterization and a complete web of narrative techniques, Ukala presents a fascinating and contrasting world of female issues, their different portraiture and manifestations. The corpus of his literary output serves as an evidence of the people's yearning, fear, potentials, hopes and aspirations in a radically evolving world. Thus in our contemporary world, both men and women cannot but be true production of their socio historical milieu.

One of the most critical aspects of the changing times within the Nigerian context is the evolution of the Social and cultural ideology and the representation of women in contemporary Nigerian dramatic literature .A close study of Ukala's literary works indicate a gradual shaping and shifting of this ideology as well as an enunciation of the envisaged female status, roles and portraiture in contemporary Nigerian milieu. From his earlier works like *The Slave wife* to his latter plays like *Odour of Justice*, Ukala's conception of the images of women is broad both in scope and profundity. He is committed to the sacred duty of exhibiting

and exploiting the different shades of women in his works which forms the thrust of this chapter. In the traditional Nigerian cosmology, which is predominantly patriarchal, there is little consideration for the projection of women other than as comforters of their husbands, breeders of children and caretakers of the homes. In Ukala's *The Slave Wife*, the women are invariably made to live, to be seen and not to be heard. They are acquired essentially to procreate. In *Akpakaland*, the women are acquired basically because of their beauty and for political reasons while in *Break a Boil*, the king acquires a new wife forcefully because of her beauty. In the selected works under study, the image of women is categorized into two: the oppressors which are portrayed as the upper class as typified in the characters of Fulama in *Akpakaland*, Alahin in *The Slave Wife* and Uki in *Break a Boil*. The oppressed which are portrayed as the lower class as typified in the characters of Unata in *Akpakaland*, Igbon in *The Slave Wife* and Ison in *Break a Boil*. Thus, the inferiorizing and stereotypical characterization and marginalization of the womenfolk in Ukala's plays cannot but result in the creation of women who are more of evil, wild, dominating, quarrelsome, treacherous and troublesome.

According to Uche Nwaozuzu, "if only women will prove their worth and excel in their endeavours, then they will have no cause to fight gender based oppression" (46). In our retrospective view of the image of women, we find steadfast tendencies of developing women rising from their dimensional state to that of figures worthy of existence and subsequently being portrayed as "complete and rounded beings capable at once of courage and cowardice, tenderness and cruelty, honesty and deceit, self-sacrifice and merciless, rapacity and in short as creatures whose beings are torn by the torments of spiritual as well as of emotional conflicts" (12).

Although the folkloric nature of the plays water down the degree of the horrific nature of Alahin, Fulama, Iya Fulama and Uki's characters and roles, yet Unata, Ison, Igbon and the 2nd Woman are exceptional in their role as the ideal women. Fulama is a jealous wife who wants all the attention from her husband and can do anything including going to the extent of visiting a native

doctor and infecting her co wife with a tail in order to have her husband all to herself. Igbon is a complacent wife who is grossly subjugated by her co wives and as a result of her class, she easily gives in to her co wives' and husband's domination and serves essentially as an incubator or a mere piece of antique furniture in her husband's house. The 2nd Woman is portrayed as an active defender and protector of Igbon against the hostility of the other wives. Unata serves as the voiceless, poor, and highly vulnerable wife who doubles as the decorative wife procured essentially for the king's pleasure because of her beauty and to help boost his ego and uplift his dubious social status which is morally bankrupt. Ison is the docile reactive first wife of king Gidi who remains passive most of the time till fate pushes her to reality. Fulama feels disgustingly marginalized as well as morally bankrupt to the extent of using diabolical means to achieve her evil machination. Fulama, Iya Fulama Alahin and Uki are the portraiture of the product of a society that thrives on evil, backbiting, jealousy, envy and treachery. According to Epochie-Olise, "*Akpakaland* is built on Ika culture and tradition, though using a wider problem that is not only related to his people in denotational manner, but to the whole nation in connotational manner as well" (144).

By means of vivid characterization and a complex web of narrative techniques, Ukala presents these fascinating contrasting worlds of female issues. *The Slave Wife* deals with the issues of apathy, subjugation, intimidation, fear and feelings of insecurity. Igbon is an embodiment of nobility, meekness and humility and this can be seen from the way she is presented below;

[Another woman Igbon, comes in wiping her left shoulder with her right palm...but she is discernibly unkempt, ragged and diffident. She does not Dare to go so close to any of the women].

ALAHIN: ...Look at this one of the swine family.

Unata's astounding courage and self-confidence finds expression in her heroic confrontation with her rival whose pretentious attitudes she sees as unhealthy. We get a good glimpse of her bravery and forthrightness in her dealings with Fulama. In the depiction of the characters in this work, certain key features are

used to emphasize and heighten the values of women. The phallic imagery in *Akpakaland* expresses quite vividly the careless life style of a king which is a serious indictment of a frivolous king who goes in pursuit of cheap amorous pleasure at the expense of his kingdom's growth and security.

Synopsis of *Akpakaland*

Akpakaland is a play that centres on the President of Akpakaland, Akpaka and his wives. The senior wife Fulama informs him that one of his wives has grown a tail, an act that is viewed as an abomination. The President agrees with Fulama that all his wives must be inspected by instructing them to undress before the entire kingdom on a given day. Akpaka agrees to inspect all his wives in five days' time and sharply rebukes Fulama who volunteers to join him in inspecting the other wives. On the fifth day, the entire kingdom gathers to inspect the wives in order to find out who among them has a tail.

Fulama, who had initially met Enwe the seer to collect a charm which she used to make Unata grow a tail, is happy since she thinks that Unata would be exposed and the love that Akpaka has for her terminated. Fate plays a fast one on Fulama as Unata and her father visit Enwe the medicine man who agrees to transfer back the tail to the sender if only they can get the sender to eat the unripe plantain that he will give them. Unfortunately for Fulama, she eats the unripe plantain when she visits Unata and the tail is transferred back to her. On the expected day, the wives reveal their nakedness to the citizenry of Akpakaland except Fulama who is enveloped with fear and disappointment. She refuses to undress but after several manipulations, scheming and struggle by Fulama and her mother with the President, the cabinet and the citizens, particularly those from the province of the poor, Fulama is forced to denude herself and the tail is discovered. Because Fulama comes from the province of the rich, the ministers in connivance with Iya Fulama try to use coercion to overturn Fulama's punishment, but this is vehemently resisted by those from the province of the poor who insist that justice must prevail.

Synopsis of the Slave Wife

The Slave Wife tells the story of Oba Ogiso a powerful monarch from Benin kingdom who has seven wives and no male child to succeed him after his demise. On the advice of his chief medicine man Obu, he marries a slave girl in order to bear him a male child and this purpose however does not come to pass immediately as expected. At his wit's end, Oba Ogiso threatens to annihilate his house hold and the medicine man if his dream of a male child does not materialize. As fate would have it, all his wives become pregnant at about the same time and when it was time for them to be delivered of their babies, as custom demands he sends all of them to their mothers' houses. Six of the wives give birth to monsters and other strange creatures and only the slave wife gives birth to a normal human baby boy. The other wives led by Alahin, out of envy, conspire to drown the slave girl's baby but the baby boy is saved by a spirit. The boy grows and is able to identify who his real mother is. Things turn out well at the end for Igbon as the truth is revealed and the slave wife is elevated to the status of the first lady while Alahin has her head decapitated.

Synopsis of *Break A Boil*

Break a Boil centres on Gidi, the king of Gidiland and the new wife he acquires as a war booty. Gidi forcefully prevails over the king of Ugbon, a neighbouring kingdom, and takes Uki the king's wife as his own, a devilish plan that Uki is privy to just to enable her do away with the crown of Ugbon community and wear that of Gidiland because of the king's fame and valour. Some elders of Gidiland object to the king's action but the king does not hearken to their admonition, thus they leave the king with a proverb which means that he who takes another man's property by force shall have his taken by force. Over time, Eririnma, a stranger to the kingdom and the king's most trusted servant, discovers that Uwa, the king's elder brother is having an adulterous affair with Uki the king's wife. Eririnma threatens to report the evil to the king but as he hesitates whether to report Uwa and Uki, they device a means to cover up their evil act and conspire against Eririnma's witnesses

Ison the King's first wife and Nkanka, a beggar in the palace and the story teller. The conspiracy by Uwa and Uki intensifies when Eririnma insists on reporting them to the king, which make them to accuse Eririnma of attempting to rape Uki. Nkanka who is to be Eririnma's witness is also gruesomely murdered by Uwa so that the truth will not be known and the second witness Ison is forced to swear to the god of Ogun never to say the truth. In order to try Eririnma, Gidi summons a meeting of the elders of Gidiland. At the meeting Uwa states his case and calls Uki and Ison as witnesses. Eririnma discovers that Nkanka is dead and that Ison has sold out but when Nkanka's ghost appears to Ison, she faints. Ison eventually confesses the truth about the abomination being committed by Uwa and Uki in the king's palace. The king kills Uwa while Uki, who is supposed to be sacrificed to the gods of the land as atonement for her evil, is spared by the king, an act which is viewed as disobedience to the tradition of the land and this costs him his throne. Eririnma is crowned as the new king of Gidiland.

Fulama, Iya Fulama, Alahin and Uki as Symbols of Oppression

In *Akpakaland*, Fulama is a stock character filled with treachery and envy and her envy is so pronounced that she has to resort to diabolical means to help her achieve her intentions. Akpaka's first three wives from the province of the rich tend to sit together in a discriminatory manner against the other two wives from the province of the poor. Fulama who is portrayed as hypocritical openly pretends to be friendly with Unata while secretly plotting her downfall. She afflicts Unata with a tail and pretends to be a friend just to make sure that her diabolical spell is functioning well and this is seen from her discussion with Unata. Fulama's evil and jealous traits is portrayed from the way she tricked Enwe and collected a portion which she uses in making Unata grow a tail, her craftiness is aptly captured below:

FULAMA: Did I? Oh well... the tail... the problem of my cow's tail has been so much on my mind that the word tail keeps jumping into my tongue. (28)

The above lines capture the war of conscience which Fulama is battling with. She is the cause of all the conflict in the play which she started with the introduction of the tail issue. Her crafty nature is portrayed severally in the play, and this can be seen from the way she trickily tries to make sure that Unata has a tail:

FULAMAL Hheen? Have you had your bath?

UNATA: Mm-mm. I am unable to –

FULAMA: Hheen? I can help you, you know, support you to the bathroom, help you wash your back.

UNATA: Thanks, but don't bother.

FULAMA: (*Stretching her hand towards Unata's bottom*) Let me help.

UNATA: (*Almost screaming*) Don't worry please. (30)

In *The Slave Wife*, Alahin the head wife of Ogiso is cast in the mould of a trouble maker and an arrogant class conscious woman who is responsible for many of the issues bedevilling the characters in the play. She carries herself so highly that she has little or no regards for her co wives and she addresses them without their due respect;:

ALAHIN: This bowl contains...Will you stop that whispering and listen? Let your dirty tongues gossip when I am away ... [*The other women stopped talking*] ... There is obobo in here for us to eat ...we shall eat all of this and the woman who eats the pepper ... She shall bear my husband an heir

1ST WOMAN: Then we must have that obobo thoroughly mixed by other hands

5TH WOMAN: Yes we must, we must

ALAHIN: Shut up for a while, black ant. You think it has not been mixed? (11)

In the lines below, Alahin is captured subjugating and dehumanizing Ighon the slave wife for giving birth to a normal human baby:

ALAHIN: Come on, bring the child! (*begins to struggle for it*)

IGBON: Leave my child alone, Alahin.

ALAHIN: Yes you will carry home this one while we will follow You home empty – handed? Not while I live...

ALAHIN: Igbon will have Ogiso's heir over my corpse.

IGBON: What have I done, Alahin? What have I done? What have I done to them? (35)

Alahin is obsessively greedy, oppressive, wicked and envious. She intimidates all the other wives of Ogiso and forces them to always remain submissive to her dictations. The height of her wickedness is made manifest when she throws Igbon's child into the Ikpoba river because she does not want the slave wife to be the one that will produce the heir to the throne.

Uki is presented as an adulterous woman who abandons her former husband for a younger king Gidi and still goes ahead to be having intimate relationship with Gidi's elder brother Uwa. Her evil machination is captured in the lines below:

UKI: Think, Uwa, think. You caught him!

UWA: Sleeping with you?

UKI: Trying to.

UWA: The king won't believe it. He trusts the stranger so much.

UKI: Of course, he would ask me to confirm or deny your story and I'd give him more sordid details. Could he trust him more than me? I that loved his youth and virility so much that I abandoned the ageing crown of Ugbon to wear his? Could he trust Eririnma, a mere soldier ant toiling to please him, more than me the queen termite that he toils to please? (74)

Uki's rude manners is aptly portrayed from the way she rudely shouts down a palace chief all in the bid to oppress him and suppress his opinion about her:

OTAKPO: Especially because of a waywar...a mere woman we have hundred as beautiful, if not more beau-

UKI: (*Rising*) You old man who won't respect himself, I have been watching your sharp tongue recklessly rip leaves in the forest. It's time to warn you that the beak that pecks at Uki pecks at fire. Yes Uki is not just a woman like your wives or mothers. Uki is a special woman, whose wink makes a throne dizzy with the cock dance. No mere subject can insult me and get away with it. (72)

Uki's heartlessness is felt from the way she addresses Nkanka who is always tormented by flies as a result of the sores on his leg:

UKI: My wish is that you carry your tattered body out of public view.

M.O.A: Heenh?

NKANKA: But death has refused to kill me.

UKI: So you consider yourself alive? Do seven day old corpses stink as much as you do?

M.O.A: Ah ah leave him alone now. (65)

Iya Fulama is cast in the mould of an arrogant upper class wife of a former president who tries to manipulate the rules in favour of her daughter and who advocates for class distinction at all times and this can be seen from her declaration below:

IYA FULAMA: Abomination if the President has chosen to scrub the floor with the daughters of peasants and petty contractors, he cannot do that with my daughter... Have you all forgotten who her father was? I am talking about the President of the fifth republic...The nightmare of students, journalists and other troublemakers. Have you all no fear? (50)

She sees no evil in the abomination that her daughter committed. Rather, she fights to exonerate her daughter from being executed by manipulating the ministers to get them to upturn justice.

In *The Slave Wife*, the 5th woman is seen verbally oppressing Ighon for airing her view:

5TH WOMAN: Has insult entered the thing? When did Iye Osamudiamwe become Ighon's mate that she should open her mouth at her. Because you have a child?

Unata, Ighon, 2nd Woman and Ison as Symbols of Resistance

Unata is the last wife of President Akpaka from the province of the poor. Her humility, meekness and her beauty endears her to the

king who spends more time with her, a situation that pitches her against the president's first wife Fulama. Fulama sees Unata as a dangerous rival who the president spends more time with, and in her bid to break the bond between President Akpaka and Unata, Fulama takes a diabolical step and inflicts Unata with a tail.

Unata is portrayed as a great strategist. She pretends to appreciate Fulama's assistance which is a strategy to disarm her, and this helps her in making Fulama to eat the roasted plantain with ease, this is observed in their discussion:

FULAMA: ...What is smelling like this?

UNATA: Is any food mine these days? I just can't eat.

FULAMA: This one will be really tasty, try it.

UNATA: I can't chew anything without worsening this headache.

FULAMA: This one will be really sweet I like...

UNATA: It doesn't matter if you want it.

FULAMA: Mm... I should take it. (40)

She is kind hearted in that she does not demand for the death of whoever is responsible for her tail but only wishes for the tail to be transferred back to the sender.

Though Ighon is a slave girl, she is predestined to be the mother to Oba Ogiso's heir. Her humility, meekness and submissiveness to the other wives and the old man who helps her to deliver her baby can be captured in the lines below:

ALAHIN: Look at this one from the swine family. Oba's wife

Osalobua laho!

All the other women at once; Ighon, where have you been since morning.

IGBON: (*Meekly*) I went to fetch firewood.

ALAHIN: Who did you tell before you went away.

(*Ighon smiles apologetically*). (13)

She resigns herself to fate and at the end, good triumphs over evil and she is elevated to the position of the first lady.

Ison is the first wife of king Gidi and her portraiture is captured as a woman who abhors trouble so much so that her co wife Uki who is junior to her treats her with so much contempt.

When she finds out that Uki and Uwa, the king's brother, are having an affair, instead of her to report the issue to the king, her desire not to be drawn into any trouble crates the environment for Uki to lure her into swearing an oath not to divulge the truth:

NKANKA: Okay. For the sake of loyalty and integrity. For the sake of justice...let us light the oil lamp of truth and tend it the guilty ought to be punished. If we do nothing, the innocent will be punished, the guilty rewarded. And evil will continue to triumph in this kingdom. Ison Please-

ISON: Leave me alone .I don't care who is punished .This will not be the first time justice has fouled the air in Gidiland. I will not be a wedge between the king and his darling wife. All I have suffered here since she came is neglect...I do not want to be poisoned or murdered in cold blood. One does not just fill one's belly and go to seek confrontation with Uki or Uwa, whose madness often crouches by the corner, waiting to prey on his snatches of sanity. (81)

From Ison's declaration of resignation above, it is obvious that she has relinquished her superior position to Uki whom she fears may kill her.

Ison is also shown as a kind hearted and meek woman, this is apparent from the way she treats Nkanka despite the sores on his body and the flies that hover over his body. Despite all the oppression from Uki and Uwa, Ison is able to overcome her fears of confronting Uki, thus she opens up to King Gidi and tells him all the evil that is happening in the palace. She rises above Uki's oppression, resists all the threats to her life by Uwa and in the end, Uki and Uwa are exposed and humiliated.

Conclusion

This work observes that women have contributed a lot in contemporary Nigerian literature. This work therefore investigates the roles and portraiture of women. Since wo(man)kind lives in a historically determined stage of complex class and role contradictions, the way power is utilized has given birth to the emergence of the oppressor and the dynamics of the latter has given birth to the „oppressed“. Thus the oppressor and the

oppressed are entangled at times in the murky game of power and survival. This type of dialectics of oppression and resistance is investigated using the major female characters in selected works of Ukala as paradigm. Resistance by the oppressed is clearly displayed by the ideas and actions of both major and minor characters in the plays under study. As the researcher has stated elsewhere, in *Akpakaland* “we experience an epic celebration of the process whereby evil is engendered and punished” (332). Uki in *Break a Boil* never relents in doing evil and plotting other people’s downfall till she is caught in her own web. Ukala succeeds aesthetically, in portraying Unata as a role model who despite the death sentence hanging on her neck still comported herself well till she is vindicated. Alahin becomes a larger than life model, so much that Ukala through Igbon, succinctly painted an enslaved psychological state of being of her co wives in a subjugative mode. Ukala does not only make authorial statements through the narrator about the nauseating oppressive ways of Fulama, he also shows how she is being surrounded by other sickening sycophants and praise singers like some of the wives from the province of the rich and the ministers to Akpaka who try to manipulate justice at the instance of Iya Fulama in favour of Fulama. With the mental and social enslavement of the Ministers who are battle ready to carry out Fulama and her mother’s oppressive orders and to unleash any type of terror, including using the gun, upon anyone or group of persons from the province of the poor that constitutes an obstacle towards upturning the instruction to execute whoever is found guilty with a tail.

Going by the theoretical mode of analysis on oppression, Paulo Freire is of the opinion that; “the dynamic actions produced in the oppressed the corresponding need for resistance and eventual liberation” (20). One is therefore not taken by surprise to note that Alahin, Fulama and Uki’s oppressive attributes give birth dialectically, to various forms of resistance from various quarters. In swift punitive retaliation against Igbon on hearing the news of her being delivered of a baby boy – a possible heir apparent to the throne, Alahin snatches the baby from her and has him supposedly drowned.

Unata, though a very humble and meek woman, when she discovers that she has mysteriously acquired a tail, did not adopt the wait and see approach or passive resistance, she notifies her father Idemudia and both of them swing into action by visiting Enwe for a possible cure. One of the aesthetic achievements of Ukala is his artistic ability and competence in highlighting the stark inequality perpetrated by women among their fellow women. In *The Slave Wife*, *Akpakaland* and *Break a Boil*, some of the women like Igbon, Unata and Ison are portrayed as victims of both masculine and feminine oppression, while at the same time, they fight to resist the oppression in diverse ways. For Igbon, the gods and fate played a major role; for Unata, her father and Enwe come to her rescue and for Ison, saying the truth and exposing the evil in the palace liberated her. Igbon, one of the major characters in *The Slave Wife*, is not liked by the king nor the king's wives right from the time she is taken in as a wife according to the dictates of the gods simply because she is a slave girl. She is brought in when the Oba is desperately looking for a male child who will be the heir to the throne. Her co wives' dislike towards her is nauseatingly carried to a point where they supposedly drown her male child, a child that the Oba has longed for all his life. Oppression of Unata is based on crude denigration that she has no class and that she is from the province of the poor, so the President has no reason to pay her special attention.

Ukala's plays studied here demonstrate the irrefutable truth that where there is oppression, there are bound to occur sooner or later, resistance. Alahin's oppression of her co wives, Fulama's evil machinations against Unata, Iya Fulama's dictatorial manipulation of the ministers to up turn justice and Uki's overbearing attitude towards Ison the senior wife of king Gidi all generated different forms of resistance. While Unata and her father fight against her oppression by returning the tail back to the sender; Igbon relied on fate and the gods to fight her cause while Ison after seeing the ghost of Nkanka, who was murdered in cold blood by Uki and Uwa, overcomes her fears and reveals to the king all that has been happening in the palace.

One can perceive in the plays, genuine efforts by the oppressed women to end their subjugation and oppression. These women's efforts are artistically and aesthetically interwoven within the major plots of the plays. The women, as presented, are optimistic fighters and in the face of obvious difficulties and dangers, they all hoped to overcome their oppressors someday. The overall aesthetic relevance and artistic success of the plays can be rightly measured and evaluated within the matrix of the on-going complex struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed in Nigeria

It is observed that oppression is an underpinning factor that fundamentally militates against women's development. In some societies, women are portrayed as people who are incapable of being rational and they are often excluded from decision making processes. This chapter therefore attempted a contextual analysis of Sam Ukala's *The Slave Wife*, *Akpakaland* and *Break a Boil* against the portrayal of contrasting roles of women engendered with strength, and resilient spirit and imbued with the paraphernalia of revolution and resistance; women who are poised with the determination to help reshape their position and readdress the various predicaments bedeviling them

A cursory look at the Nigeria political and cultural landscape shows that greater measure of discipline and cohesion are achieved where women are given an enabling ground to handle the mantle of leadership and are allowed to be part of decision making processes. Simon de Beauvoir in her work, *Second Sexes*, urges women to "break the bond of patriarchal society" (19). The selected plays therefore advocate against oppression and tyranny, with a call for the society to appreciate the indispensability of women in their efforts to move the country forward while reappraising the hitherto stereotypical yardstick for measuring and determining the fate of women. It also calls on women to remove the garb of disunity and class distinction to help redefine their image in twenty first century contemporary Nigerian dramatic literature.

Works Cited

- Epochie-Olise, Ruth. "A Sociological Perspective of Sam Ukala's *Akpaland*". In *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 2008.
- Ezeugwu, Cindy Anene. "Music, Narration, Mimesis and the Mytho-epic Essence: A Folkist Interpretation of Two Nigerian Plays. *Ikenga International: Journal of Institute of African Studies*. Vol.17, No.1, 2017, pp. 123-141.
- Florence, Staton. *Contemporary African Literature and the Politics of Gender*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin, 1992.
- Nwaozuzu, Uche-Chinemere. "Of Male Playwrights and Female Characters: A Gynandrist's Investigation of Wole Soyinka and Emeka Nwabueze". *Ikenga International: Journal of Institute of African Studies*. Vol.17, No.1, 2017, pp. 123-141.
- Ukala, Sam. *The Slave Wife*. Ibadan: University Press Limited. 1985.
- _____. *Akpaland and Other Plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2004.
- _____. *Break a Boil In Akaland and Other Plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2004.

Twenty-One



Indigenous Patterns of Women Oppression and Liminality in Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland* and *The Slave Wife*

Chikerenwa Kingsley Ihekwe
and Augustina Ashionye Obah

Introduction

The ability of contemporary drama to tell the African story through the medium of folktale is the relentless drive by creative playwrights to experiment on genre and trope. Sam Ukala in his plays creates discursive characters and subjects whose foibles dovetail on the historical and cultural epigenesis of the people. Using the conventions of Folkism, Ukala's existentialist style and explication of feminist ideals are so profound and deep with an almost absurdist and moral stance and his audience centred genre becomes what *Wikipedia*, the free online dictionary captures as the tendency to base literary plays on indigenous history and culture and to compose and perform them in accordance with the aesthetics of African folktale composition and performance. (<http://www.samukala.wikipedia.biography.goggle.com>, no page indicated.)

Women populate and dominate most of Ukala's plays. The themes prevalent in his works are constructed in a manner that they underlie the intricacies of female politics and male chauvinism. Ukala portrays female characters in ways that are variegated as their motifs behind the motivating factors. However, more conspicuous is his evaluation of "feminism" in the light of the folk and his subtlety at handling collective struggle and individualism or "selfishism" on either ways which either attracts, smears opprobrium or praise to the women. The aesthetics of female

characterization in the works is that instead of collectively routing out oppressive structures, a certain group of important females perpetuate sadism and oppression on their womenfolk, thereby limiting their victims from the full realization of their human potentials and making themselves subjects of indigenous or traditional victimization.

Feminist opinion in literature is centred around the need for a level playing ground between the genders and the empowerment of women in all ramifications of life. Women in their writings and discourses bemoan laws that are extant on their cultural formation, economic freedom and entire human rights obligations. Feminists believe that men are obstructive and thus, limit their self-actualizing struggles and potentials. Women feminists detest male control and see themselves as co-creators on equal status. This has cropped up a lot of theories as to the what and how of the humanity of the female gender in the society. It may have been behind the argument that in Africa, feminism is dead on arrival with its confusing tropes. The linkage between chauvinism and female sadism on co-gender is a contradictive realism to women collective struggle and feminism. African literature is fertile with works where some female characters in the bid to carve a niche for themselves end up oppressing other women. In Osonye Tess Onwueme's play, *Shakara: Dance-Hall Queen*, Omesiete bears the brunt of Madam Kofo, a single parent and employer and Shakara, who pursues societal recognition in resentment of her family's ideals. There are equally other plays where women are seen undermining the growth of fellow women, thereby deviating from the initial purpose of identity restoration and collectivism. About this, Rebecca Iwuchukwu notes that "more confounding debasement of womanhood, even in religion and socio-cultural circles is regrettably among womenfolk... They are themselves at times architect of their own problems." (112, 116)

Marxist feminists see collective struggle as a tool to fight for women's rights and enhance relations where they are being dehumanized. Postcolonial African women have been found mounting the cloak of colonial legacy. The result is that as more women try to bring about change by suppressing the history and

culture, they end up infringing on the rights of other women who also may be in dire need of actualization and identity formation. This is because as women struggle to emancipate themselves from perceived historical and cultural prejudices that stifle the dignity of womanhood, their actions yet underpin a conscious drive to perpetuate the obnoxious status quo they claim oppress them. Some of the cultural symbols which women see as oppressive and which make them to be in strife with one another are, marriage that allows for polygamy, child inheritance squabbles, sexual love and rights and sharing of other properties and rights. Often time, these could be destructive where one of the women in such a marriage works to rise above the others, while searching for faults which, rather than bind, segregate and hurt them.

Thus, an argument often deduced by feminist scholars and critics is that of a destabilizing culture and tradition which place men at the center and women at the end of the ladder. These groups of theorists may not be aware of women who through culture and tradition reached the pinnacle of their career and social status. Culture is a life force that does not die. It integrates the history, norms and values of a society and is encapsulated as indigenous patterns of the people. Through it the people find a common ground for expressive thinking and living, and a deviation from the templates would always amount to a disconnect in the historical practices of the people. Theories are products of culture and so with feminism. Women have been used to symbolically represent institutions, organizations and congregations of people. They represent cities too. Many of Wole Soyinka's and Femi Osofisan's female characters are of this mould. Examples include: the Iyalaja in *Death and the King's Horseman*, Erelu-Afin in Osofisan's *Women of Owu* and Titubi of the Moremi myth in *Morountodun*. Through the actions and language of these women and what they symbolize, using history, culture and tradition, they win the admiration and empathy of their readers. These women are motherists and maternalists who represent their people's thoughts and philosophies and express them in ways that achievements are the result of collective pursuits. Zaynab Alkali observes:

Some of the most powerful deities and priests of such deities presented in African literature are women. Such community goddesses are often, as quoted by a critic, the “ultimate judge of morality and conduct”, and wield absolute power over the people. The priestesses, who mediate between them and mankind and carry their power, are greatly feared and revered in their communities (16-17).

Folkism in literature or drama takes the people into the center of the performance. It is a mirror reflection of lived life and shared values. Folkism’s primary materials are language, symbols, metaphors and action. The restorative impact of folkist literature or drama is in its ability to offer punitive restitution and social order. Folkism is the mythical exploration of human communal bonds interwoven by history, tradition, customs, norms and values. Folkism performs the collective being which ushers in a world view of understanding and tolerance. Through restoration and restitution, the folk brings on true healing, forgiveness and human reconciliation.

Women, Oppressors of Fellow Women

From time immemorial, the African woman has adorned a mysterious identity. In folktales by moonlight, woman is represented either as positive or negative with variable qualities. The argument that women are viewed through the eyes of men by female critics is neither here nor there as women personify several attributes through the embodiment of such characteristics. Feminists do not agree that woman should be defined by her relationship to man, but should be represented in her own world: individuated, hardworking and co-creators.

In indigenous Nigerian society, for example, the woman may be seen as the rival who often in the bid to create awareness about a cause lands herself in trouble, either by taking her victim, possibly a female, down or elevates same to a position of trust and envy. Hence, folktales are full of women who deploy traditional structures as stumbling block against other women. In tales like these, women happen to be the creators of conflict who aide and abet serious crimes and injustice on themselves. Although women

are occasionally at the receiving end of men's actions, often times, women contribute to their own alienation. They are themselves the actors frustrating the growth of other women. They do not need to be cautioned before they become abusive, insulting, and diabolic and take to name calling.

Many a woman that would have reached the height of their careers and social status have fallen out of the way because of how they were unfairly treated by another woman or through their own attitude. As noted by Alkali, "any society which arrogates such immense powers to her female deities cannot be said to view female members of its community as inferior beings, yet such recognition of female dignity and superiority falls short of covering the ordinary woman, wife, mother, sister and daughter" (17) who is limited from growth by a fellow woman. It has been observed too that it is not only men that shortchange women but women who occupy strong positions also undo themselves.

Women oppressors of the same gender do all in their power to erase all existing historical and traditional structures. They change and alter decisions made by society and men by using their fellow women as experiments instead of charting a course for them. This is not to say that tradition and culture do not underpin woman, but woman is in the ever habit of transferring aggression on fellow weak spots to make an impression and pitch self against self. The feminist woman abhors the slightest experience of ownership by man: the feminist will rather want to own him and use the man as an object, and in the worst forms of actualizing this, enslaves her same gender, while acting as man in disguise.

Ukala symbolically highlights the above images in his works because, though women are central to the plays' themes and dominate the tales, they are known to be the root cause of so much destruction, disaffection and destabilization in the lives of the other women and the plays generally. It is not only that these women, especially the upper class ones, wield strong powers, but they use them wrongly to cause animosity, strife and crises both for the men and their fellow women. It is seen that the bad ones are in the readers' eyes, having the authority, against the victims who

disturbingly remain silent, suffering untold agonies and pains inflicted by their upper class colleagues.

Folkism has served as a very useful tool in the hands of playwrights. In folkism, the playwright has more materials to work with. Because the playwright is dealing with reality instead of abstract qualities, and because issues surrounding women form a large corpus of society's preoccupation, folkism remains the best form to capture these issues and relay them as stories in performance.

The Slave Wife and *Akpakaland* dwell on the agonies of the lower class women caught up by the vicissitudes of an African polygamous palace marriage. Coming onto the folktale stage worn out and despised, in emaciated bodies and carrying the weight of their marriage positions, the liminal forms of Igbon and Unata constitute an indictment of female genderism: an approach that created the above two women ostensibly trades in oppression. And for Ukala, there is a supposedly stronger motive behind restituting for the crimes meted against these women by their co-wives, for it is truthful always that destiny and luck presuppose, sometimes, outrageous fortunes. Investigating the sources of their predicaments outside their responsibilities, Fulama in *Akpakaland* and Alahin in *The Slave Wife* establish for themselves petty outlets for evincing seething emotions. This elucidates for Fulama's slothful disposition towards an "unknown" wife of Akpaka who "has a tail" (14) and Alahin's nonchalant hate of Igbon which Ukala conspicuously highlights right from the beginning.

ALAHIN: Dance becomes a blind person only once, Igbon. Pick a broom and sweep the place; do not eat up the floor as termites do soft wood, you idiot... The Oba has climbed on top of a palm tree to drum; to the floor of the pond he has descended also to drum. (14, 12)

Fulama's defamation of her co-wife with a spell presents a moral hurdle and an insidious act designed to lead to the destruction of the victim. A woman may go to any length to bring down another woman whose collapse would mark the antagonist's rise. Because of the power she has over the women and her

desperation to remain a light, Fulama guides the palace to a likely trajectory unrecorded ever in Akpakaland's history while Alahin's perpetuation of oppression and envy topples her out of her envied position for the slave woman who takes over. In her recount of her trajectory like Unata in *Akpakaland*, Igbon narrates:

I am a poor slave captured in war by warriors in the services of Oba Ogiso, the owner of these lands. I was separated from my kinsmen and dumped in the palace with the order to serve the wives of the Oba. As my position warranted, so was I treated. (28)

Unata, on her own part, reaches out for an outlet that her co-gender oppression provides: silence. She develops a passion for silence such that she reduces Fulama to oblivion and thus, avoids the danger of a fight back or knowledge impulse of an impending retribution. As she suffers the silent indignity of the painful tail growing on her spine, she strives to keep watch over her sense of revelation by mumbling silent words and resignation. Her epic story of stagnation, nonetheless, will turn to freedom and victory. In enlisting herself as a nanny at this troubling time, Fulama at the same time through actions and symbols project only sadism for the suffering co-wife. Such is the intensity of her antagonism that Fulama engages her daughter and self in a probe mission, rather than her ethical nursing of a woman in a likely phase of transition. She thus remains on her case and mirthlessly asks if she is getting any better or how her pain hurts. Fulama's broils are noted: polygamy, sexual relations and rights, and Unata's undeniable appeal to President Akpaka. "The moment the President married the Beautiful One, I, Fulama, the light of his morning ceased to shine" (14).

Iyebi is certain that she knows nothing about the tail and clearly abhors the striptease. She sees the order as another uncivil way to dominate the suffering women of Akpaka who in another way symbolize the oppressed segment of the society. Her suspicion of the head-wife is damning: "Unata, why do you allow your killer to pretend to be your healer?" (33) The women do not see eye to eye. While it would be said that Fulama reckons as a force at her

own upper class stratum, Iyebi is the cautious trap ready to devour, from her own sphere, and Fulama remains unprepared for any confrontation. As Iyebi nurses deep hopes and concern for Unata, fearing for her innocence, she is strong with premonition that the hunter will become the hunted. Iyebi's aggression and loathing of their senior wife, however, arises from deep and intense fellow woman victimization, so overpowering that she contemplates equal and full stripping to obdurate the image of the upper class wives which she identifies in Fulama. Fulama's anguish with this awareness is therefore deeper: "This cobra that Akpaka married, I don't know what he found in her. No breasts, no buttocks. Only mouth, ready to spit, all the time, at both the great and the small" (40).

In her characteristic sadism, in *The Slave Wife* Alahin draws an envious metaphor from Igbon's eating of the ritual pepper of male child pregnancy and inheritance to underscore the existence of a polygamous squabble and woman undermining of self:

Go throw away the rubbish, you slave; if it were alligator pepper you would know how to swallow it... I swear the pepper was meant for me and I strongly believe I ate it. I must go tell my husband that I ate the pepper seed. I know how to convince him. He must first pour his treasure in my lap. (15)

And she says: "Good news, my lord, your son already moves in me," (22) and there is an order to bring the women to parade before Ogiiso for a confirmation of their own status just like Fulama initiated the parade of shame in *Akpakaland*. Through their own actions, women create problems for their fellow women and themselves. Women are not only compelled by social and cultural structures to relegate their rights of self-dignity but their fellow women are the harbingers, it would be seen, of what happens to them and why they are shamed.

Sam Ukala discerns in *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland* a streak of liminality, regarding Fulama's quest early in *Akpakaland* that the evil wife be made to denude and be executed, and Alahin's order to Igbon in *The Slave Wife*, to "promise to mention this event to no one." (35) It is admissible, that the actions of Fulama and

Alahin in these plays variously amount to a protest feminism or protest literature. Being an emotive expression, Zaynab Alkali comments that such may be “triggered by the need, sometimes an urgent and anxious need to correct certain injustices perceived in society. Such literatures attack in order to defend dignity and integrity.” (12) Fulama and Alahin are the jealous types in African indigenous folk sexology and marriage. Whereas the former detests of her husband’s preferential treatment for Unata ostensibly because of her swelling beauty, the latter is not ready to be a spectator in Ogiso’s hearth while another woman, from the dregs, takes the glory of inheritance. It is this streak that clearly deviates from the polygamous setup of *Akpakaland*. *The Slave Wife*, as ridiculous and ironic as Ukala may want to metaphorize the subject of polygamy and male child, captures acutely what in folktale or in traditional Idu society and elsewhere in Africa, could be described as: a woman has honour that has a male child. And Ogiso’s women will only constitute noise and nuisance unless any of them gives birth to a male. It is this factor that sets the mechanism for oppression and bickering as well as in-fighting in the play.

In *Akpakaland*, the lower class wives want what’s right for them amidst the plenty the rich women have. But Fulama is full of despair that Akpaka may be giving Unata undeserved favour and opportunity, and that she is out to truncate. By enlisting the services of Enwe the medicine man through dubious means who helps her to prepare the diabolic spell, she ironically weaves herself in for punitive sanction which is the hallmark of folkism, that the end may not necessarily justify the means and that evil should beget restitution. Healing and reconciliation as matters of fact in folkism are central to tolerance and forgiveness, for Unata and Igbon pray that justice should be served as the traditional councils conclude that there should be blood cleansing:

UNATA: What does she take all of us for? Private investigation of this matter is unacceptable for me. (*Akpakaland* 48)

IGBON: (*Jumping up.*) Nothing short of that will pacify us. Nothing short of that. (*The Slave Wife* 51)

It does not actually matter if the matters presented bear some semblance to reality as “what is true in oral tradition is what a child was told by his parents” (*The Slave Wife* 53). To be noted is that folkist aesthetics is not devoid of audience captivation, audience retention and the transfer of cognitive experience to the audience. Whereas it would suggest that in *Akpakaland*, there was no consummate acceptance of punishment for the villain because of the entrance of politics and financial gratification as to the status of the woman involved, the commoners and youth take the revolt into their hands to offer gratuitous appeasement to oppression of the marginalized group. Through the actions of the characters and their language, particularly the protagonists and their rivals, Ukala furthers hope of the African in karma, that one shall reap a good measure of what he has sown. Fulama’s statement seemed lame and very far from the truth: “I know how my trouble started. Unata gave me roasted plantain to eat last night. My bottom began to itch as soon as I finished eating the plantain. I scratched the place and a tail germinated from there” (52).

But Enwe the traditional doctor would counter this allegation appropriately:

Idemudia and his daughter came to me one morning and told me that Unata had grown a tail. I said, “A tail?” They said “Yes.” I said, “It is well. What do you want?” They said they wanted the tail to return to its sender. I gave them the half-ripe plantain, in accordance with the vision of the oracle. “The one who afflicted Unata with the tail will ask for the plantain,” I said. “Give it to her with pleasure and watch.” (53)

Nevertheless, different as Unata’s experience and response to her condition may seem from Igbon, they are albeit terrified by what they internalize as crude display of limitation and inglorious virtuosity by female mates. Therefore each oppressed woman embodies a cling to righteous lifting of weights while remaining ever silent and unprovoked physically by the machinations of polygamous sadism. In her characteristic recollection of this, Unata imagines a euphemistic symbolism from Fulama’s world to

redirect a vision of her plight which superimposes and alludes to a femme fatal resignation to the liminal power of women sadists:

What should I say? When one sees a weakling, does one not hunger for a fight? Since the day the president married me, has Fulama sought my welfare? Everyone knows that whatever Fulama says in this house is a law. So, if she says I have a tail, what ... If my husband who slept with me a few nights ago, believes that I have a tail because Fulama has said so, then I ... I ha ... ha ... (Begins to weep) ... (17)

And Igbon testifies to her own mystification and understanding through a similar response:

If the child was stolen, it was stolen for me, perhaps by the old man in whose hut I put to bed. First he told me I was delivered of usubunedin; even though I heard a child cry,... Later, he brought this child from the forest and said to me, here is your son, Ogiso's heir. (34)

Ukala's advocacy of traditional restitution and punitive rites for the oppressive women and restoration to the victimized, without regard to their social consequences and status, stems from the disappointment in and shock of the broken rule of culture and tradition through which the women became sisters and partners at marriage. Fulama's imposition of clout and politics through her mother Iya Fulama eventually breaks down and as she stripteases for the Akpakaland community she is exposed and humiliated by tradition which she infringed upon:

If Fulama cannot be executed in accordance with her own decree on whoever was found with a tail, then she should be set totally free. If public execution is not for the great ones, imprisonment shouldn't be for them. (54)

About Alahin, her claims seem too lame and far-fetched from good reason and wisdom as she is further handed down her own punishment:

Was Igbon not the first to offend me? When she chewed the alligator pepper I asked her to spit it into my mouth; she

swallowed it and dripped her smelling saliva into my mouth...
Then I swore that her son would live over my corpse. (51)

Fulama and Alahin are supreme women, but they unwittingly wield their immense powers in the wrong way. Ukala's women are presented as lacking in ideology; hence there is a total collapse of the collective spirit. Their actions against subversion are weak, passive, produce negative results and are always misdirected against „selves. The description by Iyebi of Fulama, who is saddened by the conflict of status in the play is reflective of a beast and usurper of all that is ennobling: “Yes! Fulama, the Plaintiff, Fulama, the judge! ... you’ve been debasing womanhood before servants just to show that you’ve no tail.” (18, 39) How sadism and fury wreak havoc! Fulama obviously had gone to Enwe ironically for a charmed rope to make her cow grow another tail, having lost it to thieves, but as Enwe would note, “it seems to me that Fulama laid the rope across Unata’s path,” (54) and Unata had been sick having formed a tail at the spine. A victory over Unata would help her deal with envy and jealousy and possibly, acquire full ownership of President Akpaka. All the same, Alahin would not bear the thought of a male child by Igbon for Ogiso and would consider desolate impotence for the stead as “I swore that her son would live over my corpse” (51).

Again, Ukala's construction of conspiracy, sabotage and betrayal of the communal ethos in *The Slave Wife* is mystifying and harrowing as the drowning of Igbon's baby and her consequent blackmail. Alahin's superior strategy worsens the already fragile future of Ogiso land and hopes are dimmed for the saviour in wait. She will not tolerate the slave being a mother to the heir apparent after she and her group of women liminalists had given birth to such abominable creatures as snail, millipede, gourd, banana stem, and usubunedin. (*The Slave Wife*, 31-33) For twelve unsolicited, strenuous years, after the rigours of child delivery and child separation from mother, Igbon bore the brunt of blackmail and victimization by perpetuation of female silence. Ogiso's apprehension and tension capture the prevailing moods of betrayal, optimism and hope:

... This shows the truth of the saying that except something happens to it, the goat that roams the street apparently has no owner ... Your son will know his mother and choose her! Then shall be uncovered what's been covered. (44, 45)

Slander connects the two plays. Poor women who are at the lower rung of the ladder, and slaves, who populate the steady encounter worst forms of antagonism almost with their survival annihilated. The women who feel toppled and shamed by history and tradition fight relentlessly in order to reclaim their eroding dignity and identity and initiate it in the sense that it was not liberative of the oppressed collective goal. Are the Igbons and Unatas the harbingers of the woes of the individuated Fulama and Alahin? Could this exemplify the argument that when the oppressed fights the oppressor it is termed liberation from the strong? History stands by the oppressed women who are similar victims. As things collide for the two evil women and their groups:

ALAHIN: [Weeps] The world has capsized like a boat, I didn't know it would. I didn't know you would sit in judgment over me. (51)

Female looseness is also extensively treated in the two plays as also done in Ukala's other play, *Break a Boil*. Alahin incessantly cajoles and ridicules her fellow women by making unfavourable representations of them through scatological remarks. Like Uki copiously insults Ison her fellow woman in the above mentioned play, so Alahin in *The Slave Wife* describes the others as "black ant," (11) "dirty beaks... Mouthy shrimps!" (12) "swine family... Osalobua laho! ... cackling hens," (13) "termites," (14) and "you slave," to mention but a few. By and large, deceptions with animal registers prevail on and dominate the social image of woman who is ever held in suspicion of her true identity. It is also not unnoticed that the women are structured into numeric registers in the play, with Alahin and Igbon being known while the other women remain largely nameless however occasionally, but ascribed numbers. It is observed that even as the women are polarized, their group soon falters when it was time for punishment

with each of the women looking on to own identity. In *Akpakaland*, Unata and Iyebi clearly stand out in their group, while the latter yearns for a place in her kingdom, and in *The Slave Wife*, Igbon and the 2nd Woman seem to tie a knot, as the other women bicker among themselves and fall out of way and support for Alahin. It is interesting then to note 1st Woman's self-avoidance from blame: "[removing her toothpick for a moment, addresses 4th woman]. Let no hen peck at me, you hear? The thing Iye Tinyan said is that what you say I said," (50-51) because the war by these women is not rooted in collective struggle but oppression of the voiceless and the perpetuation of female sadist class structures. There is no accurate ideological bent for which woman would be known and identified in the folktales. Animal imageries also abound in *Akpakaland* which negatively demonstrate the predominant views the indigenous society may have of women. Such animal stereotypes include "lizard," (48) "cow," (49) "iguana," and „monkey" (50) because it is the above animals that have tails and represent pollution in most African societies. Pollution does not aptly capture the dance of nakedness, if unmistakably by the materials which Fulama excavated from her bottom such as tattered mat, banana leaves, and then a long tail. These creatures like the woman in the folktale litter everywhere she treads with infestations and dung and this can be very clear through the actions and words of Fulama and Alahin and their group of women followers and liminalists.

Irene Salami-Agunloye observes:

In African society women act as oppressive agents to other women especially as co-wives, mother in-law, older women, step-mothers, etc. ... women fight over men, men's inheritance, mother in-law fights daughter-in-law because of her son, etc. All their quarrels are centred round men and how to become close or the favourites of these men. (150)

The collapse of a feminist ideology or collective struggle in these two plays by Ukala stem from the fact that the tensions are not subversive, but self-destructive and self-perpetuated of the class struggle that abound, including male patriarchy. What

however succeeds in the plays is another form of struggle in the hands of the oppressed few who fight silently and determinedly for “self-liberation and self-humanization” (*Akpakaland*, 35).

Akpakaland and *The Slave Wife* demonstrate Ukala’s acute but perfect foregrounding of traditional histrionics through his women characters who embody the worst forms and ennobling dimensions of politics, society and royalty as well as female oppression and liminality. In the two plays, Fulama and Alahin are clear-cut representations of the metaphoric of indigenous folk that women are the cat and dog. Although feminism entails women empowerment and liberation from oppressive structures which underlie negative or singular motives, these women launder the myth held by many that women are their own worst enemy. It is clear that in the plays, collective liberation is not the ideal by these women but the fetishization of group segmented liberalism because of their animosity towards the other. Their oppressions against the other are provoked by the sheer desire of banal ownership as efforts made by them to fight for this or reclaim their dignity. Fulama and Alahin on one side of the group, and Unata and Ugbon on the other side of the conflict, represent the variables of these sides of traditional or indigenous myth. Hence, there is no sense of purpose driven by the women as their readers are made to feel and believe that they cannot stand together and have one voice in order to break the polygamous fate which is mostly why they bicker. Fulama’s and Alahin’s machinations to root out and silence Unata and Ugbon as well as Iyebi’s indignation not to be cowed and the events that follow these actions exemplify the myth of women’s perpetuation of the structures that undermine them as they segment themselves into female class structures. Ukala handles it funnily and tragically because a woman is her own sister. The upper class ones will not see the lower class women as partners in marriage and economy but as enemy. The lower class ones as well do not accept their identity so far and would ensure that they are liberated. *Akpakaland* and *The Slave Wife* idealize a true picture of folk life in Africa while they make universal overtones overtly. They will continue to appeal to their audiences and readers because of their acute portrayal of politics and society, and because the experiences

of Unata, Iyebi and Ugbon are the tragic but funny reality of all segmented and abused women whose equality and humanity are vicariously toyed with by the haves who throw power and influence overboard.

Works Cited

- Alkali, Zaynab. "Gender Politics and Sexual Dynamics, Imaging Men in African Women's Writing: The Quest for Identity and Integrity." In Ahmed Yerima and Saheedat Aliyu. *Gender Politics: Women's Writings and Film in Northern Nigeria*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2012 (11-20).
- Iwuchukwu, Rebecca Chinelo. "Towards Emancipating Women from Obnoxious Biblical/Societal Prejudices that Undermine the Dignity of Womanhood." *Journal of the Humanities*. Imo State University, Owerri. Volume 1, No. 7 Oct., 2004 (112-122).
- Salami-Agunloye, Irene Isoken. "Gender Analysis of Cultural Images in Nigerian Home Movies: Issues for Policy and Development." Irene Salami-Agunloye. Ed. *Women, Theatre and Politics: Contemporary Perspectives*. Ibadan: Saniez Publishers, 2006 (141-154).
- Schroeder, Patricia R. "Locked Behind the Proscenium: Feminist Strategies in *Getting Out* and *My Sister in This House*." Ed. Helene Keyssar. *Feminist Theatre and Theory: Contemporary Critical Essays*. Malaysia: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996 (155-167).
- Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and other plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2011.
- _____. *The Slave Wife*. Ibadan: University Press Limited, 1992.
- Wikipedia Online Dictionary*. "Sam Ukala."
<http://www.samukala.wikipedia biography.samukalawins2014nigeria/prizeforliterature.goggle/html.com> Retrieved 29 February 2016. Accessed 21 June, 2016.

Twenty-Two



Viable Business or Death Trap?: Sam Ukala's *Fumes of Fuel*

Ruth Etuwe Epochi-Olise

Introduction

Nigeria is a major player in the world energy market. It is the seventh largest producer of oil in the world. Oil and gas are the main sources of the nations' revenue, economy and national survival. Nigeria ranks among the highest oil producing countries in the world endowed with abundant natural gas and crude oil which makes it a hub of oil extraction business and home to many Multinational Oil Corporations. But the nation is at present confronted by all forms of crimes/criminality, insurgencies and violent conflicts which lead to kidnapping of oil workers, illegal oil bunkering, vandalism of oil pipe lines and high level of militancy in its oil rich delta region. These are as a result of the petro business that has been going on in the region for more than five decades, and this has greatly affected the lives and occupations of the people while contributing to the degradation of the environment. This has been occasioned essentially by the neglect of the region by the government, the lack of development of infrastructures and the non-commitment to corporate social responsibility by the Multinational Oil Companies operating in the region (Omeje 2006: 32). Oil is the mainstay of Nigeria's economy, but also a major source of affliction to the communities in which the resource is located as the people of the region live in chronic poverty and unthinkable social and economic conditions. Indeed, it can be said that the discovery of oil has amounted to nothing but "a tale of terror and tears" for the people (Watts 2001: 196) and a "curse" to them (Pérouse de Montclos 2014: 3). It is

this persistence of economic hardships and social isolation, coupled with relentless environmental degradation that triggered not just violence but a very high level of criminality in the region from 2005 till date. The aim of this chapter is not to over flog the already familiar narrative of the Niger Delta crisis, but to highlight the risks involved in the illegal petro business (illegal oil bunkering or oil theft) which is one of the major fallouts from the crisis in the Niger Delta as well as suggest ways and strategies of curbing the menace.

Oil Bunkering

Oil is arguably the “world’s most important resource” (Yergin, 2008: 28) and the “lifeblood of modern world economy” (Smil, 2008). Popularly described as “black gold”, oil is rated beyond its economic importance to human life, hence Obi calls it “the whetstone of modern capitalism... and world’s most viable and versatile ... most sought after commodity” (2011: 89) because it is almost impossible to survive a day without it. Hiro further describes says it as the “blood of the earth”, given how it has “come to dominate human life like no other commodity before and since” (2007). From all indications, we can see that without oil, the world may not have developed along the lines that it has developed; it has fuelled globalisation and has impacted on the world’s landscape in such a manner that few ever imagined.

Crude oil is a natural resource found in the ground with thickness and colour that varies, hence the various shade of black and yellow depending on the composition of its hydrocarbon. Crude oil is refined to produce a wide array of petroleum products which includes heating oil, diesel, gasoline, jet fuels, lubricants, asphalt, ethane, propane, butane and many other products used for their energy or chemical content. According to *Chambers 21st Century Dictionary*, petroleum is a:

naturally occurring oil consisting of a thick dark liquid mixture of hydrocarbons, distillation of which yields a wide range of petrochemicals e.g. liquid and gas fuels, asphalt, and raw materials for the manufacture of plastics, solvents, drugs, etc. (1036)

Crude oil is presumably the most traded commodity in contemporary international market. Considered as the "mother of all commodities", crude oil is a raw material as well as a convenient and effective source of energy used in the manufacturing of numerous products like gasoline, synthetic fabrics, plastics and pharmaceuticals (*Investinganswers*, 2011). As one of the dominant commodities in the world that one derives other products from, it surpasses other highly subscribed commodities such as coffee, gold, silver, sugar, corn, wheat and cotton, among others. According to Silva-Calderon:

Oil is the lifeblood of the developed industrialized world, providing readily accessible power and heat, as well as a vast array of consumer, commercial and industrial products. (3)

Its universal significance is manifested in the large media attention that is accorded to it. The world over, lives are affected and the destinies of nations are almost certainly determined by the outcome of the oil industry's operations, that is the reason why almost all the governments in the world have made oil a major concern and vital ingredient in their policies as well as a crucial factor in their political and diplomatic strategies. This is because oil keeps the factories of the industrialized countries working and provides the revenue, which enables oil exporters to execute ambitious national and economic development plans while developing countries without oil are faced with a severe struggle for survival. As a result, the stride of progress would be slowed down and life itself could become unbearable if the world was deprived of oil.

In Nigeria, crude oil is found mostly in the Niger Delta in very large quantity, but in smaller quantity in some parts of other regions/states. In the world economy, Nigeria is integrated into the global oil market through what Obi refers to as "enmeshment of the „global“ and „national“ in „the local“ (102) and she is referred to as the "jewel in the African oil crown" because she is largest among oil producing countries in Africa, but have also dramatically increased its rise "as a strategic player in the world of oil geopolitics" (Watts, 2006). However, since its advent and the first successful drill at Oloibiri, Bayelsa State in 1956 (Ikporukpo,

2004), oil has been both a blessing and curse to the economy. With its discovery, oil brought with it much revenue and this was seen as a blessing to the economy since it enhanced the economic growth and development of the country. But became a “resource curse” (Gelb, 1988) because of the problems that are associated with it; its discovery was supposed to have brought new hope to the people because it was supposed to bring infrastructural development and social investments for better living conditions, but rather negative development outcomes became associated with it.

The oil revenue propelled grievance which further motivated struggle for recognition and development, violent conflicts and wars in the region because its abundance never did translate to positive economic, social and infrastructural growth. The struggles and conflicts became criminalised in form of hostage-taking, kidnapping for ransom and large scale activities of oil bunkers. It is from this point that the term “bunkering” became known and subsequently “abused, demonised and misused in Nigerian parlance”, such that mentioning it “connotes or triggers subliminal suggestions of grand illegality” (Braide, 2003). The criminalisation of bunkering operations is a unique anomaly in Nigeria; Obasi admits that “oil bunkering as an organized criminal activity appears to be largely, if not exclusively, limited to Nigeria” (57), because these illegal practices largely evident in the Nigerian oil industry are not evident in other oil producing countries. Since the Nigerian government largely depends on oil revenues, some individuals and groups who are involved in these acts of oil theft have also actually shown and declared an unrelenting commitment to the illicit business. In the words of Ryzsard Kapucinski:

Oil kindles extraordinary emotions and hopes, since oil is above all a great temptation. It is the temptation of ease, wealth, fortune, power. [But] oil, though powerful, has its defects (cited in Watts, 6).

Bunkering is an oil industry related activity, which involves the transfer or siphoning of fuel from highly protected storage facilities into ship bunkers for onward transportation abroad. The

Human Rights Watch (2003) describes bunkering as the process of filling up a ship with oil (or coal). However, bunkering becomes illegal when crude oil, condensate and petroleum are loaded without requisite statutory licences or other valid documents, in violation of the laws and guidelines set by any government to whom the ownership and control of the mineral oil is vested. Its illegality, therefore, is a euphemism for theft. Thus, In Nigeria, Oil bunkering is used as a euphemism for oil theft, which is the illegal taking away of oil by whatever means and diverting it for personal gain. Ugwuanyi puts it aptly, that "illegal bunkering is the act of hacking into pipelines to steal crude oil which is later refined or sold abroad" (2013). In Nigeria, oil bunkering is seen as a viable business, which involves the subterranean and unlawful extraction of crude oil products from Multinational Oil Companies and NNPC pipelines and storage facilities into large containers for onward transportation through speed boats and barges into the high seas and sold to invisible but powerful international cartels. Oil theft in Nigerian is one of the latest phases of a history of transnational trade relations involving the Niger Delta and the rest of the world.

Oil bunkering is one of the confrontational strategies that are used by the local militants in the Niger Delta. It is seen as a criminal act by the Nigeria government and the multinational oil companies because it has several socio-economic impacts such as loss of economic activities, loss of revenue to the government, increase in criminal activities in the Niger Delta, environmental degradation, and lack of security, which has been known as the biggest threat to the nation's economy. But to the Niger Delta people, youths especially, oil bunkering is a legitimate recovery of natural resources denied and stolen from them by impious politicians and greedy transnational companies, and is a counter strategy aimed at saving people from slavery and reclaiming what had been taken away from them for years without their permission by the Nigerian state and multinational oil companies. John Ghazvinian aptly and rightfully notes that oil bunkering to the Niger Delta bunkers is:

a deadly serious game of chicken with the Nigerian state [and Oil Multinationals] – a desperate *cri de coeur* from a lost generation that sees no other way to claim its hydrocarbon birthright. (6)

The issue of oil bunkering in the Niger Delta region is not a new one. It has been well documented because it has become one of the major sources of making money in the region since most of the militant activities in the region are linked to this thriving business. Feyide says,

...oil is not all money and riches. Another popular view is that of political manoeuvre and intrigues. Inspired by sensational disclosures and revelations of alleged machinations in the corridors and inner chambers of oil empires, oil has been given the image of a big business ruled by naked politics dominated by ruthless men who are insensitive to nothing except their profits (1986).

The phenomenon of oil theft suggests an entirely criminal act with dire economic consequences. On the other hand, it depicts a tool by embittered militant groups, even if it's individual selfishness, to fight for the control of their God/nature-given-but-state-forcefully-appropriated oil resource; depending on who is telling which story.

Studies have revealed that oil-dependent countries are more likely to suffer from high-tech criminality, corruption, crude exercise of power and worst capitalism (Watts, 1999) resulting in conflicts, threats of wars and disputes that presently pervade the global arena (Agoro, 37), which is provoked by „grievances“ that emanated from the suffering from the ecological and social impacts of oil production or „greed“ which is hinged on the resource wealth as the target of avaricious rebels who wish to take possession of the resource revenues (Collier & Hoeffler, 2001) as well as “deploying the rhetoric of self-determination for filthy lucre” (Ukiwo, 19), and this is particularly true for states in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria inclusive (Ross, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the economic theory of greed and opportunism. Greed, according to Balot (2001: 1) “is an excessive desire to get more ... a primarily materialistic type of desire”. H. Jin and X.Y. Zhou goes further to say that “greed is a high desire for wealth, and the subsequent aggressive action to fulfil this desire” (128). While a greedy behaviour is an excessive act of self-interest that imposes costs on or otherwise deprives the well-being of others (Wang & Murnighan, 7). Though people discuss the issue of greed frequently, but drawing a line between self-interested action and greedy action is a difficult problem. Going through history, one would see that corporate greed exploded beyond anything that could have been imagined in the 1990s (Cassidy, 2002) and it became so infectious that it seemed to grip much of humanity because the avenues to express greed have grown so enormously (*Economists*, 2002).

The greed and grievance theory is one of the most commonly used theories to explain the causes of civil wars. The “greed” theory, derived mainly from economic view point, sums a rational choice paradigm that explains the causes of conflict as an absence of cooperation between feuding parties motivated to fight by financial opportunities derived from natural resources. Collier and Hoeffler (2000) argue that all rebellions are accompanied by a narrative of grievance, simply because publicly announcing greed-based motivations would lead to reduced support. As a consequence, their main explanation for the outbreak of conflict is greed: rebels are interested in the profits that they can make from predation upon primary commodities. Greed and the potential to loot motivate rebellions to the extent that, if a profitable opportunity to rebel presents itself, it will not be passed up (Collier & Hoeffler, 2007: 719). These scholars went further to argue that the main characteristics of civil war-prone states are: heavy reliance on primary commodity exports, a large percentage of unemployed and uneducated young men, and a sudden and rapid economic decline. However, some of the proponents of „greed“ theory consider economic opportunity as one of the major reasons for the resistance. To Collier and Hoeffler, primary commodities

such as oil provide opportunities for extortion “making rebellion feasible and perhaps even attractive” (2004: 145).

Opportunism in the economic perspective is a term associated with the subversion of morality to profit. Opportunism in plain words is self-interest propelled with a deliberate desire to take selfish advantage of an economic situation deceitfully, according to Williamson.

By opportunism we mean self-interest seeking with guile. This includes but is scarcely limited to more blatant forms, such as lying, stealing, and cheating. Opportunism often involves subtle forms of deceit ... More generally, opportunism refers to the incomplete or distorted disclosure of information, especially in calculated efforts to mislead, distort, disguise, obfuscate, or otherwise confuse. It is responsible for real or contrived conditions of information asymmetry, which complicate problems of economic organization (47-48).

Opportunism in behavioural terms is assumed to be ultimately caused by a complicated web of self-interests with certain situational or structural conditions. Opportunistic behaviour in this regard includes the pursuit of private interests by Niger Delta militants at the expense of the nation and the oil firms. It therefore implies that it is self-interest seeking with craftiness.

The untruthfulness of the Nigerian state in her dealings with the people of the Niger Delta presented itself as an opportunity for the current menace of oil bunkering in the region. This menace has become full-fledged viable business to the people who undermine its negative consequences. In this case, one would rightly say that oil has become a curse to the land because most people who are involved in this illicit business perish in the course of smuggling petroleum products both at the production/distribution stages and during transporting the illegal stolen oil and when security operatives exchange gunfire with the thieves who resist arrest. The environment is also not left out in this death trap because the land is poisoned and becomes unfit for humans, animals, as well as plants. So accepting Mahler’s resource curse thesis is not out of place. He says that having abundant oil is a curse; a lack of it is equally another unfortunate curse because resource wealth is

linked to poor economic growth and other economic problems (2010). The positive level of economic growth in some producing states shows that oil can contribute to economic and political stability when managed properly. The resource curse theory rather “links corruption to the gross story of the underdevelopment of the Nigerian State, especially with regards to mismanagement and misappropriation of her natural resources” (Ezirim 2011: 2; Ugochukwu & Ertel 2008: 139).

Analysis

Oil has become big business to many governments and no government will allow anyone or even the oil companies to run the affairs of this crucial sector without interference to know what goes out and how much comes in. As the most important single commodity in world commerce, it has accounted for over 50 percent by weight of all sea-borne international trade. The importance of oil is so enormous that it generates intra-tribal, inter-tribal, and international issues, which may eventually breed rebellion and militancy.

Rebellion and militancy found its way to the oil rich region of the Niger Delta because of the neglect of the region by the Nigerian government and the Multinational Oil Companies that did not deem it fit to take environmental, social, economic and infrastructural responsibilities of the hen that lays the golden egg. The Niger Delta case was initially fuelled by grievance but soon sky rocked to greed because it was unchecked. Taking a look at the theory of grievance and greed as postulated by Collier and Hoeffler (1998), oil bunkering is perceived as a profit-driven crime that is located in the context in which money made from stolen oil and illegal bunkering are funnelled into arms acquisition to fuel violence and instability in the Niger Delta (Osaghae, *et al* 2011: 25).

Oil theft is a form of criminality and is a social evil because its consequences are negatively disastrous than can be imagined. Ukala's *Fumes of Fuel* is a good piece that opens our eyes to the theory of greed and opportunism as exhibited by some of the characters like Ititi, Okoro, Efe, Ewari, Preye and Ikpotoki. Oil

theft originated from the opportunity created by both the government and the Multinational Oil Companies as well, unemployment, job rationalisation exercises in the public and private sectors, the neglect of the degraded environment and non-development of the region. A number of the people, therefore, tried to seek for survival in the covert world of crime. In *Fumes of Fuel*, Ewari gives us an insight into what it is to be in an oil producing region, when he says that:

Ewari: ... Mr Earthquake, why do you, our leaders, quake against your own people? Your people live on water, but die of cholera because they lack good water to drink. They die of hunger because their land is devastated and poisoned. They produce the oil wealth of the nation, but die in the fires of poverty, and their aspirations and future die with them. (109)

Still on the issue of survival because the government does not give her citizens the enabling environment to use their potentials positively, we can see Efe discussing with Timi thus:

Efe: Oh, my love, I need the money! Can't you see that God just directed my steps in order to provide for my education? I'm a cow without a tail. I've worked for nearly three years in Abuja, but all my savings can hardly pay my transport fare to Zaria. I need to pay school fees, too, pay for accommodation, buy books, eat, etc, etc. My parents in a *banga* camp can't help. (89)

In spite of the health hazards and other dangerous aspects of this evil crime, most people defy them and carry on with this illegal business of stealing. This is evident in Efe's conversation with Ewari and Ititi:

Efe: I'm just bearing it. Didn't the Holy Book say that the road to heaven is rough and narrow? Every prick of the needle on my skin is a step towards my degree. I see a bright future through the haze of the fumes and smell of fuel. So I can't complain. (95)

In case studies“ involving oil bearing communities, illegal oil bunkering is seen as a survival strategy for people long denied of their sources of livelihood. Therefore, “this is a classic survival strategy for someone living in poverty in an insecure environment” (Jackson, 276).

Illegal bunkering became full-fledged majorly because of the conflict and violence in the oil producing region, which came about, essentially, because of the negligence and insensitivity of both the Nigerian government and the Multinational Oil Companies to take up their social responsibilities across the region. In reference to the play, we see that the people in places that are hosts to illegal bunkering activities are quick to point to their inability to build houses, support their families and maintain businesses as a result of the environmental degradation as the reasons for their venturing into the flourishing business. According to Ewari:

Ewari: Don't boil my temper! ... Aren't they the owners of the oil company that has looted our heritage, ruined our land and waters, and asked us to go hang? (82)

and

Ewari: ... Homes in shanties like this one? Or in the miry and marshy creeks or in rickety huts perching dangerously on wooden stilts over smelly water? Why must we go back to be overwhelmed by the smelly waters of deprivation, poverty and squalor while other people live in heavenly mansion built with the black gold of our land? ... (86-87)

Grievance was the factor that propelled oil theft at the beginning, but as time went on, some of the aggrieved soon saw an opportunity to enrich themselves. Of course some corporate bodies and even the oil companies themselves became more interested in enriching themselves to the detriment of the community and other citizens. They only think of their profits, without any feeling for the wellbeing of the people and the environment. Ewari is a good example of those who transited from being aggrieved to becoming greedy:

Ewari: We run shifts in this business. They'd come and eat after us and we'd take over the scooping... (94).

Ewari: So I see the mansion I'm building on my land in Warri I can see my elegant White House standing behind beautiful lawns and blossoming flowers. You need to see the architectural design. As soon as we finish drilling this new well, I'll resume work on the building.

Efe: It's as if you had drilled some wells earlier.

Ewari: Ah-ah! How else could I have got the money to buy land in Warri. Who's the father of my father?

Efe: Was the well here in Jesse?

Ewari: No. We are mobile rigs. Wherever we hear of the people's oil well, we go there to drill until the well dries up (95).

A lot of factors are responsible for the sorry state of affairs in the Niger Delta, and the environmental devastation that oil theft and illegal refineries cause. It is not only human interest and wellbeing that counts. Ufuoma and Omoruyi (2014) aver that: Oil theft is perceived as a consequence of the state's incapacity to bring succour to the populace in the Niger Delta and their desperation to meet their necessities.

There are many ethical issues that need to be attended to on this issue of oil theft. It is immoral when people abandon education, many other legal occupations, and turn to oil bunkering because of the greed for wealth. Many of these petty thieves know that stealing oil or illegal bunkering is bad, but they claim they do it out of necessity.

Oil theft in the Niger Delta is only a prolonged practice of the global service as in other cases of organised crime because all stolen and illegally bunkered oil always finds its way into the official and legitimate market, thus reflecting a switch of its initial market dimension. This viable business has both the mighty and big oil thieves in public places as well as so many petty and small oil thieves in the villages in the Niger Delta with readily available market for their products. According to Efe in *Fumes of Fuel*, oil theft is a business, legitimate or not, that has a market, even if it may not last forever (89). The people involved in this business already have buyers, hence the reference to "mobile rigs" and "the

drying up of oil wells". This stolen and illegally bunkered crude oil is probably sold for less than 10% of its actual value to the "unofficial" oil market. Some are sold out in jerry cans to petty retailers, who are mostly women and others given out to community people for free as part of the localized corporate social responsibility to their people.

In spite the devastating impact caused by the illegal bunkering of oil by the locals, there are socio-economic opportunities that the boosts in the criminal activities have attracted because the business has become highly central to the local economy of many coastal communities in the Niger Delta and beyond and through it originally unemployed or under-employed persons have had their economic chances tremendously brightened and consolidated. This trend is seen in the lifestyle of most of the characters in the play.

Timi: Sweetie ... (*Rises and goes to hold him.*) Please, don't go. I don't like the business.

Efe: But it's from it that Okoro and Ewari made their money (90).

These bunkers are able to continue striving because of their contacts with the guerrilla market, which opens up new vistas of prosperity, quick wealth and survival for the struggling youth, a realism that eventually became the game-changer for the conflict in the region.

There are Niger Deltans who see nothing wrong in this viable business of oil theft. However, such persons ought to realize that most times these illegal activities lead to so much loss of lives within minutes and huge economic waste, funds that could have been used to assist in solving environmental problems (Nwanosike, 2013).

The issues raised above end in the trap set by the very promising and viable business called oil bunkering and the end product is death, death of the region's inheritance, its livelihood, rights and status, among others. Radcliffe-Brown (1964) says that there is a partial destruction of social cohesion, until a new equilibrium is established the people continue to deny and fear death but tolerate and accept the most horrendous forms of abject

misery, oppression, exploitation and severe depravation so that they can keep on living.

Oil theft causes the death of so many things in the society. For example, the death of the environment through what could be called environmental vandalism. Oil thieves very often carry out their illegal trade during the night and through illegal routes and roads, driving trucks and other vehicles to create and clear illegal roads through the forest thereby destroying the vegetation and causing havoc to the natural environment. There is no doubt that the movement of vehicles and even speed boats across streams destroy organisms and other plants in such places in addition to the fact that bunkers violently break pipelines to siphon oil from these pipelines and most often spill crude oil on the land and the rivers.

Efe: Life has since changed for them, changed very negatively. After that oil spill overran their camp, life changed. The soil got poisoned, and my parents could no longer farm... (89).

Ewari: ... Your people live on water, but die of cholera because they lack good water to drink. They die of hunger because their land is devastated and poisoned... (109).

Death is a natural occurrence in human existence, the quest for immortality among human beings is very old because they strive to transcend the inevitable fate that awaits them and achieve immortality. However, consciously walking into its trap is another issue entirely and this is what happens when people decide to venture into the very dangerous business of oil bunkering, which takes life at random.

Ewari: ... The smell of fuel has a way of turning my intestines like the plough turns the soil.

Efe: Is that what's nauseating me, making me feel dizzy and like vomiting? (94)

Ewari: ... I vomited at the slightest provocation. And my skin, it was as if a thousand needles were pricking me all over. You don't seem to feel anything.

Efe: I'm just bearing it. Didn't the Holy Book say that the road to heaven is rough and narrow? Every prick of the needle on my skin is a step towards my degree. I see my bright future

through the haze of the fumes and the smell of this fuel. So I can't complain. (95)

The physical death is not just the hazard faced by these bunkers, they also face fire out-break and brutal treatment from security personnel that might also eventually lead to their death.

Ewari: What were you thinking? That you'd fetch from the well until you obtain your PhD? The oil companies soon shut their valves and mend their broken pipes. Or they get the army and the police to shoot you at sight.

Efe: (*Stops eating*). Gun! Shoot gun inside petrol? (*A heavy explosion afar*) (95).

1st Woman: (*With tears all over her face, running to meet Ewari and Efe*). Why won't they come out of the fire? My husband and daughter, why do they stay there? ...

Efe: (*Dropping his own jerrycan, approaches one of the men, Ikpotoki*). Did you see Pa Aboyi and his son, Okoro? (*Ikpotoki remains silent. Ititi runs in, bearing a jerrycan on her head*)

Ititi: (*To Efe*) What did he say? (*Drops the jerrycan and moves to Ikpotoki*) Where is your friend? Where is my husband? Where is my son, my only child? Where are they? (*Grabs and shakes him violently*) When did you turn deaf, Ikpotoki?

Ikpotoki: Why do you worry me, woman? Where is Aboyi, where is Okoro? Go ask the fire! Do you see my wife beside me? Do you see my daughter? ... (97).

Ewari: He ran far ahead of me, deranged by your plea to save them. He ran deeper and deeper into the fumes of fuel until a flame perched on him and showed the approaching blaze that he was good meat. Before he could retrace his steps, he was completely engulfed and consumed.

Ikpotoki: Ewari! Come back-o. You've killed Ititi! (Ewari glances back, but moves on. Almost immediately, he bumps into two policemen, each carrying an AK-47 rifle. Ikpotoki and others, on sighting the policemen, scurry off dragging Ititi along) (102)

Families have died as a result of explosions during expeditions in the oil bunkering business, in gun battles between

security operatives and the people as well as the gradual death they experience through the breakdown of their health.

The poverty induced by the appropriation of the oil wealth found in the Niger Delta by the Federal Government of Nigeria is linked to the conflict in the region. According to Collier and Hoeffler (2002), states with low per capita GDP are more likely to experience civil war, since low average income makes wage earning through conflict a more lucrative prospect (1). Thus this viable business, as some people see and call it, has continually advanced the conflict and violence within the region and it has elicited counter reactions from the Nigerian government that has set up various security outfits to tackle the problem of oil theft and illegal refineries. In the course of these security outfits carrying out their duties, they are often resisted by oil thieves and oil bunker who fight back, and this often leads to loss of lives and properties.

Ewari: ... You boil my temper! Exactly three years ago, people like you killed Ken Saro Wiwa and our other Ogoni brothers. Now, you are in Jesse. You leave the enemies of your ancestors, the enemies of your land and your future, you leave them and war against your own people, you everlasting slaves (104)

The ascendancy of oil as the main foreign exchange earner in Nigeria from the 1970s marked a very complex relationships between the Niger Delta people, Multinational Oil Companies and the Nigerian State in several ways. About 90% of Nigeria's national budget is and was financed from oil revenue derived from the Niger Delta, but the people of the region have seen little benefits of oil wealth as they continue to live in chronic poverty and unthinkable social and economic conditions, a persistence of economic hardships and social isolation. However, because of this oil theft, the Nigerian government has for a while now been losing an estimated "\$22.5 million daily (on \$90/barrel price)" (Clarke 2008: 98). Bunkering alone accounted for at least 15% of annual output losses for the oil majors in the region, losses that translate into "billions of dollars a year for the bunkerers" (Mass 2009: 73). This huge revenue if adequately utilized can make the Nigerian

economy one of the most developed oil producing nations of the world.

Ewari: ..., we go there to drill until the well dries up.

Efe: Dries up! So, it dries up? (95).

This drying up happens every time whether under the Multinational companies or the illegal bunkers. The fact is that because it is illegal, the financial gain does not go to the government hence the economic loss to the nation. However, even with the wealth it has and continues to accrue from the region, the people there are impoverished. They are economically dead:

Efe: Life has since changed for them, changed very negatively.

After that oil spill overran the camp, life changed. The soil got poisoned and my parents could no longer farm. Couldn't you see that they were dying slowly? (89-90).

Ewari They produce the oil wealth of the nation, but die in the fires of poverty (109)

What is life without money, without food and without water? Not to mention the social basic amenities needed to carry on?

Religion is better described as man's awareness of the existence of a Supernatural Being whom he believe to be his creator and controller of the universe. It is assumed that major positive values such as good, sincerity of purpose, contentment and selfless service, conscience and feelings of shame, guilt, and remorse emanated from Him, influence actual behavior and thus the functioning of society. Religion is supposed to be a guide to our morality, but presently even when we worship, our morality is questionable, questionable because of societal pressures that put us in very tight corners. Take for example Efe, who initially does not know the essence of Christ's death, later he gets convinced and follows his tenants, finds himself in the illegal business of oil bunkering because there appears to be no way he could further his education. He jettisons his morals for the supposed betterment of his future and the eventual destruction of his life. Preye, on the other hand, backslides because of the pressures of meeting up and tells Timi to do same.

Preye: ... They are the birds: they sow not, but their bellies swell with overfeeding. They feed on everything, including your pride and morality. If you want to feed a little, forget your pride, forget your morality, forget Psalm 23 and attach yourself to them like a leech. Play politics with Earthquake and you'll have all you want your own way. (100)

Timi: You may have been born again once upon a time, Preye. But born-againship is like the seed in the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. Depending on the kind of soil that you are, born-againship blossoms and bears fruit or withers and dies. Life's trials may have returned you to what you were, an infertile or stony soil or a soil full of thorns. (101)

We see from these excerpts that morality either dies because of pressures or more sustained because of personal conviction.

Religion is a veritable tool for building a just and peaceful society and it has been known to influence the society in also being an instrument for establishing networks that could be of use for economic activities. But from the look of things around the world, we see that religion has been manipulated by political actors who introduced certain social vices such as election malpractice of all forms, cultism, armed robbery, kidnapping, corruption, drug trafficking, prostitution, to mention but a few.

Ewari: ... Why is there no Nathan among our religious leaders to tell King David that he has sinned?... (109)

Our so-called religious leaders have failed to speak the truth. Rather, they have become religio-political leaders because of what they stand to gain from the government. They shut their mouths and have allowed politicians become monsters to the masses. They have brought the death of religion in our society, hence religion can no longer function as a veritable tool for building a just and peaceful society.

According to Hegel's articulation of the master-slave dialectic, the master does not in any way want the slave to be politically conscious but his desire is to continually control, own and direct the life of the slave. Using this, we can see the decay and gradual decline in moral abilities of politicians who are busy

amassing wealth and gallivanting round the globe. This leads to their personal failure in the family, among friends, in social circles and finally in the nation.

Preye: ... The Nigerian politician is not the shadow of death: he is death itself! My dear, the birds of today are the lawless politicians and their hoodlums-thugs, armed robbers, bunkers, kidnapers and assassins (99-100)

Ewari why do our politicians stab us the more with corruption and insensitivity, which deprives us, the commoners of our little shares from our collective heritage? (108)

Ebi: You see, every political officeholder today is an imitator of the evil ways of a former political officeholder – his ostentatious living, his money politics, his corruption, his sexual immorality, his insensitivity to the plight of the electorate, his expertise in killing, etc. (109-110)

All these excerpts from the play show us how and what our politicians are and can do, hence the acceptance of social death by most of the masses.

Death, they say, is inevitable but humans keep being afraid and deny death praying it does not happen hence accepting whatever the elites and political, religious and intellectual class throw at them and in so doing leave their future in the hands of such leaders. People who have caused series of deaths in their capacities as leaders sometimes also connive with foreign powers to undo their own people.

Ewari: ... Foreigners come to your father's land, devastate it and ruin your crops; they pollute your waters and destroy your fish; they take food from your mouths and poison the water you drink; they ruin your heritage, your future and your children's future. And when your patriotic brothers and sisters, *people like me*, want to gather crumbs at the feet of the foreigner's table, you appear, you bastards, you appear with guns and handcuffs. ... You leave the enemies of your ancestors, the enemies of your land and your future, you leave them and war against your own people, you everlasting slaves! (104)

Ewari: ... They produce the oil wealth of the nation, but they die in the fires of poverty, and their aspirations and future die with them (109)

From the above lines rendered by these characters, the fear of the masses is expressed. But because of the exposures of the atrocities of the elites, the common man has decided to fight for his right.

Ewari: Thank you, my sister. You see, Mr Earthquake, what boils my temper about our leaders-our-political, intellectual and religious leaders- is that they are the snake. The snake leaves the man who struck it and twists its body against the ground. The snake forgets that the ground was also struck along with it, and it vents its venom on the ground. Can't our leaders collectively shoot at injustice rather than shoot at their own already battered people? (108; 109)

Way Forward

The atrocities committed by our government, political, religious and intellectual leaders as well as the local illegal bunkers can be resolved and things put in proper perspective, if and when, we all are ready to have ethical re-orientation, re-awakening of communalistic values as well as enforce effective laws against corrupt officials, saboteurs and the oil companies; have a military/moral re-armament and put in place laws protecting the environment as well as the people. According to Preye and Ewari, while addressing Mr Ebi, aka Mr Earthquake,

Preye: It is possible to drop the evil baton. ... These people, on their own dropped the baton of ostentation, corruption, and inhumanity. What Ewari is saying is that we need to break the cycle of evil. I think we need true leadership workshop in the Niger Delta. All the leaders need to come together and workshop on the kind of people-centred leadership that we need.

Timi: ... You all should come to the workshop with all your sins, confess and renounce them, then collectively choose to become new creatures.

Preye: Then you must set up a reliable system for monitoring yourselves thereafter. (110)

The suggestions proffered above by the characters in the play are attainable if only we all as a people are truthful and will be able to resist insensitivity and corruption, but allow equity and equality to be the order of the day as well as provide opportunities for all citizens.

Conclusion

Oil has continued to be very essential to the international community hence the quest by a group to acquire wealth from it in an illegal way, but this chapter has shown that oil theft is wrong and does more harm than good. But because of the quest by some people in the Niger Delta, the youth especially, who hanker after computer-generated images (Lista 2001: 10), glorify cars, industrial machines, modern cities and the most recent communication gadgets and techniques, engage in this dangerous business that praises violence as a means of escaping the shackles of poverty and “assuring” a future of comfort. The Nigerian state must as a matter of urgency propose ways to stopping this menace that destroys human lives and the environment as well as hamper development.

Works Cited

- Agoro, R.O. *Fighting the West with Oil: A Botched Strategy* (1st Edition). Ibadan: Olapade Agoro Investment Co., 1989. Print.
- Balot, R. K. *Greed and Injustice in Classic Athens*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.
- Braide, K.M. “The Political Economy of Illegal Bunkering in Nigeria”. 2003. Retrieved from http://www.nigerdeltacongress.com/particles/political_economy_of_illegal_bun.htm. Web.
- Cassidy, J. “The Greed Cycle: How the Financial System encouraged Corporations to go Crazy”. *The New Yorker*, September 23, 2002. Print.
- Chambers. *Chambers 21st century dictionary*. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Limited, 1999. Print.

- Clarke, D. *Crude Continent: The Struggle for Africa's Oil Prize*. London: Profile, 2008. Print.
- Collier, P. & Hoeffler, A. *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. Working Paper. Washington, DC: World Bank. Retrieved from http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2004/03/10/000265513_20040310152555/Rendered/PDF/28126.pdf. 1998. Web.
- Collier, P. and A. Hoeffler "Greed and Grievance in Civil War". University of Oxford, UK. Centre for Study of African Economics. *Oxford Economics Paper 56*, 2004. 563-595. Print.
- _____. *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. World Bank Policy Research Paper 2355. Washington DC: World Bank, 2000. Print.
- _____. „On the Incidence of Civil War in Africa“, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1), 2002. 13-28. Print.
- _____. „Greed and Grievance in Civil Wars“, *Oxford Economic Papers* 56(4), 2004. 563-595. Print.
- _____. *Civil War*. In *Handbook of Defense Economics Defense in a Globalized World Vol. 2*. T. Sandler & K. Hartley, (Eds). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: North Holland, 2007. 712-734. Print.
- Collier, P. "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy" In *Turbulent Peace – The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, Crocker, Hampson and Aall (Ed.). 2001. Print.
- Coronil, F. *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1997. Print.
- Ezirim, G. E. "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse and Development in the Gulf of Guinea: Nigeria in Perspective". *African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 5 (2), 2011, pp. 61-71.
- Feyide, M.O. *Oil in World Politics*. The J.I.C. Taylor Memorial Lecture Series, Lagos: University of Lagos. 1986. Print.
- Gelb A. *Oil Windfalls: Blessing or Curse?* New York: World Bank/Oxford University Press. 1988. Print.
- Ghazvinian, J. *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa's Oil*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt. 2007. Print.
- Hiro, D. *Blood of Earth: The Global Battle for Vanishing Oil Resources*. London: Politico's Publishing. 2008. Print.
- Ikporukpo, C. "Petroleum, Fiscal Federalism and Environmental Justice in Nigeria". *Space and Polity*, 8(3), 2004. 321-354. Print.
- Investigatinganswers, <http://www.investigatinganswers.com/investment-ideas/commodities-precious-metals/50-surprising-facts-you-never-knew-about-oil-2692>. 2011. Retrieved January 6, 2018. Web.

- Jackson, P. "Are Africa's Wars Part of a Fourth Generation of Warfare?", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 28: 2, 2007. 267-285. Print.
- Jin, H., and X.Y. Zhou "Greed, Leverage, and Potential Losses: A Prospect Theory Perspective", *Mathematical Finance* 23, 2013. 122-142. Print.
- Mahler, A. "Nigeria: A Prime Example of the Resource Curse? Revisiting the Oil-Violence Link in the Niger Delta". GIGA Working Papers, No. 120, January. 2010. Print.
- Mass, P. *Crude World: The Violent Twilight of Oil*. Dublin: Penguin. 2009. Print.
- Nwanosike, S. *Oil bunkering: Matters Arising*. 2013. Retrieved on January 9, 2018, from <http://www.thetidenewsonline.com/2013/04/10/illegal-oilbunkering-matters-arising/>. Web.
- Obasi, N. K. "Organised Crime and Illicit Bunkering: Only Nigeria's Problem?" In M. Roll and S. Sperling (Eds.), *Fuelling the World – Failing the Region: Oil Governance and Development in Africa's Gulf of Guinea* (pp. 55-72). Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. 2011. Print.
- Obi, C.I. "Beyond Electoral Democracy: Anatomy of Ethnic Minority Insurgency in Nigeria's Oil Niger Delta". In Said Adejumobi (Ed.), *State, Economy, and Society in Post-Military Nigeria* (pp. 85-111). New York: Palgrave/Macmillan. 2011. Print.
- Omeje, K. *High Stakes and Stakeholders: Oil Conflict and Security in Nigeria*. Aldershot, HANTS: Ashgate. 2006. Print.
- Osaghae, E. E., Ikelegbe, A., Olarinmoye, O. O. & Okhomina, S. I. *Youth Militias, Self-Determination and Resource Control Struggles in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria*. Dakar: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. 2011. Print.
- Pérouse de Montclos, Marc-Antoine. "Oil Curse, State instability, and Violence in Developing Countries: Theoretical Lessons for Nigeria". IFRA – Nigeria E-Papers: p. 1-58. http://www.ifranigeria.org/IMG/pdf/Oil_curse_MAPM_EPaper_2_2014.pdf. 2014. Web.
- Ross M. L, "Oil, Drugs and Diamonds". In Ballentine K & J Sherman (Eds), *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. 2003. Print.
- Silva-Calderon. A. *Welcoming Address To The Joint OPEC – IEA Workshop On Oil Investment Prospects*, April 28. 3. 2003. Print.
- Smil, V. *Oil: A Beginner's Guide*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications. 2008. Print.

- Ufuoma, O.K., & Omoruyi, O. Political Economy Diagnosis of Crude Oil Theft in Nigeria: The Way Forward. 2014. Retrieved on January 8, 2018, from <http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/1988>. Web.
- Ugochukwu, Collins N. C. & Ertel, Jürgen “Negative Impacts of Oil Exploration on Biodiversity Management in the Niger Delta Area of Nigeria”. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 26 (2), 2008. 139-147. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3152/146155108X316397A>. Web.
- Ugwuanyi, E. “Oil theft: Endless Search, for Solution” *The Nation* March 26, 2013,p.17. Retrieved January 8, 2018. Print.
- Ukala, S. “Fumes of Fuel”. In S. Ukala, M. Tugbokorowei, C. Anyanwu, R. Idase & A. Roy-Omoni (Eds.), *Rumbling Creeks of the Niger Delta (Anthology)*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2009. 80-112. Print.
- Ukiwo, U. “The Nigerian State, Oil and the Niger Delta Crisis”. In C. Obi & Siri Aas Rudstad (Eds.), *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petroviolence*. London: Zed Books. 2011. Print.
- Wang, L. & Murnighan, J. K. *On the Duality of Greed*. Working Paper, Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL. 2010. Print.
- Watts, M. “Petro-Violence: Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology of a Mythic Commodity.” *Violent Environments*. Ed. Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001. 189-212. Print. 2001. Print.
- Watts, M. “Petro-Violence: Some Thoughts on Community, Extraction, and Political Ecology”. University of California, Berkeley Institute of International Studies WP 99-I, 1999. 1-26. Print.
- Williamson, O. E. *The Economic Institutions of Capitalism*. New York: Free Press. 1985. Print.
- Yergin, D. *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*. New York: Free Press. 2008. Print.

Twenty-Three



Sam Ukala's *The Last Heroes*: A Sad Commentary on University Education in Nigeria

Greene Okome

Sam Ukala has written many plays, all of which dwell on social problems prevalent in our society. The play *The Last Heroes* is set in an (imaginary) university in an equally imaginary country. In the play, one finds such subject matters as oppression, bad leadership, greed, inhuman treatment and betrayal. It relates the downward and rapid decay experienced in the university system; a system that discourages scholarship with the attendant ridiculous salary paid to university lecturers. This poor situation, coupled with insecurity in the campuses, breed violence and lawlessness.

This play is Ukala's commentary on the university system. According to Okome:

The Last Heroes is another play of Ukala, a social play that discusses man's uphill task of existence. A play of strike, of greed, of betrayal and oppression. It is a snipe at our Ivory Towers and the „evil“ situation that pervades them (3).

The Last Heroes relates the degrading and dehumanizing situation of the academic world in Nigeria. Although, the names of the university and country are imaginary, the writer is in reality referring to the university system in Nigeria. Government interference in the administration and academic affairs in the university is very common and dislocates the system and the university is unlike universities found around the world – where lecturers are treated like intellectuals which they are, better paid with uninterrupted academic programme. The situation in the

university as it affects the lecturers is captured by Osawu, in response to Professor Bayo.

Prof: I am a Professor

Osawu: On the salary of a cleaner at the Bank, of a Gateman in the Oil industry! What is your level? Does a cleaner or Gateman presume to be of management cadre? You are a mere cleaner, Professor. Come and join in the struggle that may uplift you to the level of your dreams (82).

The level of the university lecturer is graphically captured by Osawu in the statement above. His position in society as a university lecturer is not only demeaning but inhuman. Professor Bayo represents the average university lecturer who only struggles to exist. He is oppressed, frustrated and pauperized by the same system he is committed to develop. According to Ehiemua in his article, "Crisis of Selfhood and Alternative Reality: Towards a Post-Structural Reading of Sam Ukala's *Placenta of Death* and *The Last Heroes*" in *Eagle in Flight*, in his summation of the lecturers position, he opines:

The professor in the play is a human symbol of a deflected vision, of unfulfilled hopes and aspirations, of choice, commitment and responsibility and of the irrepressible will (58).

The lecturers are apathetic over their situation, so strike becomes an option but the likes of Professor Bayo could not contemplate the idea of not going to lecture. It is not because he wants to break the strike, but because he simply cannot afford not to go to work. To him he has a duty to perform and perform he must. But his action not to join the strike is not only unpopular but has a kind of ripple effect on the system negatively.

As to be expected the strike by the lecturers could not produce the expected result of negotiation and resolution for a better situation. Instead, the State as represented by the Minister of Education sends armed policemen and soldiers to the university, who not only shoot to kill, but harass and rape innocent female students. The coming of the armed forces to the university to stop the strike with heavy force is unnecessary. But as it is, the State

does not brook any form of insubordination which is what the strikes stands for. In this play we see the Minister of Education as a source of oppression and suppression in the university and Dambaba, the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the agent within the university, a „household" enemy. The dialogue between Danbaba and the Vice Chancellor captures the above situation vividly:

Danbaba: Do you want to retain this position or not Sir? Look, some other. Vice-Chancellors have restored normalcy to their campuses. How? Unpatriotic deans, professors and lecturers have been cleaned off like pus from a boil, thrown out of the staff quarters into the rain- they, their wretched families and belongings!

V.C: I'd be shocked to hear of such crudity in a slave camp. I just can't imagine it happening in a university, and to deans, professors, lecturers, who are in short supply in this Country!

Dambaba: The Minister calls them „unpatriotic and ungrateful ruffians". They deserve the crude treatment that they get... lest I forget, the Minister has, in fact, given you forty-eight hours to show him evidence that the unpatriotic, ungrateful ruffians here have returned to work or been sacked and thrown out of their quarters – they, their wretched families and belongings (85).

The likes of Dambaba abound in our university system; they are the source of fear, oppression and suppression because they are highly connected. But Dambaba's politics and the appearance of the armed forces in the campus brings about a confrontation with the student body. And the result is fatal with the campus in disarray and dislocated. The student leadership as well as the „recalcitrant" lecturers sacked.

The play, *The Last Heroes* relates the struggles of the students and lecturers against the interference and oppression of the State and the encounter between the students and the agents of operation as represented by the armed forces produces a very serious fatal dislocation in the campus, and the future of the university education in Nigeria remains bleak.

Works Cited

- Ehiemua, Kingsley I. "Crisis of Selfhood and Alternative Reality. Towards a Post-Structuralist Reading of Sam Ukala's *The Placenta of Death* and *The Last Heroes*. *Eagle In Flight.*, eds. Steve Ogute *et al.*, Ibadan: SafmosPublishers, 1999 52-63. Print.
- Okome, Greene I. "Sam Ukala and the Development of Nigerian Drama and Theatre. Unpublished work, 2016.
- Ukala, Sam. *The Last Heroes*. Sam Ukala: Two Plays. Ibadan: Kraft Book Limited, 2007. Print.

Twenty-Four



Sam Ukala as a Complete Man of the Theatre

Taofeek Olatunbosun

Introduction

To be a complete man of the theatre is to have the theatrical wherewithal of what goes onto the stage. The consolidating of theatrical needs is not achieved to the exclusion of any of the persons involved in the enterprise. Hence, the man/woman regarded as a complete person of the theatre must be theatrically certified or qualified to be an actor, designer (scenic, sound, light, and make-up), director, manager and above it all a dramaturge. The way these various aspects of the theatre are brought together by Sam Ukala is the major concern of this study by subjecting *Iredi War*, a play script, to a psychoanalytic exploration of the connectivity between the playwright and the play script in order to uncover Ukala's theatrical expertise as well as the wealth of his experience as a successful playwright.

The Role of Dramaturgy in Playwriting

The concentration of a dramaturge is distinct from that of an actor/actress, director or playwright. The ability to reconstruct stories for the stage requires excellent theatrical narrative strategies coupled with projected ideology or ideologies as the case may be. This is where we can examine the wit and excellence of a playwright in relation to the theatre. Failure in this regard means that many plays end up not being successful because they lack dramaturgical features that could help to sustain the text. Therefore, theatrical perspicacity is something to yearn for by a playwright.

In terms of ideology, our quest is to know what Ukala attempts through his play *Iredi War*. Has his intentions been achieved and is such attempt worthwhile? Was he able to do a good critique of the invasion of Owa Kingdom convincingly? In response to these questions, we can safely say that the play, as folkscript, convincingly engages in a dramatic criticism of the Iredi War of 1906 in Owa Kingdom in present Delta of Nigeria. Creatively, the *Iredi War* on stage is not exactly the Iredi War of Owa kingdom in history. There are modifications and adoptions of theatrics to compress the entire history into a play of less than two hours on stage. The adaptation of the Iredi war story within the folkist realm to a well-constructed stage play shows Ukala's artistic creativity as a dramatist and a man of the theatre. Ukala uses the play to project the ideology of "Native Might".

From such ideological celebration, we see the natives at logger heads with, as well as overcoming, the white supremacists in addition to questioning the barbaric incursion of Western concepts into their traditional setup. This is a projection of an African nationalist ideology of self-sufficiency, might and resourcefulness which is "Ukalian". However, the merit of such celebration is displayed in the realistic approach of events and their various turn outs in the play. Ukala's dexterity to turn history into play by maintaining and projecting his personology is a plus to his creativity as a playwright. We notice a similar ideological projection in William Shakespeare's rendering of the history of Julius Caesar's (100-44BC) activities in the Roman Senate and the consequences of such actions in the play *Julius Caesar*. Ukala displays such re-awakening prowess in the way he recreates the activities that led to the war instigated by Crewe-Read in Owa kingdom in 1906 and the consequences of that war. For instance, through Narrator I:

My own grandfather was a soldier in the West African Frontier Force (WAFF). From Benin to Calabar, anywhere any native community raised its ugly head of protest against whatever the white man wanted, my grandfather and others like him were quickly drafted there to pour fire on that community (14).

This is an instance of several wars fought by the white man through the natives as foot soldiers. The playwright produces such dialogue as a way of critiquing the presence of the white colonialists in Africa in a dramatic way. As an appendage to the above, Crewe-Read speaks: “If that’s what it is, then it is treason, a slap in the face of King Edward VII. (32)”. Who is King Edward VII? He was the king of The United Kingdom and the British Dominions who ruled down to India more like an Emperor who died in 1910 and was buried in Buckingham Palace. This is a subtle satire on King Edward VII of England and his mission in Africa. The dialogue continues: “There is only one king in United Kingdom and British Dominions, including Owa. His name is His Majesty, King Edward VII” (34) Thus, “(To AUDIENCE) My people. Whether he was a captain or a yeoman, Crewe-Read was a white man. Every white man was wise enough to rule the Blacks, *abi?*” (38) This is an age-long argument cynically referred to. Also, Ukala daubs:

CHICHESTER: Yes, while Ekumeku remains inscrutable to us, it seems to have eyes and ears everywhere, within our own camps, even within our bedrooms! That, apparently, makes nonsense of Lugard’s assertion that the African “lacks the power of organisation, and is conspicuously deficient in the management and control of men”. Ekumeku does not only organise and control its members effectively, it also organises and controls the entire western Ibo citizenry. It disseminates important information to them before our telegrams arrive. It organises even drums and gongs to function as runners or telephones! (61)

The above is a final blow to dismiss the assertion of the beneficial presence of the colonialists and the preposterous mindset of seeing his incursion into Africa as liberation of the black race. Through the dialogue of characters in the play, the intelligence and organisational skills of the black race is pronounced and re-echoed as a primordial asset. These dialogues are versions of criticism levelled against the white man through the voices of various characters as scripted by Ukala.

Also through the lens of dramaturgy, we can see Ukala's theatrical narrative approach to feature the history of the Owa people. The play does not tag along the normal acts and scenes patterns but follows an African-audience form – a folkist approach. The aim of this approach is to capture the way the story would have been told in an African village circle. The achievement of thought is a theatrical plus to Ukala: "Three-quarter arena formation. Half of the arena is the performance area while the other half is the audience area" (11). The play is divided into sections: Beginning, Middle and Ending which is emblematic of its Africanness in construct. This is equivalent to a three act play. While the former can be acculturated to Africa the latter is European. The criticism of whether to tell or not to tell a sad history opens the play – Beginning. This is significant to African values and orientation. The act of deleting bad histories and distorting records is raised and rightly corrected through the Narrator re-echoing the people's values (12). This makes the play not to be only scripted in the African style but domesticated within the purview of the African belief system. This brands Ukala as a good dramaturge, and also as a fine critic of his time.

The Role of Acting in Playwriting

The profundity of a playwright on the theatricality of the script comes to the fore in terms of how he/she handles the trinity of telling, interacting and showing through acting. Acting as a skill can be very difficult to achieve when the playwright possesses little amount of acting skills – it takes a good actor consciously or unconsciously to create a good acting script for the stage. There on the stage he/she can represent as a way of recreating himself/herself convincingly through the chosen characters in the play text. In other words, the characters that the audience see on stage are various impersonations of the playwright's personology. It takes a good playwright to develop inner-psychological twists to compliment the characters' outer-techniques in order to give the level of reality expected of the characters to the audience. It is necessary to remind us that screen acting (TV, film, etc.) is quite different from the stage. In the former, one is resourced with

shooting, editing and other paraphernalia of the film art that give room for several retakes and manipulations; but for the stage, the performance is given live and direct to the audience interpretation.

Sam Ukala in *Iredi War* demonstrates a high level of acting skill when he uses Narrator I and Narrator II to showcase his dexterity in using the means of telling, which cannot be captured on stage through showing, to convey certain acting skills:

NARRATOR I: Crewe-Read rode his bicycle with all his might and those who ran after him ran, first like the hare, but then like the elephant! Occasionally, he looked back and waited for the elephants to catch up. He needed all the company he could get (58).

Deducing from the above line, the expectation of the characters who are involved is demonstrated through words. Their inner-psychological twist is explained; coupled with the external expectations to demonstrate. “Crewe-Read rode his bicycle with all his might...” Is a demonstration of an internal energy coupled with the external personality of the character’s dispositions –acting skill. The comparison with “hare” and “elephant” indicate acting prowess told to the imagination of the audience to bring out the expectations of the playwright on his characters, and this is directly from Ukala’s skill in acting. This would probably have been a job for the director to create on stage, but has been masterfully done by the playwright. Ukala uses the means of telling to demonstrate the act. This is similar to what Edwin Wilson says about Eugene Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros*:

Various forms of modern avant-garde and experimental theatre also require special techniques. A good example is Eugene Ionesco’s play *Rhinoceros*. During the course of the play, one of the two chief characters turns rhinoceros. The actor playing this part does not actually put on horns or leathery hide. Rather he must physically transform himself by means of his posture, voice and general demeanour (109).

A similar act is what Ukala explicates through the Narrator’s telling. The task of putting a bicycle on stage that is being chased,

fist like hares and then like elephants, and other actions that accompany it could be quite herculean it is reduced to telling.

Intriguingly, on page 30: “everyone freezes as Town Crier’s gong rises afar off followed by the TOWN CRIER’S VOICE....” This is voice control, in acting, where the actor needs adequate understanding of how a Town Crier acts through voicing in a typical African rural society. And since drama is an imitation of life, the stage ought to be skilfully controlled not by the designs alone but also by the acting that goes on in the scene. The gong comes before the voice of the Town Crier to catch the attention of the people. If this were otherwise, the Town Crier’s coming without the gong would be disregarded and assumed to be noise and not information in a rural African society. This showcases the playwright’s ability to import the concept of mimesis into acting and by so doing giving room for verisimilitude which proves the well-informed attributes of the playwright on the role of acting as reflected in *Iredi War*.

Stage acting works with timing, Ukala was able to compressed certain events and actions that would have taken a lot of time in real life into manageable scenes and acts. For instance:

(A gun explodes from the South. WARRIORS instinctively drift northward, but a shot comes from there also. The WARRIORS drift to the west. Another gunshot from there veers them eastwards only for them to also encounter a gunshot from the east. They huddle together, then spread out to form a little square with their backs to the centre and their faces to the advancing troops, their guns and bows ready. Rudkin’s troops advance, somewhat confidently, from the four corners, their guns also ready) 83.

The above narrative which is a war scene is turned into a choreographic acting to manage time and to present the war sequence in a manner that would convey the right information to the audience while also being aesthetically pleasing. The skill of communicating through choreography conveys the message of war and shows an artistic acuity in Ukala’s ability to demonstrate high proficiency in acting (More of such choreographic ingenuity is found on pages 17, 71, 72, of the play).

Ukala's auditioning of his characters, at the conscious and unconscious stages, before scripting them is a choice that needs to be investigated. The representations of various characters to act the various assigned roles, as shown in the description of the characters on page 8 for example, underscores Ukala's mastery of role play. The clear cut descriptions he gives to the characters in the play help to reveal the profoundness of the playwright in acting as these would in converting the actions to the stage. In reality, this is actually the job of the director by the way he/she does the casting. However, this is first done by the playwright through brief introduction of characters and other subsequent narratives in italics. A bad playwright would give weak/confusing descriptions that may mislead the director not only in the choice of casting but in acting as well. It is necessary for the personalities of the characters to be well projected through the playwright's narratives for them to come properly to life on stage. In *Iredi War*, Ukala presents a good grasp of character formation from auditioning, rehearsing down to performing.

In dialogue and stage movement, Ukala is also able to put local dialect in the mouths of the characters, including variety of accents (those of the colonialists and the locals) as a way of effecting character delineation. The movement of characters on stage: the how, when and where movements on stage and character control of sitting, standing and walking as depicted in *Igboba*, *Lawani*, *Afopele*, *Jamba* and *Constable* reveal their cultural roles. The way the characters react to various dynamics and roles show an understanding of various adjustments that may attend a play in performance.

The employment of centring by Ukala to eliminate impediments and blocks in performance adds aesthetic value to the script, and in consequence to the performance of it. Centre in this regard is the ability to have freedom, flexibility and balance on stage. This is portrayed in the script through the use of free style in the divination of *Igboba* in a blackout, various dances by warriors and Narrator I and Narrator II's improvisations on stage. These give room to symbolism and stylization of characters in acting - control of the body to achieve style or replicate symbols through

dance and sign language. This is well utilised by Ukala to paint the time and atmosphere of the play.

The Role of Music and Design in Playwriting

A playwright may not be a musicologist but a good dose of music knowledge is an added advantage to the art of playwriting, especially in Africa where music is almost inevitable in a theatre performance. This flair to incorporate music in performance may be as a result of the musicality of African languages and the use of music in traditional activities. In Africa, a song can easily tell a story of 200 pages. Language in this regard has aural soundscapes and vocality. These usually make most successful African playwrights, especially those from Nigeria, to include music in their plays. Through these dramatic songs, we can explore the ritual, literature, history and theology of the people. Hence, in Africa music is pertinent to a major theatrical breakthrough.

Profusely, Ukala uses music to embellish *Iredi War* as a canon to depict a master piece from Africa. One of such is the employment of the popular call and response songs strongly associated to the beginning of African folktale performances:

<i>Luni ilu</i>	Tell a tale
<i>Ilu I-gboba</i>	Tale of I-gboba
<i>Do n'udo</i>	Tug at the rope
<i>Udo kpirikpiri</i>	It's unsnappable

Before the above song is to be sang, there comes a call and response from the audience and Narrator I in the form of a ritual prayer. This is done outside the performing arena as a prelude to the song that would be raised thereafter. This is the playwright's narrative thereafter:

Some performers soon accompany the singing with drums and other instruments while others dance. This infects the AUDIENCE many of whom now join in singing, clapping or dancing till NARRATOR II, spotlighted in the audience chin-in-hand, hurtles forward and stops the music. (12)

Similarly:

(Blackout, Sound of “Iredi do”-pronounced “doh”-from afar:

Iredi do, do, do Iredi greetings

Iredi-o Iredi

Onye gbu nw'eworo Killer of lion's cub

Cheri nne-o Wait for the mum

Ebelebe Ebelebe

The song is repeated a number of times. Fade in frontage of Igboba's court. YOUTHS/WARRIOR of Owa, in war attires, armed with guns, spears, bows and arrows, and sheathed swords strapped to the waist, are singing and dancing round the corpse of UZUN. At a signal from EBIE, singing stops and WARRIORS form a semi-circle with the corpse in front.) (40)

This is a profound exploration of musicology in the play and this shows a high level of pragmatic acumen in Ukala. A musicological approach would need to be employed to demystify the expertise of the playwright in music. For in the above we can see an adroit movement from songs accompanied with drums and other instruments, to dance. Dance in this regard is more ethnographical as dance “occupies a central place in cultures throughout Africa” (*New World Encyclopaedia*) the dance speaks volumes of the actions that would subsequently take place in the play. Without a thorough understanding of this, the interpretation of the play in performance may be affected. Any African playwright that can give such a blend of drama and music can, indeed, be said to have attained something worthwhile, and Sam Ukala has done this successfully to prove his worth.

The role of design in playwriting is usually in reference to scenography which determines the environment of action in the play. This requires strong artistic backgrounds in theatre with a pivotal interest in engaging and seeking creative scenes to explore various ideas and adventures with the intention to support and clarify the said story. It is only a playwright who is well acquainted with stage business that can make due reference and explications to stage designs. An amateur playwright may not be able to do that effectively. Ukala proves this in the description below: “There-

quarter arena formation” (11). What is three-quarter arena formation? In theatre, this is similar to the thrust stage where the three sides are extended into the audience and connected to the back stage. It is also slightly called an open stage where the performers can intimate with the audience. Ukala further showcases his mastery of stage designing by adding “Half of the arena is the performance area while the other half is the audience”. This changes the configuration from the presumed thrust to theatre-in-the-round but divided between the audience and the cast. The cast and the audience are sharing the stage arena on level pegging for audience assimilation into the action.

Ukala’s choice of scenes is determined by the nature of the dramatic story: a folk play that needs the elements of moonlight tales gathering which may not necessary need a proscenium stage. Other design features in the play are “Light on the Owa...animal skin fan...” (14); the use of lightning (24) and other aesthetics (11).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is safe to state that Sam Ukala is one of Nigeria’s best theatre hands who has proved his worth as a complete man of the theatre through his play, *Iredi War*. Exploring his repertoire as a playwright reveals that for anyone to be a resounding success as a complete person of the theatre he/she must understand and possess the adroitness to adequately explore every facet of the theatre. Then he/she can be called a complete man or woman of the theatre.

Works Cited

- Ukala, Sam. *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Craft Books Limited. 2014. Print.
 Wilson, Edwin. *The Theatre Experience*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2001. Print
 Shakespeare William. *Julius Caesar*. USA: Dover Thrift Edition. 1991. Print.
 Obafemi Olu. *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre*. Lagos: Centre for Black & African Arts and Civilisation. 2009. Print.

Oni, D & Ododo S. *Technical Theatre and the Performing Arts in Nigeria*. Lagos: Centre for Black and African Arts Civilisation. 2011. Print.

“New World Encyclopaedia”

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/African_dance,
4th/sept/2017.

Twenty-Five



Reading the Mind of The Playwright: Personality Fragmentation in Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*

Henry Obakore Unuajohwofia

Introduction

Literature has been in the forefront of the research to understand the human psyche. This is because in works of literature, neurologists and psychologist have found an archive of the manifestation of the human mind. Among the first to note this potential is Sigmund Freud. Freud's major contribution to the study of the human psyche embedded in literature led to the development of the dynamic model which asserts that the human mind is a dichotomy of the conscious and the unconscious. Freud sees literature as the external manifestation of the conflict between the conscious and unconscious in the human mind. In order to understand the human mind, the works of literature becomes the metre to measure writers' hidden desires and suppressed motivations.

Freud's foremost disciple, Carl Gustave Jung developed the method of the personal conscious, personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. Personal conscious are the daily activities consciously carried out by man. Later they are forgotten and stored in the personal unconscious. Jung describes the collective unconscious as the accumulated knowledge of the human experience stored in the mind of each person. These memories of time past exist in humanity as archetype which Jung described as "the introspectively recognizable form of a priori psychic orderedness", according to Charles Bressler (140). These

unconscious images can only be deciphered when created in a solid state of human experience like stories of literature.

In his publication of the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) Northrop Frye schematized the experience of the archetype in stories. Frye's form of the archetypal criticism is hinged on the development of the monomyth – a circle that encapsulates four peculiar phases of human experience. These are the "Romance", "Anti-Romance", "Comedy" and "Tragedy" (Bressler 128). Frye's contribution to the understanding of the human mind is his provision of the structural frame work to understand stories in regard to themes, point-of-view and symbolism.

As far as this study is concerned, the most important contribution to the study of the understanding of the human mind is found in the works of Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst. His works and those of Frye, Jung and Freud constitute a method of literary criticism known as psychoanalytic criticism or psychoanalysis. Lacan developed a method of textual analysis based on the understanding of human psyche in terms of lack and fragmentation. Lacan explains that human longing for unfulfilled desire lead to a fragmented personality. According to Bressler, in Lacan's view, literature has the particular ability to capture *jouissance*, that is, to "call up a brief moment of joy or terror or desire that somehow arises from deep within our unconscious psyche and reminds us of a time of perfect wholeness..." (131).

In Lacan's method, images are analyzed to show how they signify meaning. This *Saussurean* system of realizing meaning through the difference between the signifier and the signified is latched on by Lacan to relate how the real order in a work of art can help a critic explain the imaginary order. In this vein, Nasrullan Mambol writes that "Lacan draws on Saussure and emphasizes that meaning is a network of differences... this purports to show that same signifier may have different signifieds, so that the correlation between signifiers determine the meanings" (3). The main objective of a Lacanian textual analysis therefore, "is to teach us that a fully integrated and psychologically whole person does not exist and that we must all accept fragmentation (Bressler, 135). Therefore personality fragmentation in the context used in

this study means the splintered selves of the author that manifests in his delineation of themes, characters and techniques. As such, this paper studies the tropes, characters and techniques of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War* to argue that the fears, desires and aspirations of these characters are a reflection of the playwright's journey through the imaginary, the symbolic and the real orders of the human psyche as developed by Lacan. At the end, the paper shows that the interaction of these three phases results in fragmented personalities of the characters and in essence, the playwright.

Synopsis of the Play

Iredi War is an award winning historical play about the uneasy relationship between the kingdoms of Owa and Britain during the turbulent era of colonialism in Africa. The play dramatizes the Owa uprising against colonialism and the brutal war that followed. The war results in the killing of Assistant District Commissioner O. S. Crewe-Read, whom the Owa people called Iredi. The revenge attack by the British results in the defeat of Owa and the exile of the king of Owa, Igboba, and other notable chiefs and nobles of Owa. Though adapted from history, the play is not a historical account of the Owa uprising of the 1906. Instead, as Darah puts it,

...a literary account of an event is always different from a historical account because the events related in the history are verifiable, that is, they can be proved to be true or false. Thus, even when a literary event is based on an actual happening or historical episode, the literary version remains fictional because the artist always distorts the sequence of events in order to attain the aesthetic effect... (215/217)

In *Iredi War*, Sam Ukala distorts the sequence of the historical event to reflect the fragmented personality of the human psyche reflected in the themes and behavior of the characters of the play.

Representation of Personality Fragmentation in the Play

In his bid to project the splintered psyche of man in the play, the playwright highlights some personality traits that serve as tropes in

the play's storyline. The imaginary idea of zeal manifests vividly in the play either as nationalistic fervor or as negative excesses of men in the pursuit of their selfish goals. Though zeal is a noble virtue that propels men to great deeds, too much of it acts negatively in leading an inexperienced person to disaster. This is the negative part of the personality explored by the playwright in the life of Crewe-Read, the Assistant District Commissioner (A.D.C), Agbor Sub-District. An early pointer to the overzealous personality trait of Crewe-Read is exhibited in his meeting with Igbooba and his Chiefs at the palace of Owa. While responding to Igbooba's observation that he has not been chewing the kola nut offered to him as a sign of their cordial relationship, Crewe-Read retorts:

CREWE-READ: Because you first offered it to your jujus.

IGBOBA: Our gods and anc-

CREWE-READ : Jujus! That is what they are! On my first visit, I rejected your kola and palm wine for same reason. Perhaps you were too insensitive to notice...for Christ's sake, can't you pray to God Almighty, the Alpha and Omega, the Omni Present, Omnipotent, Omniscient? (15)

In this exchange, Crewe-Read's reply shows him as an overzealous religious fanatic whose self motivated stance does not portray him as a harbinger of well wishes for those whom he hopes to govern.

Apart from religious zealotry, Crewe-Read also exhibits elements of nationalistic zeal that establishes his personality as a self-centered individual heading for a crash in his responsibility as a leader of men and materials in the colonial administration. Responding to the democratic nature of the Obi's Court in Owa, Crewe-Read says:

CREWE-READ: I'm not concerned about your culture, which is uncivilized, anyway. I'm concerned about protocol in the Southern Protectorate under His Majesty King Edward VII, King of the United Kingdom and British Dominions, in whose service I am. (19)

This disdain for the indigenous power structure and the ebullient personality of Crewe-Read congregated with his overzealous attitude to mark him out as irrational and authoritative. And so, like Iwekuba who asks, "...where is our friendship with the whiteman if we can't share kola and palm wine with him?"; the members of the audience (MOA) also describe the personality of Crewe-Read as "power-hungry", "power-drunk", "young and inexperienced", and "pompous" (17/38). As Nkem Chigere, observes,

... due to the overzealous applications and radical importunity of both the foreign secular and white colonialists, the lot to dictate and rule, designed by the Euro-choice and arbitrary division or demarcation of both people and land fell on a large number of petti-unwanted native officials, without any social status, recruited here and there by the government, badly paid, insufficiently trained to pass on cleverly to the people the foreign and colonial judicial process. Sooner or later, they lost their popularity and the *Ekumeku* venture had justification in the people's genuine dissatisfaction and rejection of their witty services of betraying nature. (203)

These words symbolically reflect in the fears of authoritarianism in the splintered self of the playwright embodied and developed in the character of Crewe-Read.

As Lacan proposed, the fears of an author submerged in the unconscious are penned in literary works as negative traits that the audience is not guided to emulate. In *Iredi War*, one such fear of the playwright is cowardice. In the reconfiguration of the Owa uprising of 1906 into a play, the playwright explores this negative personality trait in the activities and behavior of several characters that cut across the colonial and the colonized divide. Among the colonized, the acts of Ekome glaringly portray him as a coward. As a symbol of cowardice, the playwright develops Ekome's speeches and actions to reflect this negative trait that the playwright fear will lead to the fall of Owa during the uprising. The build up to Ekome's cowardly personality manifests at the beginning of the play when the whiteman sends his bands of fanatics to burn Owa shrines and gods. Ekome's argument that the gods ought to have

defended themselves is countered by Igboba that “you are young, Ekome and speak like a child. You just told us that it was the servants of Omini-mini that set our shrine ablaze. Or was it Omini-mini himself?” (27) This follows Ekome’s declaration to Iwekuba that “I’m not a warrior like you, my elder. My father was not a warrior” (27).

Later when Igboba orders the warriors to fight the whiteman who desecrated Owa gods, Ekome exclaimed:

EKOME: Hmm! Obi Agun! You’re mandating them to fight the whiteman? Hmm! I think we should make peace with him-o. (30)

In action, the playwright’s presentation of Ekome’s activities during this unnerving period of Owa history leaves a sour taste in the mouth. When Iwekuba confronts Lawani to shoot, the narrator explains that “...EKOME inches his way to the entrance and runs off. IWEKUBA shakes his head in utter dismay” (37). Still, the playwright confronts his fears as embodied in the cowardice of Ekome and finally kills off the fears as Ekome is eliminated from the action before Igboba finally confronts the British face-to-face in the play. Ekome is last seen when he delivers the message of the “Imina song” from the gods whom the king of Owa had sent him to consult. Like Ekome, Nwoma, the younger wife of Igboba also portrays acts of cowardice when she “runs off” leaving her husband in the face of danger (86).

As noted earlier, the act of cowardice is not limited to some of the colonized people who refuse to resist but instead “let an evil stranger set him and his house ablaze” (27). In the camp of the colonizers, the idea of cowardice is presented as betrayal of trust or treason. Among the characters projected as traitors by the playwright are Gilpin, Lawani, Omozefi, Afopele and Jamba. Their attitude as Africans is disgusting and preposterous. The absurdity lies in their ability to connive with the whiteman to harm their own people without any misgivings. However, as the play develops, this fear of being betrayed by fellow Africans in the playwrights unconscious is questioned by the writer in the speech of Afopele to his colleague, Jamba:

AFOPELE: Make you day deceive yourself for der... Just take a good look at me, Jamba, a prince that has become the whiteman's mad dog! I'll get to Owa-Nta and tell those warriors there with blood in their eyes... "I am Afopele, son of Imaran, the paramount Chief" and they'd ... stand at attention, salute me and tell me to pass, hunn? Jamba, reason it now? If my father wasn't a traitor, would the whiteman have appointed him paramount chief? Did he appoint Ovonramwen or Nana a paramount Chief? The warriors of Owa-Nta would see the son of a traitor running a traitor's errand for a whiteman and they'd tell me, well done? Mr. Jamba, I'd be to them nothing more than a whiteman's dog with a telegram tied to its neck!... I'm angry now, Jamba. Very angry! (56)

As was in the case of Ekome and Nwoma the cowards, the playwright expels the fear associated with the betrayal of trust by Jamba and Afopele. After tearing the telegram, Afopele jumps into the forest and leaves the "traitor's errand" job of the whiteman. According to the narrator, "after looking this way and that", Jamba also left the whiteman's service and jumped into the forest which is a symbol of freedom. Lawani is killed by the "Uta mgbá" sent by Nneka. As for Gilpin, he survives the war but in a diminished state. His role of exposing the ills of the whiteman's personality as racist, arrogant, high handed and insensitive serves to confirm his middleman's role; being also a half-caste. More so, Gilpin's matured disposition and professional outlook singles him out as an educated Africa who though alienated, still retains emotional link with his people unlike Lawani. Gilpin's categorization in the splintered personality of the playwright becomes complex, for, as Odogwu Okwuashi of Onisha-Ugbo would say, "the mouse eats, but so does the maggot" (Okpewho 1998, 191).

The exploration of the splintered self of the playwright manifested in ideas that are symbolically developed through the configuration of characters also finds outlet in the portrayal of the positive virtue of bravery. In this scenario, the life and times of Nneka, the queen of Owa demonstrates that the brave part of the playwright's personality is also the soft part. Though there are men

like Igboba the king; Iwekuba, the War Minister; Acholem, the Prime Minister and Ebie, Youth Leader and the son of Iwekuba whose determination and steadfastness in resisting colonialism all show smacks of bravery, the brave acts of Nneka is exceptional. The most implausible response to this is that she is a woman. However, when her personality is compared to that of Nwoma, the junior queen, then, Nneka's acts of bravery becomes significant.

During the turbulent period of Owa history, both Nneka and Nwoma stand with their husband, the king. But on the fateful day that the colonial army broke through the defenses of Owa and starts marching to the palace of Owa, the reality of war dawns on all in the palace. It was in that hour that Nwoma implores her husband:

NWOMA: My Lord, hurry! Let's run away!

IGBOGA: (Facing her) Yes, run away. You and your son. Call me Nneka. You all must run away ... (86)

According to the narrator, "Nwoma runs off". She is not seen again in the play. In contrast, to the surprise of Igboba, "Nneka, in war attire, emerges from within, armed with a spear" (87). The conversation that ensues between Nneka and Igboba point to the articulation that Nneka is the embodiment of the brave part of the splintered self of the playwright.

IGBOGA: (*To NNEKA.*) What are you still doing here? Didn't I order-

NNEKA: Me to run away and leave you alone here? Yes, you did, my lord. But why should I do that? What life do I have left that I want to protect? Anxiety over you would kill me faster than the whiteman's gun. Since you refused to run away with us, wherever you are, there I'll be with you.

IGBOGA: Don't say I didn't warn you, my queen.

NNEKA: ...What can white man do to me, the daughter of the greatest hunter of this land and beyond? What can fire do to the feet of an iron pot? ...

NNEKA: That is why I'd have laughed my lord to scorn if he opted to run away with his young wife. The idea really made me laugh: the great lion of Owa, running away from children! (*Brief laughter.*) Our future is in our past, My lord. It's no

longer available for us to protect. All we have left is our present. Let's fight the lepers together to protect our present. (87/88)

The bravery of Nneka should not be associated with the notion of martyrdom. Unlike the bravery that is suicidal, this is one that awakens the spirit of survival. Buoyed by the bravery displayed by Nneka, Igboba is able to surge forward in the midst of desolation to rescue his people from the jaws of death. As Acholem puts it,

ACHOLEM: That the oracle said, Salute your king
isn't he worth the salutation?
He saved us from the noose
He offered his neck
Because Obi Agun is a man with a man's heart.
Didn't Ekome run away?
Obi Agun, we salute you (96)

At the end, though the negative traits of cowardice and betrayal contribute to the desolation of Owa, the bravery of a few rekindles the hope that conquers all fears. And that (the hope) of the playwright is not misplaced. Packaged in Igboba's last speech before exile, this optimistic fragment of the playwright's personality is worth representing here.

IGBOBA: Wait, my people, wait
A man does not pass by his compound
Without marking it with his foot
Neither the whiteman's chains
On our legs
Nor the whiteman's guns
At our backs
By our sides
At our front
Can stop our feet
From marking our compound
As a sign that we shall return.

And Owa did survive; and the people of Owa did return to defeat colonialism in 1960.

Techniques for Realising Personality Fragmentation

Apart from realising the fragmented personality of the playwright in the delineation of characters that represent vices such as cowardice and traitorousness, and virtues such as bravery and hope, the playwright develops other literary techniques that enhance the reader's perception of his splintered self as manifested in the play. The story of *Iredi War* is developed in dramatic and narrative form. The playwright refers to this technique as folkism. Ukala (1996) describes folkism as "the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture and concerns of the folk ... to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale" (47). Thus in the play, the events are structured into "The beginning", "The middle" and "The Ending". The existence of Narrators I and II; the Members of Audience (MOA), and finally the opening and closing formula, all point to the story as a folktale. At the same time, the action, dialogue, performance, existence of characters that perform; audience, and songs classify the story as a play. This fragmentation of the performance of the story reflects the argument of the paper that the story of *Iredi War* is the fragmented personality of the playwright that is being demonstrated.

The language of the characters also shows apparent fragmentation. In this regard, suffice to show through the speech of Igboba, this fragmentation. Though not a garrulous character, Igboba's speeches are full of artistic flavour and philosophical dept. In the beginning to the middle of the action, Igboba speaks in prosaic form. An instance is when the king speaks to the "igbagba efa", the oracular medium:

IGBOBA: What to do that the visitor will not kill his host. What to do that he that I did good to will not pay me with evil. What to do that this war be mere breeze to Owa, mere dew (76).

Though in sober and pious mood, Igboba speaks in prose. In contrast, when on their way to exile, Nwobi, Acholem, Iwekuba and Igbogba speak in poetry. An example is Iwekuba's speech about the sacrifice required for the survival of the father land.

IWEKUBA: The whiteman's gun is a mere stick
 To Obi Agun, his queen and me
 The body of the goat does not bear whip marks
 Yet the Obi keeps us in this hive of prisoners
 For the love of our land....(97)

The fragmentation of the language of the characters into prose and poetry serves to facilitate the demonstration of the illogical capabilities of the human psyche.

On a deeper level, the relationship between Igboba and Chichester is developed to reveal the splintered psyche of the playwright. Adopting the ironic technique, the affinity between the two leaders smack of twists and turns. In the exchange between Igboba and Chichester, the latter having deceived the former to a peace-meeting that changed to a trial, Igboba exclaims:

IGBOBA: The rabbit does not look like one that was roasted by a friend for a friend. The meat is deliberately burnt beyond recognition (91)

The background to this speech lies in the prior cordial relationship between Igboba and Chichester. At one time, Chichester even refer to Igboba as "my very hospitable, very respectful friend" (74). The irony of this situation is that Chichester, even when he calls Igboba friend, does not behave as one, but unleash war on Owa as if Igboba is an enemy.

On a personal level, the relationship between Chichester and the colonized people also portrays an ironic twist. Though, he is experienced in the behavior of the colonized people as he served in the Benin massacre and is the acting provincial commissioner, he still has a low rating for the indigenous people's intellectual competence. So when he was shot in the chest during the war with Owa, he asks Dr. Bates:

CHICHESTER: Why do they always aim at our chests? They shot
Crew-Read in the chest... who told them the location of the
heart?

BATES: Anatomy

CHICHESTER: Natives! Anatomy!

The irony is that the “natives” considered by Chichester to be uneducated are knowledgeable about anatomy. The technique of irony technically unveils the splintered reasoning of characters who are a reflection of the splintered selves of the playwright. As for the audience, the ironical events enable them to ask questions about the naivety of each of the characters who are embodiment of the audience psyche, their fears and dreams.

Since the events in the play are a recreation of what transpired in 1906, the playwright has every reason to acknowledge the survival of Owa kingdom in the face of the overwhelming threat from the British colonial empire. Though, Owa is reduced and almost desolated, the audience as well as the British might be thinking that the war might end Owa’s existence. But ironically, the war has made the Owa’s spirit to survive stronger. And, as the words of Igbooba signposts, Owa is desolated physically, but the spirit of survival is still resilient and unbroken. For, Igbooba states:

IGBOBA: Wait, my people, wait
A man does not pass by his compound
Without marking it with his foot
Neither the whiteman’s chains
On our legs
Nor the whiteman’s guns
At our backs
By our sides
At our front
Can stop our feet
From marking our compound
As a sign that we shall return (97)

Conclusion

As the chapter has shown, the psychoanalytic analysis of the fragmented personalities of the characters reveals that there is no

person that is perfect. Relatively, the study has shown that the splintered selves of the playwright is revealed through characterization, plot and techniques adopted by the playwright in the play to recreate a historical happening. Though, it is difficult to read a playwright's mind perfectly, it is pertinent to consider the words of Elvis Buckwalter that as we grapple with the psychoanalytic study of the fragmented mind of the playwright, we must admit that it is manifested in "both the conscious as well as the all-too-neglected unconscious side of the discursive to render a well-rounded literary analysis read between the line" (35). As such, the fragmented mind of the playwright can only be revealed when one reads between the lines.

Works Cited

- Bressler, C. E. *Literary Criticism: An introduction to Theory and Practice*. (3rd Ed). New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc. 2003. Print.
- Buckwalter, Elvis. "Lacan: Adapted Approach to Postmodern Language". *Essays in Philosophy*. Vol 8: Iss 1, Article 4. Pacific University Library. <http://commons.pacificu.edu/eip/>. Web.
- Chigere, N. A. *Foreign Missionary Background and Indigenous Evangelization in Igbo Land*. Munster: Lit Verlag. 2001. Print.
- Darah, G. G. "Oral Literature" *A History of Nigeria, Vol. 1: Peoples, States & Cultures Before 1800*. T. Falola. (Ed.). Lagos: John West Publishers. 1986. 215-226. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and Id*. New York: Norton, 1962. Print.
- _____. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. A. A. Brill. New York: Random. 1950. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957. Print.
- Jung, C. G. *The Collected Works of C. J. Jung*. Ed. Herbert Read, Michael Fordhan, and Gerhard Adler. 20 vols. Plus supps. New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1953-83. Print.
- Meyer, Joyce. *Battlefield of the Mind: Winning the Battle in Your Mind*. Nashville Tennessee: FaithWords Press. 1995. Web.
- Okpewho, I. *Once Upon a Kingdom: Myth, Hegemony, and Identity*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1998. Print.
- Ukala, Sam. *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2014. Print.
- _____. "Preface". *Iredi*

PART THREE



**Cultural Aesthetics and
Contemporary Discourse**



Plate 6: Group photograph of ANA – Delta members and the National Executive led by the National President, Prof. Olu Obafemi at the inauguration of the Delta State chapter of ANA, Delta State University, Abraka, 2002.



Plate 7: Sam Ukala (right) chatting with Prof. Egun Clark and Prof. Olu Obafemi (front row). SONTA Conference, University of Ilorin, 1991.

Twenty-Six



Eco-Centred Performance Poetry Among the Gbagyi of Abuja: Issues at Stake

Mabel Evwierhoma

Introduction

Performance is action, and entails an active concept of relaying standpoints that are embodied before witnesses, or an act that is to be encountered for assessment, entertainment, by an audience in a real or virtual space. For the purpose of this paper, performance involves the enactment of songs and poetry that often convey the imitation of human and animal roles within the Gbagyi indigenous space. For an observer, the performance of traditional poetry is purely for entertainment and transmits the material and non-material features of Gbagyi ways of life. In contemporary times, the content of these performances has become more political; has helped to spread the substance of Gbagyi „new“ resentment to Abuja as capital of Nigeria. The performance of recently lived experience often conflicts with Gbagyi life before land became a matter of critical concern to the indigenes. Many of the performances this writer has witnessed within several communities in Abuja have gradually mixed politics with culture and their ritual contents have gradually faded. No matter the contemporary realities of the Gbagyi peoples, the yearning for life as it was, no longer equals the need to relate to their environment and the challenges it currently faces. It reveals the eternal conflict between dream and reality, and the ruthless burden each state or condition assigns to the individual or group performers within it. There is therefore Abuja the dream, and Abuja the reality for the Gbagyi performer, and the audience. The dream would connote the past, or present or a future longed for, where huge farm lands were

symbols of status. The reality is the absence of these lands and the reduction of status of the Gbagyi in view of the challenge of coexisting with cultures often considered more „dominant“. The performances reflect this transition and the pain that accosts it. Urban settlements have taken over the local settings, and the transformed Abuja, or the „concrete jungle“ leaves the Gbagyi the major option to adjust to the change. One mode of adjustment is the performance of environment-based songs and poetry, often accompanied with dances. Many factors affect these performances and hinder the full actualization of Gbagyi performance poetry. The eco-concern notwithstanding, the Gbagyi culture remains under explored, and the folkloric content continues to face the threat of extinction.

Abuja was created in 1976 by Decree No. 6 when General Murtala Muhammed was in power. The states from which the geographical entity was carved are: Niger, Plateau, Kaduna states and present Kogi State, which was formerly part of Kwara State. It consists of some indigenous ethnic groups, and they have mutually coexisted for several generations. According to Adamu, there are five major ethnic components of Abuja. These are the Koro, Bassa, Gade, Gbagyi and Ganagana (5). Prior to this declaration, other groups within Abuja were listed by Adamu as: Gbagyi or Gwari (a majority), Koro, Gwandara, The Gade, The Bassa, The Fulani (of Pai and Kundu), and the Igbira (vi-vii). In the study commissioned by the FCTA in 1995, the fast pace of development in Abuja was noted by the researchers who ascribed this explosion to on-going construction and developmental activities, the movement of material and non-material cultures from different quarters of Nigeria into Abuja (5).

The Gbagyi

The Gbagyi occupy the area considered to be the middle belt, or central region of Nigeria. The region is arable and is home to farmers, hunters, archers and people of other business vocations. The Gbagyi live in rural and semi-urban and urban communities, and this is dependent on their education, occupation, or economic status. Some of the cultural practices of the Gbagyi people

especially names of items, titles like Madaki, Magaji, Galadima, SarkinYaki; and settlements like Dutse, Birnin, Kwali, are akin to those of their neighbours – the Nupe, Hausa, Bassa, Ganagana, Koro, among many others. Some early ethnographers, historians and social anthropologists like Siegfried F. Nadel, in *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*, asserts that “The description of environment is concerned with a solid, easily defined, almost self-evident reality” (12). He discusses the several trade routes that affirmed the interaction of different ethnic groups around the Nupe area which inadvertently included the Gbagyi. (319). S. J. Hogben and A. H. M. Kirk Green, in *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, also featured the Gwari and their Hausa neighbours and aspects of material life. These ethnographers have offered conjectures on the origin of the Gbagyi ethnic group. Hogben and Kirk Green assert that the Gbagyi peoples migrated from outside their present abode and were connected to the Zaria Emirate as an administrative outstation.

The Gbagyi practice Knunu, or the traditional faith mixed with distinct cultural practices. These cultural observances and practices consist of marriage (Amula), naming a child (Ayetu), and burial rites (Azabi or Bera) (Ayuba Larry Sanda Yusuf, 699-702). Nevertheless, the Gbagyi are a homogeneous group with linguistic variations. While the Yanma and Ngenge exist, there is Gbari or Gwari group. The belief of the Gbagyi is in gods and guardian spirits, evident in ancestor-worship and they consult Zokuda who are diviners and Ashigbeda who are herbalists and healers. In Niger State, the Gbagyi language spoken in Kuta area is distinct from the ones spoken in states like Kaduna, Nassarawa, Kogi, Plateau, and the FCT where they are presently found. A Gbagyi community is headed by Saa, or Etsu who in consultation with the traditional cabinet or council administers the villages and the sum of households and farmsteads in it.

Gbagyi cultural studies have become necessary pursuant to some indispensable factors. The Gbagyi community is a major host to the federal capital of Nigeria, Abuja. The culture is facing some threats associated with the diverse cultures that now coexist and compete with it for relevance, weight and significance. The loss of

homesteads, farmlands is also a major setback. There is a drought of Gbagyi scholars of arts and culture in comparison to those in related cultures in central Nigeria, who are of Nigerian extraction. Most of the Gbagyi cultural practices have remained undocumented and the language may face extinction as a result of the shrunken size of the Gbagyi communal landscape, culture-mix, and influx of assorted peoples, agencies into Abuja. Many of these cultures from outside Gbagyi communities are imitated by the Gbagyi. Nevertheless, the dominant use of Gbagyi as a means of instruction and communication may stand its people in good stead. Late General Mamman Vatsa remains one out of many artistes who put Gbagyi culture on a high and dominant pedestal. Many festivals like the Zhibaje, performed before planting season are not fully observed for reasons of their being fetish. These days, the planting season commences without this festival that is central to Gbagyi life being performed. According to Mr. Danjuma Kuyembo, “these festivals are becoming extinct due to western education and globalization” (Interview). It is therefore crucial that these challenges be addressed, especially through a scholarship that has impetus for Gbagyi cultural advancement and development.

The ethnographic thrust therefore warrants a look at the Gbagyi people and their worldview as they relate to the focal point of this paper. The resort to ethnography is a consequence of the non-literate composure and standing of a people when research on and documentations of their practices are required for (un)scholarly purposes (Dele Layiwola, 72-73). Levi Izuakor considers ethnographic study from a holistic bearing. In his view, it “encompasses all aspects of a people’s culture, including, but not limited to, their world view, technology, dressing, architecture, language, religion, cuisine, social and political organizations, burial rituals, marriage rites, dance, crafts and drama” (60). This kind of study necessitates a purview of the full essence of a people. It does not foreclose other forms of field experience that may warrant a partial study of a people. It provides a fall back on original oral sources, where written records are unavailable. It however requires training, a perceptive mind to „unscramble“ the

messages of oral tradition. (Izuakor, 68). Again, the research documents the outcomes of any ethnographic investigation or study on indigenous peoples and assists in the preservation of the culture (Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson, 1-16). As seen above, the Adamu study on Abuja helped to provide a resulting document “on the peoples of this FCT before they are altered, or forgotten as a result of the fast growths of the FCT” (5).

Within the scope of field work, it is therefore certain that ethnography is „a sphere of influence” on „culture and its intellectual analysis for the purpose of study” (Layiwola 76). The focus on the ecology or environment gives licence to query, and “... always ask about the conditions in which ethnography is produced and must work within, a call to recognize how discursive forms, including those of ethnography, stage, direct and limit, what is said and not said, who is heard and benefits, who and what remains subaltern, outside articulation” (Kim Fortun, 448).

The Kabusa and Giri People

Kabusa is a rural settlement in a sub-urban environment in Lokogoma District, Abuja. It is only about 10 kilometres from high brow settlements and estates within the Abuja city centre like Sunnyvale and Sun City estates among others. According to Chika Okeke, its location makes it a „dual settlement”, because it has “both the features of urbanized and underdeveloped areas in one locality. Kamardeen A. Ismail and Olowoporoku M. Opeyemi recognize the criminal activities of hoodlums as a result of this (*Daily Trust*, September 15, 2016).

This writer interacted with the Etsu or Saa Kabusayi and found out that irrespective of the centrality of the chief to the affairs of Kabusa people, his control is no longer as total as it used to be. However, he remains a patron of the performers and performing group, due mainly to the fact that the repertoire of the performers necessarily include panegyrics or praise songs to the chief.

Giri is also semi urban and has become a melting pot of cultures. There is however a dominant Gbagyi community, with a leader the Etsu Giri. Like the Kabusa people, the indigenous

people of Giri in Abuja could also lay claim to much dispossession of their land as a result of the presence of major government agencies on their land. The community hosts the University of Abuja Main Campus and staff housing estate; the Nigerian Army and Navy are presently constructing official structures there along the Abuja International Airport road axis. There are usually claims and counter claims of compensation for and non-compensation by the government of the Federal Capital Territory Administration and the indigenes. Occasionally, there are altercations between the Giri hosts and staff of University of Abuja over right to land and its use. The Giri people are mainly farmers and hunters. Due to shrinking land resources, they have resorted to teaching, or trading, as well as other technical jobs like auto repairs, tailoring, among other blue collar jobs. The period from 2006-2016 showed mass settlement in the area, with different Nigerian ethnic groups installing their natural leaders or titled chiefs to head them. The results are often inter-ethnic conflicts, like the one witnessed in 2012 between the Gwari and Fulani. The Main Campus of University of Abuja was used as an Internally Displaced Persons Camp for the victims. Many are still there today.

Performance Poetry

When traditional songs or poetry are performed, the meanings derived from them cannot be uniform or singular. The artists are often accompanied by drummers, flutists, dancers, other singers or the chorus. This makes the performance inter-textual, moving between the song, performance, or music as coexisting texts. The poems or songs are performed before a mixed audience of indigenes and people of other cultural extractions. These songs are heard and „seen“ because they are oral, lyrical or musical and not written texts that are performed publicly. The narration of the people’s history, politics and experiences in the physical environment of Kabusa bears the oral narrative facts of life in Kabusa. The songs are the oral narratives on land and the challenges its ownership is fraught with. Attempts were made to transcribe some of the songs collected bringing to focus what transpires in writing sung or oral texts. Susan Gingell refers to it as

„textualized orality“ (4). However, before this could occur on the field, translation was necessary and it was to this effect that my two field assistants, Peace Karma and Hope were particularly helpful. Once the scope of mediation is technological, or „mediatized“ is performance real or fake? (fakelore as against folklore)? See Paul Schauert, *Staging Ghana: Artistry and Nationalism in State Dance Ensembles* (17, 116, 296 n 31). To Schauert, “Fakelore is a term coined by American folklorist Richard Dorson in 1950 denoting “inauthentic” forms of culture that are constructed for strategic, often political and economic, purposes” (297 n31).

Performance poetry involves listening to and watching songs or poems mainly to obtain aesthetic impact. However, they are shaped by the audience, performance environment and audience contexts. Divergent views on performance reflect its nature and impact. In the controversial and majorly speculative opinion of Peggy Phelan, performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. (Phelan, 146). This stance is corroborated by Philip Auslander “[...] the common assumption is that the live event is “real” and that mediatized events are secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real (Auslander, 3).

What is performance? According to Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter*,

... “performance” is not a singular “act” or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (95)

J. L. Austin’s manner of approach dwells on the effect of performative action. Here, one reaffirms the claim that Gbagyi eco-centred performance poetry is yet to have effect on the first in the sphere of action itemized by Propp which is the villain. Here the dispossessor-bourgeoisie is the villain, epitomized in

government dispossessing the Gbagyi people of their land, and giving them what is not commensurate to it. To buttress the standpoint of this treatise, performance theory is employed to articulate the centrality of performance as agency for the poet, the poem and the environment; Richard Schechner, (1981), Victor Turner (1969) and recently, Kelly Michelle Askew (2002).

The orality or the spoken or sung component of Gbagyi performed poetry is crucial as it helps to fuse and continually sharpens the peoples' identity and their concerns. It is therefore not apposite to say they are not poetry, or deny them their place when poetry is considered. Ruth Finnegan (43) had referred to oral performances like tales, song as un-poetic and without a position for what is poetry. Words are powerful and this is evident in Gbagyi songs and poetry.

Narratology and Orature

As a construct, the focus on the structure, function and effects of the narrated, sung or performed story or poem continually yields more options for the verbal arts. Here, form is often privileged over content evident in *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp (1928) in the attention he paid to myths, folktale and narrative fiction. Thirty one functions or actions in a story are itemized along with seven spheres of actions or roles often played by one character, or multiple characters. Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette among others gave much impetus to the myth and folktale as tools for solving problems. It is therefore worthy of note that the story, its nature or form, the plot, or discourse of poetry as performance communicates meaning. Genette's *Narrative Discourse* accentuates order, duration, frequency, mood and voice in the seminal text. (50). The concern here is the focal point of the performance, that is, the individual(s) charting the narrative mode of Gbagyi poetry. To peruse the poet-performer and the persona therefore, the resulting narratives of Shekwolo Musa Yeche, *Gbagyi Mi*, Mr. P'S *Gbagy Knunu*, Thomas Leda Mhiyi Gbarin and a host of other performed songs are utilized to support the different tropes. The result of the Gbagyi construct is a narrative on the indigeneity of their peoples and the Nigerian question. The

resulting meta-narratives are inherently subversive in form, but the Gbagyi voice for now is muted in national affairs, especially the silent subversion that is gradually building up.

Orature encapsulates the lore of the people and their orally transmitted stories and narrative experience. These group or individual lore may be sung, spoken, chanted, hummed, or performed via the embodiment of the voice or other verbal arts, often carrying the mimetic along with them. The term was coined by a Ugandan Pio Zirimu and often speciously ascribed to Ngugi wa Thiong'o as the originator of the term. Some prominent researchers on orature and its language of transmission are J. P. Clark, Okot p'Bitek, Isidore Okpewho, Wande Abimbola, Tanure Ojaide, Nolue Emenanjo, among others.

Performance Poetry among the Gbagyi

The performance of culture is an assortment of verbal and visual indices of narration, bearing within it the concerns of the people it showcases. This display is the song, dance, story, history, mimicry among several representations of the people's ancestry and progress. Every performance of culture bears the complete essence of the people.

Gbagyi cultural transmission through the modes mentioned above is inter-generational. However, the performance process is a selective one, where steps of addition and excision take place to determine what is performed or left out of the enactment. The mechanisms for constructing who the poet or performer is differ from community to community in Africa, nay, among the Gbagyi peoples. It is for this cause that in many places, the poet is a singer and the singer is a poet. Both function as performers and within the influence of this essay, the terms are used interchangeably as they narrate and meta-narrate the Gbagyi ethos and aesthetic.

„Manyinu“ is the term for song or poem in Gbagyi. Among the ethnic group also is the performance of dances and movements that accompany the poetic renditions.

Major poetic renditions among the Gbagyi are made up of few lines that are repeated several times for emphasis:

We own the land
The land belongs to Gbagyi

The lines above are common to the Gbagyis of the different communities in Giri, Kabusa, Ido and even Lugbe who often lament their lack of access to ancestral land.

Eco-centred performances

The engagements between performance and ecology have continued to generate concerns. The triadic relationship between them stem from the age long impact one has upon the other. The concepts of the theatre as mirror, watchdog and censure of society may not be too far from this interface. A major voice in this regard is Baz Kershaw, whose efforts in performance ecology and man's role in it, which he terms "the slide towards a calamity for humanity" (12) is vast. Wendy Arons and Theresa May also see the moulding effect eco-centred theatre and performance can have on the society. (40). Eco-centred creativity resides within the confines of the environment and the relationship between them merits attention, enough to be studied (William Rueckert, 1978). The eco-centred performances under consideration are temporal but ephemeral yet they remain within the collective memory of the Gbagyi people. Most of them concern land seizure, grabbing and dispossession, by individuals, corporate bodies, government and its agencies which live within it evident in the songs of Thomas Leda and Shekwolo Musa. To Mrs. Iko in Kabusa,

We need to farm. Everywhere we go there are buildings on our farm lands. We want to develop our land. There are now houses on our land. We cannot farm like before. Where Sunnyvale Estate is now was our land. It was a forest and they have taken it away. Thieves now harvest our land. (Personal Interview)

Others are on dwindling harvests, and the challenges of Gbagyi existence as a result of modernization.

The grounds for these challenges arose because of the relocation of the federal capital of Nigeria to Abuja from Lagos in December 1991. Prior to this date, General Murtala Muhammed

had designated Abuja as the new Federal Capital of Nigeria via Decree No 6 of 1976. Thereafter, in 1978, the Land Use Decree, later Act vested all lands in the Governor of the State, except land vested in the Federal Government or its agencies (Section 1). This burden is borne more by the Gbagyi as a result of the dominance of Federal Government of Nigeria's presence in Abuja.

The Gbagyi often express concerns over the environment, farming practices and lean harvests. The change in the Abuja land mass since the relocation is massive. Where once stood orchards, trees, silos, crops and painstaking farming now have buildings and physical structures of different sizes, hardly owned by the Gbagyi. Eco-centred performances are majorly political, even as they refer to the interpersonal, nay, intercultural relations that create the political currents. The problems are not one-sided. The activities of the indigenous peoples in Gbagyi communities also constitute threats to the environment, like bush burning, hunting game, and obsolete and inappropriate land use practices. Therefore, while development is pursued, regression becomes a hazard. The performances provide some options for the people to engage in socialization, teach norms and mores, transmit the core spiritual and material essence of what it means to be Gbagyi and teach proverbs, idioms, folktales among other important cultural dynamics.

The eco-core of any community brings into focus all the flora and fauna that are within the environment in correlation with the physical and non-human environment. In some premises, this concern is not only ecological and relevant to livelihoods, it relates to how they are managed and sustained. At another level, the ruin and damage to the environment is remedied through artistic and performative interventions. The eco-centre fulfils the realization that nature is under siege from technology, governance, reflects the disconnection between nature and nurture and the parasitic tension emanating therefrom, rather than symbiotic affinity between them. Therefore, whither the Gbagyi cultural sensibilities few decades from now?

Components of Gbagyi Eco-centred Performance Poetry

The concern of this paper is the eco-centred performances of the Gbagyi. Arising mainly from practice, the performances of oral texts involve indices of creativity. This propelled Ziky Kofoworola to declare that “modes of performances can be explained on the basis of the various creative elements of Arts involved” (65). He went on to identify some into categories of instrumental, vocal and freelance performances (65-66). It is informative that the elements are vocal, instrumental, and incidental bearing with them crucial elements of embodiment. As performance, poetry has “features, forms, inspirations and implications” (Kofi Anyidoho, 382). While the concern of Anyidoho in his treatise is to written poetry that is performed before an audience, the oral form as enactment is, according to him, also valid. In his view, the African oral poetry audience should be an „earwitness“, whereby the ears for sound and not the eyes for the printed word are validated. It amounts to the subversion of the limitations encrusted by illiteracy in the colonial language because of the „inadequate audience for the printed word“ (382).

Songs

The songs also considered to be poetry in this paper, are the Gbagyi orature in the context of Pio Zirimu’s use of the term as related by Ngugi wa Thiong’o. (see *Homecoming* (1972 pp 69-70). The solo performer is common in Gbagyi culture. To Kwabena Nketia, songs are like words, or speech and they facilitate verbal communication, dialogue, conversations about life, experiences and social interaction. Songs are dialogue. (177-189).

Most of the songs are non-ritualistic and are secular, performed after harvest, during coronation or major events in the community. Gbagyi songs are mainly antiphonal, short and repeated several times for emphasis. Apart from the praise poems, there are songs that satirize the government, express submission to God and human forces, prayer etc. In considering the poetic form of festival songs, Oyin Ogunba discusses the composition and performance of Yoruba festival songs and asserts:

The performance of these songs is one occasion in which a Yoruba community emphasizes its musical and poetic standards.... As poetry, some of these songs still have great limitations. There is for example, still too great a reliance on repetitive structures and this is only partially compensated for by the concrete quality of the imagery and the great illuminating nature of the diction. (29-30).

Such accompaniments of such poetry and songs are drums, flutes, gongs, costume, stage delivery/figurative language among others. In the opinion of Anyidoho, the result is a *ménage of “the integrative nature of the tradition of the performing arts in Africa”* (383, emphasis in text). This performance sums up the essence of the African being- spirit and man, living and yet-to live. It has been referred to as an art that is whole, complete, total, a summation of the artist’s embodiment on a living space.

The songs are often without elaborate or superfluous introduction, or the usual homage to ancestors or leaders. Without the basic introduction, the poet-performer goes straight to the point. The poems or songs are in short stanzas, often like refrains rendered in the main song. Performance is like narration accompanied by musical instruments like the flute, drum, gourd rattles and metal gongs. In terms of embodiment, the eyes and ears and other parts of the Gbagyi dance during performance. They can be referred to dancing bodies when little or nothing is worn by the male dancers who have only a strip of cloth covering the phallus and the buttocks bare. The costumes consist of a dull, woven fabric tied round the torso by women and tied toga-style by the men. The typical Gbagyi cloth is coarse, navy blue, or blue-black in colour, almost similar in texture to the mud cloth. There are variations to the Gbagyi textile as contemporary motifs are added to it. Of recent, inscriptions like “Mizhi Gbagyi” feature prominently on the cloth worn by performers and other members of the ethnic group. At other times, the men wrap the cloth round their bodies, toga-style, or dance near naked with leaves, dried sorghum stalks as covering the waist area. Diluted ash, charcoal or powder is employed to render motifs on their bodies, depending on the age-

grade, or cult of the performer. The total body or corporeal existence is engaged in performance.

In terms of spatial utility, most performances are in circles while chants are going on. But when the Saa, or Etsu or King is present, the performers dance with arms stretched out, with the torso and shoulders moving back and forth, up and down. Most male and female performers dance with the chest pushed out. Others move with outward footwork and bent waists shaking to the accompanying instrumentation or music.

Tropes in Eco-Centred Gbagyi Performance Poetry

Certain elements facilitate the significance of Gbagyi poetry performances. The usual obeisance to the Saa and departed ancestors in words and action by the performers commence the renditions. Thereafter, the following are highlighted:

Identity affirmation: A singer like Thoma affirms “Mhiyi Gbarin”
“I am Gbarin, not any other tribe”.

The Main theme rendered: After showing respect, affirming the self of the poet and his identity, the main idea of the song or poem is performed. For example, Mr Albarkada of Giri performs the admonition song of unity as a prerequisite for logical political action:

Gbagyi let us have one voice
May be they will hear us
Those that are suppressing us
Maybe they will hear our cry and stop what they are doing
They are those who collect our game (meat) from the traps that we
set
They collected meat from us

Here, meat symbolizes their land, inheritance and entitlements. The emphasis on meat, is a referent also to the age-long culture of hunting game, now scarcely practiced. Again, the need to speak out in one voice is emphasised.

The lamentation over scarce resources is also common in the poems performed. In the opinion of the Gbagyi people in Iddo for

instance, lack of access to land to farm has made food scarce. The poet sang:

The Gbagyi eats and is satisfied, that is why we have food to
feed visitors
That is why we have food to feed other languages
The world has changed
Food is scarce
They now look at us as if we are not important

The Land-Ownership and Dispossession: Thoma Leda sang:

How can someone's land be sold in his absence and he did not
see the money?
We will not allow anyone to be cheated in our land"
(source, Compact Disc)

The farm is important to the Gbagyi the way it is across the world. However, in Giri, a respondent informed the researcher, "Our farm is our inheritance, but it has been taken away". While many of the people have started to agitate for compensation, return of their land to them, or a relocation of the federal capital, others appeal to their people to seek divine intervention. The standpoint of inaction was encountered in Kabusa. Some of the women of Kabusa rendered this standpoint out of the need for peace and a look unto God for vengeance. They rendered in song:

Even if they render evil to us
Let us not revenge
Because God will come and avenge the evil

Spiritual spaces: possession, trance:It is claimed that the eco-centred performances in Gbagyi culture are secular. At times however, ritual content is captured for effect and relevance. Masquerades called Akakani also perform during performances that are communal in nature.

Other elements that feature in the performances include the home, family values, the sky and animals. Of the animals, the most common used in Gbagyi performed poetry is the hare. The saying

“If you want to know who owns dogs, set the grass on fire” connotes the possibility of action under provocation.

Performance and Politics

The effort to place the poet at the centre of the scheme of human endeavour is a political construct that is full of challenges in this age of technological advancement. The theatre remains a weapon that only the people should wield. Whether digitized, or mediated in assorted ways, the poet becomes a political force when centred. The gradual or immediate subversion that arises out of the move from the fringes of society to the core creates a legislative space for him in the manner of Augusto Boal’s *Legislative Theatre*. Here performance is used to raise consciousness and generate popular participation, in the manner of national anthem, which are themselves poems, or songs of national affirmation and pride. To this end, the local performance spaces should be adequately managed, for herein lie personae that perform not only their person(alities), but their communal ethos and the poetics of corporate (re)alignments, in order to accomplish onward impact on the national space. This would in turn support the emerging realities of centering the performer poet, and facilitate his eco-centred expressions to be potent.

One Humanity?

Is there a possibility for a monolithic humanity? Perhaps yes or no. In a world ripped apart by conflicts, terror, poverty and lack, the challenges faced by modern states and the performers within them cast aspersion on the concept of one humanity. Indeed there are many peoples, many voices, but the world is divided. Only the arts perhaps sung and performed poetry offer a veritable escape from these challenges. Nevertheless the eyes of racism continue to blur the possibilities of a streamlined humanity.

The proponents of re-centering the poet are encouraged to note that the Gbagyi poet’s existence on the fringes of actuality, performativity and impact calls for more attention from observers and the performers. These songs are gradually leaving the sphere

of entertainment to that of action. The performer in this context struggles with actuality, first and acceptance by the immediate environment, second. There are shifting indices of loyalty in the community and nation-state. The songs are yet to be considered national, or expressive of the national ethos. Rather they articulate the angst of the dispossessed and the torment of geographical and psychological displacement. What is proved is a fragmented humanity, of the privileged over the subjugated. With the focus on these poems or songs as reflective of grievances and objection to suppression, the future of the Gbagyi or Nigerian ecosystem, the geography, flora and fauna along with the socio-politics that construct them remain within the scope of performance.

What manner of reaction should emanate from government to Gbagyi resentment evinced in their performed poetry? Much attention has not derived from Gbaagyi gradual rebellion through performance. Many people do not understand or speak Gbagyi language. The variations between Gbarin and Gwari and Gbagyi pose some research challenges.

Conclusion

The factor of embodiment often ascribed to Gbagyi performance poetry and its focus on the ecology notwithstanding, the organs of delivery and appreciation and the context within which they exist need further research and analyses. This is necessary from the perspective of indigenous Gbagyi peoples themselves for the „inner“ views of the concerned and not the empathic. The Gbagyi can best recount the distress they face in the disappearing ethos of their people and the threat they face from challenges to their land and its essential constituents. With time, one wagers that the outlook of non-Gbagyi researchers may be countered or reaffirmed, by the Gbagyi researcher depending on who is involved. In furtherance of the need to speak out their „condition“, the young performers should desist from the showcase mentality. This is where performers become active only when aspects of their culture and tradition are relived before dignitaries and they are paid for it. The struggle for justice at times reflects operations of victimhood, yet the interrogative poetics remain essential in this

generation and they should be performed and made exclusive. Land Reclaimed by acts of subversion may yield to the Gbagyi, their self affirmation first, before the struggle for ecological balance. It is expected that with time, the land and the eco-centred concerns it generates would be reclaimed by acts of subversion.

Works Cited

- Adamu A. *Socio-Cultural Study of the People of Abuja* Vol. 1 A Publication of the Research and Documentation Unit, Abuja Council for Arts and Culture, 1995.
- Anyidoho, Kofi. "Poetry as Dramatic Performance" in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*. Eds. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Arons, Wendy and Theresa J. May. *Readings in Performance and Ecology*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Auslander, Philip. "Embodiment: The Politics of Postmodern Dance." *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism*. Routledge: London, 1997. 73-86.
- Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of —Sex.* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Davis, Jim, Katie Normington and Gilli Bush-Bailey with Jacky Bratton, "Researching Theatre History and Historiography" in *Research Method in Theatre and Performance*, eds. Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 86-110.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Land Use Act*, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, Chapter 202, 1990.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Fortun, Kim. "Ethnography in Late Industrialism" in *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 27, Issue 3 2012: 446-464.
- Gennet Gérard. *Narrative Discourse*. London: Basil Blackwell, 1972.
- Gingell, Susan. "Introduction,". *Essays on Canadian Writing* 83 (Fall 2004): 1-18.
- Hogben, S. J. and A. H. M. Kirk Green, *The Emirates of Northern Nigeria*, London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

- Ismail, Kamardeen A. and Olowoporoku M. Opeyemi “Kabusa: An Abuja Community under Criminal Attacks”. *Daily Trust*, September 15, 2016.
- Kershaw Baz and Helen Nicholson. “Introduction Doing Methods Creatively” in *Research Method in Theatre and Performance*, eds. Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 1-16.
- Kershaw Baz. *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Layiwola, Dele. “Fieldwork Experience and the Documentation, Mediation and Analysis of Dramatised Culture” in *A Handbook of Methodology in African Studies*. Ed. Dele Layiwola. Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Limited, 1999: 71-85.
- Nadel, Siegfried Frederick, *A Black Byzantium: The Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press, 1942.
- Nketia, Kwabena J. H. *The Music of Africa* New York: WW Norton and company Inc.
- Ogunba, Oyin. “The Poetic Content and Form of Yoruba Occasional Festival Songs”, in *African Notes*. Volume 6, Number 2, 1971: 10-30.
- Okeke, Chika. Nigeria: Kabusa – A Slum Settlement On the Edge” in *Leadership Newspapers*, 11 December, 2011.
- Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- <<http://www.believmag.com/issues/200907/?read=article_phillips>>
- Sanda, Ayuba Yusuf Larry. “Knunu of the Gbagyi/Gbari: Beyond the Cultural Context”. *International Journal of Current Advanced Research*. Vol 5, Issue 3 2016: 699-703.
- Schauert, Paul. *Staging Ghana: Artistry and Nationalism in State Dance Ensembles*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015.

Musical Recordings

- Leda, Thomas “Mhi Yi Gbarin” (ND) *Mhi Yi Gbarin*. Perf. Bro. Thomas Leda. De Ambassador Studio SabonWuse Niger State/Galazy Impression Concept, Abuja. VCD.
- Mr. P. “HotaKponyayen” (ND) *GbagyiKnunu*. Perf. Mr. P. Luka B. Haderi, Kuje Area Council, Abuja. VCD.

Musa ShekwoloYeche “Gbagyimi” (ND) *Gbagyimi*. Perf. Shekwolo Musa Yeche. Sheks Music World/Shekwolo Musa Yeche, Kukwaba-Kubwa Abuja. VCD.

Interviews

Mr. Albarkada, 33 years old resident of Giri, a teacher. Interviewed on 2nd July, 2017.

Mrs Ali Iko, Age 28, trader. Interviewed at Kabusa Village on 10th June, 2017.

Mrs Joyce Polycarp Age 30, trader. Interviewed at Kabusa Village on 10th June, 2017.

Mrs Esther Samuel, Age 30, trader. Interviewed at Kabusa Village on 10th June, 2017.

Mr. Tachuzagun Age 49, farmer interviewed at Iddo on June 15, 2017.

Twenty-Seven



Attitude of Students to the Study of Urhobo in Delta State Tertiary Institutions

Eyankuairé Moses Darah

Introduction

This work deals with the attitudes of students to the study of Urhobo in Delta state tertiary institutions, using Delta State University, Abraka and College of Education, Warri, as case study. These two tertiary institutions were solely selected for the study because they represent the only higher institutions in Delta state and Nigeria where Urhobo is taught as a course at the B.A and N.C.E levels. The term Urhobo in this context is used to refer to the study of the language, culture, people, literature, science, technology, art, biodiversity, religion, worldview, etc.

Over the years, Urhobo has come under intense research by scholars to sustain efforts toward the study and to encourage hype in spoken and written form of the language. This is to stem the ugly tide of language extinction currently threatening most Nigerian/African minority languages. Despite these sustained efforts by Urhobo scholars, the attitude of the people towards the study of the language is still mostly negative, due largely to low prestige accorded the language, lack of employment opportunities after study, poor or non-existent pedagogical materials, rural–urban migration and inability of government to implement the National Language Policy in Education.

Though, the problems confronting the language are quite enormous, this work aims at stimulating sustained positive interest both for researchers and students of Urhobo by exposing the shortcomings associated with the language with a view to promoting favourable attitudes toward Urhobo as a symbol of

education, culture and modernisation. Previous researches have often focused on attitude of the speakers of the Urhobo language as a language of worship in churches/traditional places, mass media, entertainment, market, home, primary and secondary schools, etc. but none has actually focused on attitude towards the study of Urhobo in higher institutions of learning (Darah, 2010:12). Previous researchers have failed to extend their researches to attitude of students studying Urhobo in tertiary institutions. That is what this work aims at doing.

Statement of the Problem

This study attempts to solve some of the problems posed to the elaborate study of the Urhobo language in tertiary institutions by creating awareness about language endangerment and to gear people's interest positively to the study of Urhobo; as a result of negative attitudes generated over the years by students which have placed the language on the list of the most endangered indigenous languages in Nigeria and Africa. The evaluation of the status of Urhobo in terms of growth poses a serious linguistic problem. The solution to this dire linguistic attitudinal problem is crucial to achieving a coherent language policy and language planning. It is my view that this research problem can be properly handled by determining the various attitudes of students in the two tertiary institution with a view to proffering solution to the poor attitude they have towards Urhobo.

Methodology

This study combined the use of research questionnaire, interview and observation in collecting data on language attitude. The questionnaire tagged "Urhobo Students' Response Questionnaire" (USRQ) is made up of two sections i.e. the personal data and the question section. There are ten questions with columns of Likert Scale type, i.e. strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher and all were retrieved almost immediately after the respondents supplied the answers. Two schools were chosen, i.e.

College of Education, Warri and Delta State University, Abraka. Subjects for the study comprised fifty respondents with 25 respondents drawn from each of the schools. The COEWA covered students from NCE 1 to 3 while DELSU covered 100 to 400 levels. Some students were interviewed to gather data on their attitude to the study of Urhobo language in tertiary institutions. For the analysis of the data, simple frequency counts and percentages were used.

Research Questions

1. What are the factors that make students to study Urhobo?
2. What are the employment opportunities for graduates of Urhobo language?
3. What are the challenges facing students studying Urhobo?
4. What is the prestige attached to the study of Urhobo?
5. What are the attitudes of parents toward their children studying Urhobo in tertiary institutions?

Literature Review

The concepts of “language” and “attitude” are no more new to linguists in Nigeria and other African countries. The two concepts refer to a situation where the behaviour of a particular people towards their language and culture is either: positive, negative or indefinite. When such situations occur, the language would be affected; as such it can result to its growth or decay.

The general attitudes of the Urhobo people to the Urhobo language have been viewed from different perspectives. For instance, Apene (2006) argues that the Urhobo language is among the world’s endangered languages that would go into extinctions in future if a proper measure is not taken to correct the abnormality. The reason according to him is because “Urhobo is in a constant struggle with English and Pidgin as a result of the increasing rate at which Urhobo younger generation speaks this language. Apene’s fear was that a language that is not used as a medium of communication in market, churches, urban and some rural areas

cannot survive the axe of language death which may affect not only the language but the entire people and their culture.

In his article titled, „For Dying Language and Culture Urhobo Find Way Out“ published on the Guardian Newspaper, Kalu (2005) summarized Professor Aziza and Dr. Mowarin’s papers presented at the sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society, on the attitudes of Urhobo people to their language. According to him, Prof. Aziza of the Department of Languages and Linguistics, Delta State University, Abraka dwelt on ICT Globalization and future of Urhobo while Dr. Mowarin of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, talked on „Probable Linguicide of Uvwie and Strategies for Maintenance of Urhobo“. His report of Aziza and Mowarin is a true reflection of the attitude of the Urhobo people.

Aziza (2005) on her part said that “Urhobo language is gradually disappearing and may go to the land of dead language, if something is not done fast to arrest its decline and maintain its use and relevance. The surest way of maintaining any language according to her is by using it regularly as the language of the home, school, social function (including religious worship), trade and commerce and mass communication.”

Reasons for this death, she went on, are “families non speaking Urhobo in their homes, dilution of Urhobo culture into English mixture because of inter-ethnic social gathering, inter-ethnic marriages, western education, migrations to Urhoboland, non promotion of Urhobo by the mass media”. But Aziza was hopeful that “Urhobo can survive the imminent language shift, death and extinction if we take some effective and pragmatic steps and exploit available ICT resources to propagate the language”. To this end, she asked the people to sponsor the production of “Teach Yourself” materials on audio and video. And that the Urhobo Foundation, Lagos, producers of the Urhobo Language Primer, together with its audio cassette, can make the materials more affordable as most students nowadays lack the culture of intensive study and that the situation is worsened if the materials are not easily affordable. She wanted the Urhobo to establish at least a radio or a television station whose airtime would be devoted more

to relaying programmes in Urhobo rather than in English, and that jobs be given to those who study Urhobo. Urhobo graduates, she pointed out, could be useful in government enlightenment programmes on HIV/AIDS, female circumcision, juvenile pregnancies, participation in politics, census matters, the benefit of a good education, issues which affect the people. For her, there are many talented Urhobo artists-theatre, musical and visual, all working in Urhobo language whose talent can be tapped and publicized and that a radio/TV station will be of immense help to them.

Aziza asked Urhobo linguists, technocrats, engineers, artists, media experts, to design Urhobo numerous moonlight stories into puppet shows for children. She wanted mobile phones, the computer, the internet among others, to be used to strengthen Urhobo and ensure its survival. "With improved connectivity, we can now reach our friends and loved ones in very remote areas through the cell phone and communicate with them in Urhobo." Aziza asked that the Urhobo "need to nativise technology to make digital literacy in Urhobo possible. Our engineers have a lot of work to do here," as the Yoruba have a keyboard called Konyin and the electronic dictionary in Yoruba. The Nigerian Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) also has a Nigerian font that can be used for Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba. Delta state government, she went on, should "recognize the use of Urhobo and Enuani (Igbo) for discussing affairs on the floor of the Delta State House of Assembly at least one day in the week..."

Aziza urged that "we must develop Urhobo and raise it from the status of a domestic language and make it available for information dissemination using modern information and communication technologies... All hands must be on deck to make Urhobo relevant to modern trends so as to counter the strong destructive current of globalization and the present-dominated ICT".

Mowarin (2005) was more particular on possible extinction of Uvwie language, a dialect of Urhobo in the nearest future. To avoid this awaiting danger, he examined strategies that can be adopted for the revitalization of Urhobo language and culture. He

said that Uvwie and Urhobo are at different stages of endangerment and there was need to shift out retrogressive aspects of Urhobo culture. He pointed out that the two subtle cases of linguistic hegemony in Nigeria are the desertification of the indigenous languages in the Middle Belt region by Nigerian pidgin. Threatened languages, he said, are found within the 397 minority languages. Since speakers of the majority languages dominated the nation's socio-political and economic spheres, the minority language speakers view their languages with disdain because they constitute a barrier to their socio-economic and political upward mobility.

Mowarin further revealed that "only Nigerian languages developed to facilitate ICT, that will survive the future". He talked about the bad attitude of the Uvwie people to their language, industrialization, migrations, pidgin, the assimilatory effect of Urhobo as some Uvwie families have now shifted from Uvwie to the Agbarho dialect as their mother tongue. This bad attitude, he said, "marks the eventual death of the language".

Mowarin accused the Delta State Government of neglecting the Uvwie language. According to him, "the language is not taught in schools in Uvwie speech community and no attempt is being made to encourage literary tradition for the language". Still worried about the danger posed by the negative attitudes of the Uvwie people, Mowarin pointed out that "the extinction of Okpe will be further delayed than that of Uvwie due to its large rural setting around Elume and Egborode axis. Once this part of Okpe opens up areas to development and language exogamy sets in, the language will be doomed by extinction". Mowarin added that "the western parts of Okpe, which include Aghalokpe, Oviri Okpe, Ekpan and Okurekpo, have already been infiltrated by Urhobo and Nigerian pidgin". He extolled the "Linguistics/Urhobo" of DELSU course study and the decision by the Delta State Ministry of Education to teach Urhobo in schools in Okpe and Uvwie speech communities.

In summary, the attitudes of the Urhobo people to the Urhobo language as displayed by the above listed Urhobo scholars point to one direction, that is, the people's attitude to Urhobo remains poor.

While Apene (2006) sees the rising profile of English and Nigeria Pidgin as major threat to Urhobo leading to negative attitude, Aziza (2005) heaps the bulk of the blame on parents for failing to use Urhobo at home and in their day to day activities. As for Mowarin (2005), the Delta State government should held responsible for the reckless abandon and lack of use Urhobo is currently experiencing for paying lip service to the implementation of the National Language Policy.

Theories of Language Attitude

A research work on sociolinguistic topics would be incomplete without adequate consideration and adoption of appropriate theories that may help to avoid re-inventing the wheel, or making errors that have been previously exposed and enhance the chance to become cumulative, coherent, generalized and integrated (Baker 1992:27-28).

According to Shipman (1981:22-23) cited in Barker (1992:28) that:

Theories are essential ways in which social scientists make sense of their social world. They are attempts at a simplified model of that world. They are always influential because research, like any form of human interaction, is given meaning by those involved. All of us interpret our interactions with others to give them sense. Social scientists have accumulated a number of theoretical models of human behaviour. Each extends and simplifies available evidence. Conversely, these theoretical models will guide the selection of problems, procedures for collecting data, criteria for checking that the evidence is valid and ways of analyzing and presenting results. The social scientist is qualified within a discipline that provides such options for organizing models of the social world... being a functionalist or phenomenologist, behaviourist and so on, means that a specific system of organizing perceptions about the social world has been adopted.

Soyele (2007:60) quoted Baker (1992) that “attitudes have been found to relate to object categorized or discriminated

according to motives, value, personality and emotions". He stated further that "the attitude of an individual or society can determine language choice". The mentalist and behaviourist orientations have been identified by Agheyisi and Fishman (1970:131) as the two major theories of language attitude. The two types of language attitude theories are being examined in the sections that follow.

The Mentalist Theory

The mentalist orientation view presents attitudes as a "mental and neutral state of readiness which cannot be observed directly, but must be inferred from the subject's introspection". It is concerned with a factor which motivates an individual in learning a language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal. This theory is not without its shortcomings. One of the difficulties arising from this view-point according to Hohenthal (2003) is the question on how to determine the derivation data on attitudes and the way they can be quantified.

The mentalist perspective on attitudes is viewed as an internal, mental state which may give rise to certain forms of behaviour. It can be described as an intervening variable between a stimulus affecting a person and that person's response (Appel & Muysken, 1987:16; Fasold 1984:147). It is the study of mentalist perspective that is adopted in this study to examine the Urhobo students' attitude to the study of Urhobo language in Delta State tertiary institutions. The reason for adopting the mentalist view is based on the fact that most research work on language attitudes are based on this perspective (Appel & Muysen, 1987; Barker, 1992, Bosch & De-Klert, 1992; Cargile & Giles, 1998; El-Dash & Busnardo, 2001; Lawson & Sachder, 1997, 2000; Long, 1999; Mgbo-Elue, 1987, Moreau, 1990; Payne et al, 2000; Pieras, 2000; Thibault & Sankoff, 1999; Woolard & Gahng, 1990; Zhou, 1999; Gao & Zhou, 2000; Hoare, 2001; Hoare & Coveney, 2000; Hussein & El-Ali, 1989; Loratim-Uba, 1995, 2001, etc.) which provides interesting results that can be used to predict other behaviour.

The Behaviourist Theory

According to Soyele (2007:61), the behaviourist orientation explains language attitude from the view of overt and observable response to social situation. The early formulations of behaviourism were a reaction by the United State Psychologist John Watson (1924). The study of behaviourism requires introspect (thinking, imagery, emotions and feelings) that might be handed in terms of stimulus and response. The aim of behaviourism is to modify observable behaviour rather than thought and feelings. According to the behaviourist, attitudes are a dependent variable that can be statistically determined by observing actual behaviour in social situations (Hohenthal, 2003). Its shortcomings have to do with the question whether attitudes can be defined entirely in terms of observable data (Dittmar 1976:181).

Referring to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action those points to the importance of behavioural intentions and social norms as part of a systems approach, Barker (1992:20) noted that "attitudes towards a specific behaviour may be a better predictor of intention and external behaviour than attitude to an object, although in language attitudes, this is not always possible".

According to Fasold (1984:147-147) under the behaviourist perspective attitudes are to be found simply in the response people make to social situations. He further states that this viewpoint makes research easier to undertake since it requires no self reports or indirect inferences. It is only necessary to observe, tabulate and analyse overt behaviour. Ihemere (2006) concurs with Agheyisi and Fishman (1970:18) warning that attitudes of this sort would not be quite as interesting as they would be if they were defined mentalistically, because they cannot be used to predict other behaviour. Fasold (1984) argues that the more straightforward behaviourist approach, in which attitudes are just one kind of response to a stimulus certainly cannot be ruled out.

Presentation and Analysis of Data on Attitudes to the Study of Urhobo

The strongly agree and agree responses of students on their attitude to the study of Urhobo language in Delta State tertiary institutions

were regarded as positive declarations, while the strongly disagree and disagree responses were taken as negative declarations. Using five tables to analysis data we decided to correlate respondents' age, institutions, level/part, sex and their attitude to the study of Urhobo and programme in tertiary institutions.

Table 1 shows the responses of respondents on the factors that make students to study Urhobo in higher institutions.

Table 1

DELSU		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	18	36
Negative	7	14
Total	25	50
COEWA		
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	13	26
Negative	12	24
Total	25	50

In Table 1 of the responses of DELSU students from 100 to 400 levels were jointly interviewed on admission difficulty as a factor that makes students to study Urhobo in DELSU. 18 of the students in DELSU responded positively while 7 responded negatively. The situation is not too different in COEWA, as 13 respondents representing 26% responded positively while 12 representing 24% responded otherwise on admission as a factor that make students to study Urhobo in COEWA. Therefore, the findings shows that the attitudes towards the study of Urhobo in higher institutions emanated from failed attempt to get admitted into choice of courses rather than sheer interest to promote and advance the study of the language.

Out of the 18 positive respondents in DELSU, 15 were females while 3 are males. Of the 7 negative respondents 5 were

females while 2 are males. In the same vein, 8 out of the 13 positive COEWA respondents were females while 5 are males. Of the 12 negative responses, 9 were females while the other 3 are males. The above figures from DELSU and COEWA in terms of sex, shows that more female students study Urhobo than their male counterparts.

Table 2 shows the responses of DELSU and COEWA students on the employment opportunities for graduates of Urhobo.

Table 2

	DELSU	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	5	10
Negative	20	40
Total	25	50
	COEWA	
Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	8	16
Negative	17	34
Total	25	50

Table 2 shows the response of DELSU students from 100 to 400 levels and COEWA students from part 1 to 3 on the employment opportunities for graduates of Urhobo. In DELSU, 5 students responded positively, and 20 responded negatively. Of the 5 positive respondents 3 were males while 2 females. In the same vein, the 20 students that responded negatively, 2 were males, while 18 are females. From the 8 positive responses in COEWA, 3 were males while 5 females. Also, 15 of the negative respondents were females while the other 2 males.

Table 3 shows the responses of DELSU and COEWA students on the challenges facing students studying Urhobo.

Table 3

	DELSU	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	6	12
Negative	19	38
Total	25	50
	COEWA	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	10	20
Negative	20	30
Total	25	50

Table 3 shows the responses of DELSU and COEWA students on the challenges facing students studying Urhobo. In DELSU, 6 students responded positively while 19 disagreed. Of the 6 students that responded positively, 3 were males while 3 are females. On the other hand, of the 19 DELSU students that disagreed, 2 were male, while 17 are females. In COEWA, the statistics show that, of the 10 positive responses, only 2 were males, while the other 8 are females. On the other hand, of the 20 students that disagreed, 17 were females while 3 are males.

Table 4 shows the responses of DELSU and COAWA Students on the prestige attached to the study of Urhobo.

Table 4

	DELSU	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	10	20
Negative	15	30
Total	25	50
	COEWA	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)

Positive	12	24
Negative	13	26
Total	25	50

From Table 4 above, the response of DELSU and COEWA students on the prestige attached to the study of Urhobo are shown. Of the 25 students that responded to the question in DELSU, 10 representing 20% were of the opinion that there is prestige attached to the study of Urhobo while 15 representing 30% disagreed. 7 of the positive response were females while 3 are males. The statistics for the negative responses shows that 11 were females while 2 are males. In COEWA, 25 students from part one to part 3 were interviewed of which 10 responded positively, of this 10 that responded positively, 3 were males while 7 are females. Equally, 15 students responded negatively, out of which 6 were male and 9 are females.

Table 5 showing the responses of COEWA students from part 1 to part 3 and the attitudes of parents towards their children studying Urhobo language in tertiary institutions.

Table 5

	DELSU	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	11	16
Negative	14	34
Total	25	50
	COEWA	
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	14	28
Negative	16	32
Total	25	50

Table 5 above shows the response of DELSU and COEWA students on their parents' attitude towards the study of Urhobo in

tertiary institutions. Of the 25 DELSU students that filled in the questionnaires, 11 responded positively while the other 14 responded negatively. In terms of the respondents' sex, of the positive responses, 7 were females and 4 males. In the same vein, the statistics shows that, of the 14 negative responses, of the 13 were females and only 1 male. In COEWA, 14 students responded positively and out of these 14 students, 3 were males and 11 were females. In the same vein, 16 students responded negatively of which 3 were males and 13 are females respectively.

Discussion of Findings

The first findings revealed that the factor that make most students to study Urhobo in tertiary institutions (DELSU and COEWA) emanate from failed attempts to get admitted into choice courses rather than cheer interest to promote the language. As a result of this, the quality of most admitted students is relatively low because Urhobo was never considered by them in their initial quest for admission. Most students also lack the necessary interest in the language. This agrees with Adegbija (1994), who suggests that "people do not want to remain static in life. They want to move up the social ladder and be seen as achievers. They want to be associated with the language that is admired as one of the best because such a language is seen as an avenue to access certain goods and services". Hence, students seem to shy away from the study of Urhobo language in tertiary institution.

The second findings revealed that lack of employment opportunity for graduates of Urhobo make students to develop a poor attitude towards the study of the language in the tertiary institutions. Most students would like to move to other departments they considered more prestigious that would guarantee them job opportunities upon graduation. This implication poses serious threat to the leading and survival of the language at higher institutions. Such attitudes could also lead to language shift and dispel favourable interest to the study of the language. With the Nigerian economic situation today, no discipline can boast of one hundred percent assurance of securing job for her students upon graduation. Lack of job opportunities over the years has become a

national failure by the government to live up to her constitutional responsibilities.

Thirdly, this finding showed the challenges facing students studying Urhobo in tertiary institutions. It is generally agreed that students studying Urhobo in tertiary institutions are stigmatized. This is due to lack of prestige accorded the language and career opportunities of the Urhobo programme. This implies that those who study the language at higher institution lack self confidence and the necessary prestigious esteem the language ought to guarantee them. One could sense that the language is relegated to the background due to negative attitude attached to it. Another major challenge facing the study of Urhobo in tertiary institutions is lack of written materials in Urhobo. Most of the materials available for the programme are written in English. The implication is that, if nothing is done to reverse this trend, the Urhobo language will automatically be phased out of the higher institutions. The resolve by the Urhobo Studies Association to publish materials in Urhobo is in the right direction but their sincerity is called to question, now that there is nothing on ground to show for their five years of existence.

In the fourth finding, it was observed that there is little prestige attached to the study of Urhobo language in tertiary institution. This is as a result of negative attitude which arises when there are no favourable teachings towards the use of a language.

So far, the linguistic implication for the study of Urhobo in higher institutions is in dire need of positive attitudinal renaissance to steam the ugly tide of unfavourable attitude confronting the language at the moment in higher institutions of learning.

Finally, the fifth findings revealed the poor attitude of parents towards their children studying Urhobo language in tertiary institution. This is as a result of the nonchalant attitude of their children towards the speaking of the Urhobo language. Most parents feel the Urhobo language programme would not guarantee job opportunity for their wards.

Conclusion

This study was carried out to examine the concept of language attitude portrayed by students studying Urhobo language in tertiary institutions. The outcome of this work revealed the present situation of Urhobo language with insight to further study.

Many attitudinal factors are capable of influencing the behavior of people towards choosing to learn a particular language or not. In the course of this work, it was noticed from the study that it is the language that seeks to provide a change for a better life as this was noted by Adegbija (1994) that people tend to speak and associate with the language of high social and upwards mobility.

Therefore, we observed that Urhobo language as a course does not stand a better chance of surviving in the near future due to the following factors.

- (a) The Urhobo language programme is in a constant struggle with other courses such as English, Medicine, Economics, French, Law, etc. as seen from the data in which many students prefer other courses to Urhobo.
- (b) At the institutions, Urhobo language is taught as a course only in College of Education, Warri and Delta State University, Abraka.
- (c) The limited number of students with positive attitude to Urhobo language and the enormous challenges facing the programme are lack of adequate written materials and the slim hope of securing related employment upon graduation.

Having arrived at the conditions above we can rightly conclude that the study of Urhobo language at the tertiary institutions is in sharp decline since most students studying it portrays negative attitude to its growth.

Recommendations

It has been investigated and observed that the growth and decay of every language largely depends on the people's attitude. This is so

because one cannot from outside instill into a people the desire to maintain or revive their own language.

Students of languages whose functions include, committing the language into writing, (language planning and language development), are therefore responsible through their attitudes and choices for what happens to their indigenous languages or mother tongue.

We hereby recommend some measures to sustain the study of Urhobo language in tertiary institutions:

- (a) Writing and publishing of books in the language should be encouraged by the Delta State government, Stakeholders and Non Governmental Organisations by providing annual budgetary allocation for it.
- (b) Government agencies and Urhobo Non-Governmental Organisations should complement the efforts of Ukoko r'Emoto, DELSU and Urhobo Progress Union, America by awarding scholarships to deserving Urhobo students and they should create job opportunities for them upon graduation
- (c) Parents should encourage their children studying the language, and should as a matter of urgency speak the language to their children at home; the root cause of students negative disposition to the study of Urhobo language at higher institutions.
- (d) The students should strive to promote the language to ensure its growth and sustenance. They should join hands in building a language that can measure up with other developed languages such as Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa. The task is enormous but their positive disposition and total loyalty to the language is the only weapon needed to change the negative attitude.
- (e) Language maintenance is crucial to the survival of any language. Therefore, Urhobo language maintenance efforts should be geared towards the use of the entertainment resources such as videos and music; Audio/visual materials for reading and writing should be

produced enmass and sold at cheaper rate to all strata of the Urhobo people.

- (f) DELSU and COEWA should design a new curriculum and pedagogy that would cater for all aspects of the Urhobo language, literature, art, science, religion, technology, culture and biodiversity on areas yet to be covered in our institutions of higher learning.
- (g) Existing literatures in the language such as the Urhobo Bible and Dictionaries should be revised and published by the Delta State Government and Urhobo Non Governmental Organisations to measure up with the standard orthography in the language.

Works Cited

- Adebija, E. 1994. *Language attitude in Sub-Saharan Africa: A sociolinguistic overview*. Clevedon Avon: Multilingual Matters. www.languageinindia.com/march2005/languagevitality1.html
- Agheyisi, R. and Fishman, J.A. 1970. Language attitude studies: A brief survey of methodological approaches. *Anthropological Linguistics*. 12:131-57.
- Ajzen, I. 1988. *Attitude, personality and behaviour*. Keynes: Open University Press.
- Allport, G.W. 1935. Attitude. In C. Murchison (ed.) *Handbook of social psychology*. Worcester, Mass: Clark University Press.
- Apene, E. 2006. *The attitude of Urhobo speakers to Urhobo language*. Unpublished B.A. project. Abraka: Delta State University.
- Appel, R and Muysken, P. 1987. *Language contact and bilingualism*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Aziza, R. (2005). *ICT Globalisation and the future of Urhobo*. Effurun: Sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society. http://www.waado.org/Organizations/UHS/AnnualConferences/sixth/reports/guardian_urhobo_culture_language.html
- Baker, C. 1992. *Attitudes and language*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Bosch, B. and De-Klerk, V. 1996. *Language attitude and their implications for the teaching of English in the Eastern Cape*. Austerdam: John Benjamins.

- Cargile, A.C. and Giles, H. 1998. Understanding language attitudes: exploring listener affect and identity. *Language and Communications*.
- Darah, E.M. 2010. Attitude of students to the study of Urhobo in Delta State Tertiary Institutions. A Masters Dissertation. Ibadan: Department of Linguistics and African Languages Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan.
- El-Dash, L.G. and Busnardo, J. (2001). Brazilian Attitudes toward English: Dimensions of status and solidarity. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*. 11 (1), 57-74.
- Fasold, R. 1984. *The sociolinguistics of society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gao Y., Su, X. and Zhou, L. 2000. Pre-handover language attitude in Hong Kong, Beijing and Guangzhou. *Journal-of-Asian-Pacific Communication*, 10 (1), 135-153.
- Hoare, R. 2001. An integrative approach to language attitudes and identity in Brittany. *Journal of Socio-linguistics* 5 (1), 73-84.
- Hoare, R. and Coveney, A. 2000. The linguistic marking of identity among young people in Brittany. *Revue-Parole*.
- Hohenthal, A. 2003. Measurement techniques – What is a language Attitude?
- Hussein, R.F. and El-Ali, N. 1989. Subjective reactions of rural University students toward different varieties of Arabic. *Al-cArabiyya*.
- Ihemere, K.U. 2006. An integrated approach to the Study of language attitudes and change in Nigeria: The case of the Ikwere of Port Harcourt City in selected proceedings for the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics Olaoba Arasanyin and Michael Pembetan, (ed.) 194-207. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Iroratim-Uba, G.A. 1995. Attitude towards received pronunciation (RP) among Nigerian undergraduates. *Review of Applied Linguistics*.
- Iroratim-Uba G.A. 2001. Adapting data gathering methods to multilingual and multicultural Settings: An illustration with the Matched Guise in language attitude research in Nigeria. *Review of Applied Linguistics*.
- Kalu, U. (2005.) For dying language and culture, Urhobo find way out. Sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society. *The Guardian*. Monday October 31, 2005.
http://www.waado.org/Organizations/UHS/AnnualConferences/sixthreports/guardian_urhobo_culture_language.html

- Long, H. 1999. Language attitude and social mobility in Hong Kong. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 1 (117), 56-62.
- Mgbo-Elue, C.N. 1987. Social psychological and linguistic impediments to the acquisition of a second Nigeria language among Yoruba and Igbo. *Language of Language and Social Psychology* 6 (3-4), 309-317.
- Moreau, M.L. 1990. French, Wolof and Diola in Senegal: Which social identities? *Revue de Phonetique Appliquée*, 94, 41-42.
- Mowarin, Macaulay. 2005. Probate linguicide of Uvwie and strategies for maintenance of Urhobo Effurun. Sixth Annual Conference of Urhobo Historical Society.
http://www.waado.org/Organizations/UHS/AnnualConferences/sixth/reports/guardian_urhobo_culture_language.html
- Payne, K., Downing, J. and Fleming, J.C. 2000. Speaking Ebonics in a professional context. The role of Ethos/ source credibility and perceived sociability of the Speaker. *Journal of Technical Writing and communication*, 30 (4), 367-383.
- Pieras, F. 2000. Social dynamics of language contact in Palma de Mallorca: Attitude and phonological transfer. Unpublished dissertation. Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University.
- Shipman, M. 1981. *The limitation of social research* (2nd edition). London Longmans.
- Soyele, R.A. 2007. Attitude of Ogun State junior civil servants to the English language in relation to Yoruba. In Adeyanje Dele (ed.) *Sociolinguistics in the Nigeria context*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi University Press Ltd.
- Thibault, P. and Sankoff, G. 1999. Evaluation of the French of English speaking Montreal youths by their French speaking peers. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 56 (2), 245-281.
- Woolard, K.A. and Galing, T.J. 1990. Changing language policies and attitudes in Autonomous – Catalonia. *Language in Society*, 19, 231-330.
- Zhou, M. 1999. The official natural language and language attitudes of three ethnic groups in China. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 23 (2), 157-174.

Twenty-Eight



Urhobowood Home videos and the Poetics of Cultural Documentation

Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah

Introduction

Culture, in its effect, is the sum total of a society's endeavours, be they political, social, artistic, economic or moral. These are subject to change through the ages-as Ngugi has observed. Film then, has the dual role of reflecting and influencing the dominant culture of a given society (Shehu, 81).

From its inception, film has been a purveyor of the culture of a people. The medium portrays the philosophies, values, beliefs, essence and the cultural aesthetics of a people. In other words, the film of a people reflects the whole gamut of their existence. It encompasses their mode of dressing, their attitude and behavioural pattern, religious norms, political organizations which therefore make them distinctive from their neighbours. However, "culture is not merely a return to the customs of the past. It embodies the attitude as the future of their traditional values faced with the demand of modern technology which is an essential factor of development and progress" (CPN, 5). Film is that art which makes us see the past, feel the present and foresee the future.

In a nutshell, film is popular culture. Thus films such as *Shaka Zulu* (1986), *Oduduwa* (2009) *Invasion 1897* (2015) and a host of others are not only products of history, they are also an attempt at cultural documentation. Scholars such as Ekwuazi (1989), (1997), Adesanya (1997), Okome (1997), Haynes and Okome (1997), Larkin (1997), Johnson (1997), Ogundele (1997), Shaka (2003), Ogunleye (2003), and Oyewo (2003), Ayakoroma (2008), (2012) and (2014) have done a historical, theoretical study

of film cum home videos in Nigeria and a critical reading of film text, thus, creating a large framework and a pedestal for Nigerian cinema in particular and African cinema in the Diaspora. In the Nigerian repertoire, films in English expression and indigenous popular cinema have been the subject of discourse. These studies show that filmmakers such as Ola Balogun, Hubert Ogunde and a host of others are the pioneer filmmakers of popular expression. In other words they made films in the Yoruba language, set in Yoruba culture and these films explored the Yoruba cosmology. In the same vein, the aforementioned film scholars also traced the origin of indigenous popular cinema in Northern and Eastern Nigeria thus creating a larger theoretical framework for cinemas in these cultures. These studies are restricted to film in Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo, hence, indigenous Nigerian cinema is looked at in the context of the aforementioned cultures. However, with the democratization of the film art which was facilitated with the birth of home videos, other ethnic nationalities in Nigeria now produce video films in their languages, with a view to projecting and documenting the aesthetics of their unique culture. Consequently, this discourse examines Urhobowood the indigenous film industry of the Urhobo people.

Film in Nigeria: A Historical Discourse

The introduction of film in Nigeria is as a result of collaboration between Herbert Macaulay and the Balboa film exhibition company in Barcelona, Spain as Oladele (2009) puts it that “Nigeria’s first contact with cinema was in 1903. It was at this instance of Herbert Macaulay who invited the Balboa and Company who was then doing an exhibition tour of silent films on the West African coast to Nigeria. The films were shown at the Glover Memorial Hall, Lagos in August 1903 (www.history-and-development-of-nigerian.html).

Thus, the Captain Glover Memorial hall, Lagos, became the birth place of film exhibition in Nigeria. The success of the Balboa and Herbert Macaulay collaboration led to an incursion of the silent visual medium of communication by the Christian missionaries. The church saw it as a tool to propagate it religious

doctrine. However, there were signs of racism in these films as Okome (29) states that “The role of Simon Peter was played by a light skinned person while a black man played the role of the villain, Judas Iscariot”. The British Colonial masters capitalized on the universal appeal of the film medium and utilized it to establish its propaganda motif. This propaganda was to make Nigerians cum Africans believe that the white man culture was superior to that of the African. Consequently, films such as Edgar Wallace’s *Sanders of the River* (1935) and the *Tarzan* series were produced to project the superiority of the white man over the African. On the subject of film policy, Ekwuazi (2) submits that “the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was established in 1947”. With this film unit, film for propaganda was fully entrenched in Nigeria.

At the attainment of independence, filmmaking took a new direction. “Political agitation and the consequent announcement of self-rule in 1960 somewhat changed the pattern of filmmaking and distribution in Nigeria”. (Okome, 17). Thus, the Federal Film Unit (FFU) was established. One of the objective of the Federal Film Unit, was to decolonize the content of film in Nigeria. However, “the Federal Film Unit did not make any appreciable effort at creating an indigenous cinema; instead, it began the exhibition of the same colonial documentaries” (Mgbejume, 44). The Nigerian Film Unit could not replicate the same achievement attained by filmmakers such as the Senegalese Ousmane Sembene whose films such as *Xala*, *Ceddo*, and a host of others were an attempt at rewriting the history and culture of Africa by the African and from the African perspective.

However, two documentary films, notably *Bound for Lagos* (1962) and *Culture in Transition* (1963) were produced after independence by Nigerian film makers. But what could be called the first feature film in Nigeria was an adaptation of Wole Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest*, produced in 1970. This feature film was produced by Francis Oladele’s Calpenny production, and directed by Ossie Davies. With *Kongi’s Harvest*, the foundation stone has been laid for indigenous feature filmmaking in Nigeria.

Filmmakers of this period could be categorized in two classes, the filmmakers of English expression, who were trained in the art

of filmmaking and those of the popular culture or folkloric repertoire. Those in the first repertoire include Eddie Ugboma, Ola Balogun, Francis Oladele, Adamu Halilu, Sanya Dosunmu and a host of others. Though one of the objectives of the Federal Film unit was to decolonize the content and structure of film, the above trained filmmakers produced films which reflect the contemporary Nigerian society an attempt towards decolonizing film in Nigeria. Thus, Haynes (1997, p. 4) puts it that “Eddie Ugboma’s approach was to make movies influenced by American action or blaxploitation films”. The films were urban in setting and deal with crime or political violence; *The Rise and Fall of Dr. Oyenusi* (1976), *Bolus 80* (1982), *The Death of the Black President* (1983).

When the Yoruba travelling theatre pioneers saw the prospect of the financial reward in the film trade, the doyen of the Yoruba travelling theatre, Hubert Ogunde decided to delve into production of film, hence, a transition from travelling theatre to film art. On the production of films that reflect the culture of the traditional Nigerian societies, Bardi (45) states that “... Nigerian feature films later transcended into Nigerian folkloric films... and Hubert Ogunde produced films such as “*Aiye*”, “*Jaiyesmil* and —*Ayanmol*. These films were based on Yoruba folklore with themes, which include: witchcraft, poisoning, love stories, etc.” These filmmakers are the filmmakers in the second category.

These films were tradition oriented films, with ardent themes which replete the Nigerian cultural spheres. They were all on celluloid. Moses Olaiya Adejumo, also known as Baba Sala was not left out of the film pursuit. He allocated his farcical character on film with his production of *Orun Mooru*, directed by Ola Balogun. Consequently, Ola Balogun is also an indigenous filmmaker as he had previously produced *Ajani Ogun* (1976) in Yoruba language. *Aare* and *Mosebalatan* followed. Adeyemi Afolayan produced *Ija Ominira*, in 1979, directed by Ola Balogun. They were so occupied in filmmaking, that this new art soon became a threat to theatre on the stage. These folkloric films though full with the portrayal of magic, witchcraft, and other metaphysical elements boiled down to the sensibility of its audience as Adeoye (2012, p.45) avers that “... the theatre exists

primarily for a people and any attempt to insulate the theatre from the people will serve nobody". Thus film was able to fill that lacuna left by Eddie Ugboma and the filmmakers of the English expression.

The popularity of film in this era was short lived. Hence, "we could refer to the period 1970 to 1985 as the glorious years of the cinema industry in Nigeria" (Ayakoroma, 3). The late 1980s saw a different phase in the fortune of the medium as other factors, most notably the Structural Adjustment Programme which affected the economic sector and led to the devaluation of the naira, the rise in crime rate, the conversion of cinema houses to Pentecostal churches and the rise in television drama led to a depletion of film making in Nigeria (Ayakoroma, 37-38). This led to experimentation with the video camera with the productions of *Soso Meji* (1988), by Ade Ajiboye (Big Abass) and *Ekun* (1989) by Alade Aromire. Kenneth Nnebue, an Igbo business man produced *Ajeni Iya mi* (1989). The ardent determination of filmmakers to stay in the film trade, led to Kenneth Nnebue's production of an Igbo language home video, *Living in Bondage* (1992). This home video garnered the attention of the audience for two reasons. First, its being subtitled in English led to an understanding of the situations in the video, secondly, the thematic preoccupation which was the get rich quick syndrome, a prevalent issue in the Nigerian society. Without much ado, *Living in Bondage* could be termed the first Nigerian classic. With *Living in Bondage* (1992), Nollywood had begun.

In Northern Nigeria, the film art was slow in developing for various reasons as Johnson (99) puts it that "strangely enough, film has been very slow in taking off in the predominantly Hausa-speaking northern parts of Nigeria, especially in the video format... what account for this delay is not very clear". In other words, film culture was not enjoyed in the North due to the fact that Islam was anti pathetic to the arts especially the performing arts. Nevertheless, "during the colonial era, a couple of celluloid films have been made in Hausa, *Baban Larai*, *Shehu Umar* and *Kanta of Kebbi* ...Brendan Shehu, a director general of the Nigerian Film Corporation directed *Kulba na Barna* (1992) while

Saddiq Tafawa Balewa directed *Kasarmu Ce* (1991)” (Johnson, 1997, p.99). The aforementioned films were made on celluloid. Larkin (105) notes that “The birth of the video film format was in 1990 with the first Hausa language home video film, *Tirmin Danya* and it is recorded that between 1990 and 1997, the Kano-Kaduna axis produced some fifty video films”. Since then, numerous films have been produced in the Northern axis of Nigeria and Kannywood has come to stay. This film industry (Kannywood) has been able to project and document not only the culture of the Hausa people, but the Islamic religion as well. Laced with its musical aesthetic, “Hausa film industry makes up to 30% of the Nigerian film industry” (McCain, 1). Our study has shown that the celluloid and home video film media have portrayed and documented the cultural motif of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

With the democratization of the video medium, it has come to the fore that home videos are being made in other languages in Nigeria, and that these home videos are geared towards documenting these cultures. Thus, the evolution of Ijawwood of the Izon people, Efiwood of the Benin people, films in Tiv language, Idoma language amongst others. Among the emerging film woods is Urhobowood of the Urhobo people of the Niger Delta people of Nigeria. This study therefore examines the purpose, content and the thrust of film culture in Urhobo land.

A Historical Survey of Urhobowood

Video film productions in Urhobo land is an offspring of the Spartan theatre troupe. Orekereke (personal communication, December 26, 2014) states that “the Spartan theatre troupe began in 1987, and it was a live theatre troupe”. Orekereke’s assertion portends that like the Yoruba itinerant theatre, the Spartan theatre was a travelling theatre ensemble whose objective was to entertain, inform and educate the rural and the sub-urban populace in Urhobo land. The group toured the nook and cranny of Urhobo land. As an Urhobo theatre practitioner and home video producer, Orekereke reiterates that there was collaboration between the late comic actor, Jagua and the Spartan theatre troupe.

Video film production in Urhobo started with the film, *Vicissitude* (1998). This was six years after the production of Kenneth Nnebue's *Living in Bondage* (1992). From the foregoing, there was nothing such as the production of film on celluloid by Urhobo people. However, film exhibition was a recurrent affair in the 1970s and 1980s as Okome (1997, p.95) states: "I felt the same way about the cowboy films that mobile vans brought to my home town of Sapele". Okome reiterates that as early as this period, film exhibition had already begun in Urhobo land, specifically in Sapele an Urhobo town. Though it was with an English title the home video *Vicissitude* (1998) was well accepted by the audience because it was the first video film to incorporate the cultural mores and the language of the Urhobo people. Thus, with *Vicissitude*, Urhobo indigenous home video was born. The successful reception of this movie culminated into the production of *Okpemu* (1999), produced by Joseph Orekereke and directed by late Benedict Tenyo. *Okpemu* (1999) focuses on the implication of ill gotten wealth. Chief Odiete kills his best friend, Chief Okpubekun because he wants to acquire the money made in a business deal by the two of them, alone. In Urhobo cosmology, thievery and murder, are grievous offences and as such, looked at in contempt. Thus, the ghost of the murdered Chief (Okpubekun), haunts the murderer, until the killer (Chief Odiete) dies mysteriously. The thematic thrust of *Okpemu* (1999) which reflects the social materialistic ills of man made it a box office success.

Other movies such as *Akpomiemie*, *Oberhirin* and *Akpokona*, *Akpomedaye Dollar* followed. A domestic drama, done in Urhobo language, subtitled in English language, coupled with excellent acting and good special effects, *Akpokona* confirms the Urhobo belief in witchcraft and spiritism as Nabofa (429-430) posits that:

The popular belief is that witches form themselves into well organized secret cults and guilds. They convene their meetings in a special way... the spirit or Erhi of one of the members assigned that duty, transforms itself into this bird and flies over the area making the weird squeak thus summoning the members for the convocations which are usually held in secret places usually on top of trees at night.

The Urhobo people believe in the existence of some extraterrestrial beings, that could cause havoc to man. These extraterrestrial beings at the same time strengthen themselves on human flesh and blood. While sleeping at night, these beings transform themselves into birds and fly to the coven, either on a tree or another optional place where meetings are held. John Mbiti in *Anigala* (57), posits that “the whole psychic atmosphere of African village is filled with the belief in mystical powers”. There are instances when these witches and wizards use these mystical powers for positive impact in their lives and the lives of other people. It is on this positive implication that *Akpokona* is tilted.

Though the above video films were an eye opener into Urhobo cultural norms, mores, belief system, language, mode of dressing, religion and world view, the name Urhobowood was not in existence until 2009 when Joseph Orekereke, Benedict Tenyo and Justus Esiri, seeing the disperse nature of movie making in the Urhobo polity, decided to form a body, nay an umbrella that could improve on the quality of these movies. The prospective nature of the production of better movies could be a factor for the formation of Urhobowood video film industry but a greater factor was underneath, as Orekereke (personal interview, 2014) states that:

The Urhobo language and culture face an imminent danger of going into extinction. In fact in our cities today, both the language and the culture have become alien to many Urhobo families. The cultural identity of the Urhobo people is at the verge of being totally obliterated as a result of lack of appreciation, use and promotion by the Urhobos themselves.

Thus, Urhobowood was established on the ground of cultural portrayal and resuscitation, as well as cultural documentation. Urhobowood is therefore established basically for the service of culture and the society in general. Hence, this discourse is an investigation of how Urhobo video films have been able to reflect the Urhobo culture with a view to documenting this culture. For this study, two video films, *Okparigu* (2014) a Jorek multi-media production, and *Enaiso* (2014), a Recozee production video film are subjected to critical analysis.

Synopsis of Okparigu Kingdom

In *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014), a young man Oghenetejiri, desecrates the land by fishing in Otomudo river. Fishing in that river is forbidden because it harbours the village totem, a crocodile. After many months with no rain, the inhabitant consult *Oboh* (native doctor) also called *Ubiaro* (Eye) to tell the reason for the famine and pestilence in the community. *Oboh* says that the totemic crocodile has been killed and sacrifices have to be made to resuscitate him. *Ovie* (The King) tells the town crier to relay the message for everyone to convene at the palace. Everyone does and he tells them what *Oboh* had said. They all agree to carry out the sacrifice.

Synopsis of Enaiso

Enaiso (2014), set in an urban area, revolves around the eponymous character of Enaiso. He tells off Erute, his fiancé simply because she is educated and from a rich home and for that, he wouldn't be able to control her as a man ought to do. He marries Enamegwolo, a middle class lady whom Enaiso claims has elements of respect in her. Enamegwolo turns out to be the opposite of what Enaiso expects. She does not execute her domestic duties, let alone cook for her husband. She squanders his money and goes to the extent of committing adultery. Enaiso regrets ever marrying her. Enaiso's relatives who are aware of Enamegwolo's escapade pack her and her belongings out of Enaiso's house and Enaiso goes back to plead with Erute to come back home to him. Erute reunites with Enaiso.

The Poetics of Urhobo Culture in *Okparigu Kingdom* and *Enaiso*

These two video films uphold elements of the Urhobo culture which include *language, mode of dressing, belief system, proverbs* and other *cultural symbols*. The most distinctive aspect of the Urhobo culture like any other culture, is *language*. Language is a means of identification of the Urhobo people. It is the simplest way with which recognition is made. It is a means of communication.

Language could be verbal or non-verbal. If the cause for the objectification of Urhobowood is to yield any fruitful result, then a portrayal of the Urhobo language does not have to be done away with. The above home videos are done in Urhobo language. As a movie set in an urban area, *Enaiso*, is sometimes synthesized with English language due to the characterization of some of the characters as well as, to facilitate an understanding between the video film and non Urhobo spectators. In *Okparigu Kingdom*, when Enakemo's father calls her to confirm where Oghenetejiri went to in the second scene, Enakemo replies with the word *Papa*. Oghenetejiri replies with the same *Papa* when he returns as well. Though Father in the Urhobo language is *Oseh*, this video film incorporates *Papa*.

More explicit is the portrayal of the Urhobo dressing in video films. Urhobo attire is sex based. The choice of clothes depends on the occasion. Women tie some cloth around their waist and fasten it with a string called *Umuamua* with a blouse to cover the upper part of the body. It is also traditional for a woman to tie a kind of bead called *Ikpono* around her waist before wearing her wrapper thereby, increasing the size of their waist and buttocks as it enhances the beauty of the Urhobo woman. They wear necklaces, earrings and headgear as well. The men dress gorgeously when attending ceremonies. A long wrapper, called *Egburu* is tied with *Umuama* (string) to the waist and reaches the ankle while a long shirt is worn over the wrapper. A walking stick may be held with a hat to match. This type of dressing is portrayed in both movies. In the video film *Enaiso (2014)*, Enaiso, Obruche, Ejaita and Ejaiife return from the Urhobo progressive Union meeting and they are seen well dressed in the manner specified above with the exception of Ejaita who is dressed in the European manner. In the subsequent scene, Enaiso's mother enters well dressed in the same Cloth and dress. In the scene where Erute's father has a conversation with his friend, they wear a beautiful, wooden ring around their necks. It depicts that they are *Ilorogun* (Chiefs). Only chiefs are allowed to wear it with beads around their wrists. In *Okparigu Kingdom (2014)*, the King's attire is gorgeous, but he wears a crown made from beads. *Oboh's* attire is a reflection of who he really is. Pure

white and complete red clothes are generally worn by chief priests. The red colour signifies danger, death and blood while the white signifies purity. The white chalk on *Oboh's* body is a reflection of purity.

There is the belief in *totems* in Urhobo land. These totems include objects, natural phenomenon and animals such as *Usekpe* (snail), *Ushohore* (snake), *Edjere* (Crocodile), *Afioto* (Rabbit), etc. Otite (459) states that “totems are like flags or badges with which a group of people identify...” A people could have more than one totem. In *Okparigu* (2014), Oghenetejiri goes to fish in Otomudo river which harbours a totemic crocodile (the harbinger of rain) whose fishes must not be killed. This spurs the conflict in the movie. It is a taboo to carry out such an act. The penalty is a mysterious death for the executor for desecrating the land. However, Oghenetejiri hides under the umbrella of the church. It is believed that the crocodile in Otomudo river, like all other totemic objects in Urhobo land, protects the village and its inhabitants from danger. Out of fear, the father asks him to take the fishes back to the river. Based on his belief in the Christian religion to which Oghenetejiri belongs, and his church pastor's hyper critique of the belief in totemism, Oghenetejiri goes back to the river to fish the following day but this time, the mystical totem unleashes its fury on him, probably to act as a warning. He is fortunate to escape. Oghenetejiri's action does not only lead to sickness and the stoppage of rain, it also culminates into a catastrophic destruction of the ecosphere as crops and plants begin to wither. Appeasement has to be made. Sacrifices have to be carried out. *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014), objectifies the sacred nature of totems in the African cosmology and in the Urhobo polity in particular.

Proverbs are a way of mystifying issues of grave height in Urhobo society. Truths are hidden in the words. Those who talk in proverbs are considered wise. In other words, this is the language of elders. Achebe (5) states that “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten”. In the first native doctor's scene in *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014), the native doctor says that “a coffin does not go with good tidings No amount of love that a father has for his child will make him lay down his testicles for that child

to play with"...The moon is bigger than the penis". These sentences have original meanings underneath them. The most dominant and emphatic adage is made by the *Obohor* native doctor, *Ovie* and *Otota*. They reiterate that Otomudo, the crocodile who is the harbinger of rain has been killed. This reiteration is a mere axiom for desecration. *Ovie* even says that when a man finds it difficult to fart, the best thing he does is to widen his anus with his two hands. Thus, it is a mere play on semantics and semiotics. The people of Okparigu immediately decode the symbols sent to them.

The *monarchical* system of government is the type of government which is inherent in Urhobo land. There are various clans with their *Ivie* (Kings), assisted by their *Ilorogun* (Many Chiefs) or advisers. Otite (1972, p. 336) states that the *Ovie* (king) "is the highest political actor in the kingdom". *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014) reflects the Urhobo political system as it presents a king who tries to execute his kingly duties in an attempt to put an end to the epidemic in Okparigu. In order of hierarchy, he is followed by the *Otota* (Spokesman) who is an *Olorogun* (A Chief) himself, and the other chiefs with respective titles.

Okparigu Kingdom brings to the fore, the traditional African medium of mass communication. Before the emergence of modern mass communication media such as radio, television, film and new media, media of mass communications existed in Africa. The Igbo people made use of the gong while, the Yoruba people, the *Bata* and *gangan*, while the Urhobo people made use of the *Igede* (drum). *Okparigu* (2014) shows a town crier with an *Igede* (drum), relaying the message mandated him by the *Ovie* (king). With the help of this town crier, the king is able to summon all and sundry to his palace. This home video depicts the relevance of this communication medium in Urhobo land and how effective it is.

Marriage is a socio-communal institution in Urhobo land. The definition of marriage in Urhobo is different from the European's definition. The white man sees marriage as the union of a man and a woman to become husband and wife. However, traditional Urhobo societies see marriage as a union between two families, not just the man and the woman. Thus, a woman marries not just her

husband, but his family. In Urhobo society, a man is allowed to marry more than one wife. In *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014), Ovie has two wives. This symbolizes the high status, strength and power of a man. For a king to rule a kingdom, he has to prove his capability of ruling his family first. Wealth is measured by the number of wives and children one has. In *Enaiso* (2014), despite the formal education of the eponymous character, EnaisoTanure, he refuses to be dominated by a woman. His fiancée, Erute, tells him that she is about to order his (Enaiso) and his best man's suit from the United States of America. Enaiso feels so bad about this, because, he feels Erute is trying to usurp his manly duties. The woman in Urhobo society could be dictated for by her parents in her choice of husband. Ejaita, Enaiso's younger sister tells her mother about her boyfriend back in Canada:

EJAITA: Mum, he is quiet, handsome and from a rich background.
You will like him.

MOTHER: Children of nowadays! In our time, our parents gave us
to our husband. You will always grow up to love him in the
marriage.

EJAITA: Mother that was then. Now it is a different ball game.

MOTHER: That is the reason you have so many divorce cases these
days.

Ejaita's mother is a woman who believes man is a prisoner of his culture, and as such, should adhere to the tenets of his culture. She is a custodian of her culture. As an Urhobo woman, marriage transcends mere childish love. Though love is imperative for a marriage to succeed, certain factors have to be put into consideration as well. No matter the bond of love and intimacy between the couple, without the support and blessing of the parents of the bride and the groom, such a marriage is bound to fail.

The major theme in *Enaiso* (2014), is the that of marriage. Enaiso, the eponymous character in the home video proposes to marry Enamegwolo, the daughter of Ogbota despite her deviant character. He fends off all odds and even Obruche's advice on their insistence for him to send her packing, believing Enamegwolo will turn a new leaf. However, she commits adultery. In Urhobo land a

house wife committing adultery is the second most sacrilegious offence, after murder. Though a man sleeping with an unmarried woman besides his wife is not bound by this law, a woman who does this, incurs the wrath of the gods. When a man catches his wife in this act, he stops going to bed with her, and he must not eat food cooked by her, else, he may fall sick and die. Enamegwolo does not only commit this abominable act, she takes her partner in crime to her matrimonial home. She is sent packing by Enaiso's relatives. This act is frowned upon in contempt and if the marriage must continue, then propitiations have to be made, and sacrifices carried out to appease the gods.

The fluidity of the action in *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014) is not far-fetched from the belief and a conscious allegiance to the metaphysical as well as a divine supreme being. The action of Ose Rukevwe in *Okparigu* (2014) shows the Urhobo man as a respecter of his forebears. In the scene where he is called to salvage his daughter from further beating, Ose Rukevwe pours a little drink on the ground for the gods to drink. In the absence of fresh palm wine, the local gin could be used to rinse one's mouth early in the morning. It is the preoccupation of the Urhobo on Edewo (Work free days). Ose Rukevwe sits comfortably drinking when his attention is needed by Rukevwe's friend.

The glorification of traditional food is intrinsic in *Enaiso* (2014). Enaiso meets Obruche, his friend eating *Usi* (Starch) and *Oghwevwri* soup. He requests for *Amiedi Erinkpokpo* (Palm fruit soup prepared with fresh fish). These are among the numerous foods adored by Urhobo people, as Otite (464) states that "... *Ukodo, Oghwevwri, Irhiboto, Ovwovwo, Okpariku* and *Amiedi*. These foods among others are the major source of nourishments for the Urhobo man".

The manner in which respect is accorded by young ones to their elders, is the *Migwo* paradigm. It is the most recognized and widely known of the Urhobo language. A junior goes on his or her knees accompanied with the word, *Migwo* which means my knees are on the floor. Being a salutation, the senior replies, *Vredo*, meaning get up, thank you. In the Urhobo cosmology, according respect to elders is paramount. It is this *Migwo* factor that leads

Enaiso into the hands of the dreadful woman, Enamegwolor. However, modernism has led to a bastardization of the word, *Migwo*, that one could hardly find a girl or a boy go on their knees to say it. What is in vogue is, they say it while standing. This does not only connote disrespect, it also contrasts the word itself. Surprised at Enamegwolor's humble and gentle manner at kneeling, accompanied with the greeting, Enaiso immediately sees her as a respectful and a responsible girl who would be a good wife material and he decides to marry her despite Obruché's warning. He does not deduce the fact that outward appearance is not reality. Enite, Erute's younger brother, also accords the same respect to his father when he goes in to greet him. Aesthetics, the art of beauty in Urhobo cosmology is far from physical beauty. Virtue and good character are considered as the beautiful in most traditional African societies in general and in Urhobo in particular. *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014), a video film which depicts royalty, reflects the *Ajuwe* paradigm. A king is not only a custodian of the culture but he serves as a representative of the gods on earth. Thus, utmost respect has to be accorded him when he is greeted. The subjects place their left palm on their right elbow and bow in greeting. They sometimes go on their knees.

The zenith of the portrayal of cultural aesthetics in *Enaiso* (2014), is the veneration and the glorification of the Urhobo national anthem. When Enaiso, Obruché, Ejaita and her mother return from the meeting of the Urhobo Progress Union where Enaiso is made the President General of the youth wing of the association, they celebrate by singing the anthem. It is a song which cuts across the twenty four kingdoms of the Urhobo land. The movie projects the song in a well dignified way as they dance to its rhythm.

KoKoKo Ogbare Urhobo eh, Orere r'	Arise together, the time has come Ivies a-a Hail Urhobo distinct land of royal people
KoKoKo Ogbare Urhobo eh, Orere r'	Arise together, the time has come Ivies a-a Hail Urhobo distinct land of royal people
KoKoKo Ogbare	Arise together, the time has come

Urhobo eh, Orere r"	Ivies a-a Hail Urhobo distinct land of royal people
Obo r" Urhobo je vwena	The love I have for Urhobo
Aso „fa je vweotio ye-eh	Surpasses the love I have for any other place
Edefa me chakpo	When next I come to this world
Urhobo me wharhe	I will come as Urhobo
Urhobo eh, Orere r"	Ivies a-a Hail Urhobo distinct land of royal people
Anoma-a a.	No doubt about this assertion.

In the words of Otite (470), the Urhobo national anthem serves as an instrument for energizing Urhobo people and mobilizing their identity and consciousness as one ethnic group in Nigeria's plural society. From the foregoing, we state that *Enaiso* (2014) and *Okparigu Kingdom* (2014) have been able to portray, project and document the culture of the Urhobo people.

Conclusion

Many ethnic nationalities in Nigeria have discovered that video films are not just a potent medium with which entertainment, information and education are disseminated, but it has come to the fore that as popular culture, it is a medium with which the culture of a people could be marketed. In other words, film sells cultures. In this era that modernism now becomes a threat to African traditions, norms and culture, video films can play the vital role of reviving and documenting the traditional beliefs, philosophies and mores of the people. With the emergence of popular Yoruba home video films, Kannywood which projects the culture of the Hausa people, Igbowood which is the popular home video culture of the Igbo people, other minor ethnic groups in Nigeria such as Izon, Bini and Tiv have set up their own video film industries. It is on this ground that Urhobowood is established to stand as a body in projecting and archiving the culture of the Urhobo society. We recommend that film scholarship in Nigeria should encompass the study of popular culture, nay video films made in the minor nationalities in Nigeria.

Works Cited

- Adeoye, Abdul Rasheed. Aesthetics, dramaturgy and directorial poetics of Ayo Akinwale's theatre. In: A. Adeoye (Ed.), *The dramaturgy of a theatre sociologist: Festschrift in honour of Ayo Akinwale*. Ilorin: Department of the Performing Arts, Unilorin. 2012.
- Anigala, Austin. The mystical contest in J.P Clark's Ozidi. *International journal of current research in the humanities*. No. 1. 32-39 2008
- Ayakoroma, Barclays. Trends in the development of contemporary Nigerian video film industry. In: D. Oni and A. Yerima (Eds.), *Trends in the theory and practice of theatre in Nigeria*. Lagos: SONTA. 2008.
- Ekwuazi, Hyginus. Nollywood: Towards an agenda for sustainable development. *The Crab Journal of Theatre and Media Arts*, No. 2, Vol. (7): 100-119. 2011.
- Haynes, Jonathan. Nigerian cinema: Structural Adjustments. O. Okome and J. Haynes (Eds.) *Cinema and Social Change in West Africa*. Jos: Nigerian Film Corporation. 1997.
- Larkin, Brian. Hausa dramas and the rise of video culture in Nigeria. In: J. Haynes (Ed.), *Nigerian video films*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 1997.
- Mgbejume, Onyero. *Film in Nigeria*. Nairobi: African Council on Communication Education. 1989.
- Nabofa, Michael. Erhi and Escatology. In: O. Otite (Ed.), *The Urhobo people*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. 1982.
- Ogunleye, Foluke. Christian video film in Nigeria: Dramatic sermons through the silver screen. In: F. Ogunleye (Ed.), *African video film today*. Manzini: Academic Publishers. 2003.
- Okome, Onookome (1997). Cinema and social change in Nigeria: The political imperative In: O. Okome and J. Haynes (Eds.) *Cinema and social change in West Africa*. Jos: Nigerian Film Corporation. 1997
- Okome Onookome. The context of film production in Nigeria: The colonial heritage In: O. Okome and J. Haynes (Eds.) *Cinema and social change in West Africa*. Jos: Nigerian Film Corporation. 1997
- Okome, O. (1997). The character of popular indigenous cinema in Nigeria In: O. Okome and J. Haynes (Eds.) *Cinema and social change in West Africa*. Jos: Nigerian Film Corporation, pp.92-109.
- Otite, Onigu Urhobo Identity. In: O. Otite (Ed.), *The Urhobo People*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books. 1982.

- Oyewo, Gabriel. The Yoruba video film: Cinematic language and the socio-aesthetic ideal. In: F. Ogunleye (Ed.) *African video film today*. Manzini: Academic Publishers. 2003
- Orekereke, Joseph. *Urhobowood information handbook*. Ughelli: Jb crisp Publishers. 2013
- Shehu, B. Decolonization of the film industry: Role of policy. In: H. Ekwuazi and Y. Nasidi (Eds.), *No... not Hollywood: Essays & Speeches of Brendan Shehu*. Jos: Nigerian Film Corporation. 1992
- Shehu, B. (1992). The role of film/cinema in national development. In: H. Ekwuazi and Y. Nasidi (Eds.), *No... not Hollywood: Essays & Speeches of Brendan Shehu* (pp.77-87) Jos: Nigerian Film Corporation.

Interviews

Oral interview with Joseph Orekereke, Mayor, Urhobowood, Ughelli, 26th December, 2014.

Filmography

- Zuka, Larry. (2014). *Enaiso*. Featuring Joseph Okoro, Fred Ariko, Abigail Iriferi, Yvonne Yoma. Nigeria: Recozee Productions Limited.
- Orekereke, Joseph. (2014). *Okparigu*. Featuring Joseph Orekereke, Chris Warri, Josephine, Omorowa, Emurotu Edefe, Monouba Priscilia. Nigeria: Jorek Multimedia Production.

Twenty-Nine



Professional and Educational Theatre: Where is the Meeting Point?

Godfrey Oghuan Ebohon

Introduction

Theatre has always been a communal thing right from the early man where his existence was hinged on one form of celebration or the other. The pre-eminence, efficacy and functionality of these celebrated activities by humans are what have metamorphosed the arts of theatre into what it has developed into today. It belongs to the people and it has been with them in different contexts. Different aspects of humanity have seemed important and have, therefore, been stressed in theatrical presentations. However, Ebohon argues that it is “perhaps true that no universally accepted explanation of theatre exists, its nature and application can be suggested by examining its relationship to other human activities” (Pp. 222& 223).

Right from inception, the theatre has always been an important social institution that promotes unity, love and performs a remarkable service that brings about change in all ramifications. Theatre comprises of plural elements that combine to produce a theatrical whole. All of these elements are independent and are controlled by persons who form the uniting whole. The theatre production team may comprise of the director, actors, stage managers, scene designers, costumers, make-up artists, props manager and many others whose activities go into the making of a theatre event, even though some of them may be seen as silent. This chapter will focus on professional and educational theatres and show their point of convergence. Theatre is a very strong medium if properly applied as an agent of emancipation and

enlightenment of the people within a socio-political and economic milieu. This discipline has always been part of the tools for educating, creating awareness, entertaining, modifying of behaviour and changing of man since the beginning of time. It is therefore a key to human development whether it is professional or educational.

Educational Theatre

It is generally accepted that educational theatre is that theatre found in an educational institution. However, some scholars see the concept as going beyond just locating a theatre in an educational institution. As the name implies, it is also a process of imparting knowledge to the populace using the arts of the theatre. Over the years the theatre has appeared as a teacher teaching the populace all sorts of social, educational, economic and political behaviour. The limitation imposed on the range of educational theatre has exists primarily because there is a general misunderstanding of the scope, comprehensiveness, and educational potentials of this discipline. Educational theatre should not be considered only as a way of training students on the arts of the theatre or as a means for teaching other subjects, but rather it should be seen as a motor for integrating the individual into the society.

Educational theatre therefore, according to Fowowe and Adeleke “is any work of art, experience, demonstrated or performed either on stage or in classroom sitting under the supervision of the teachers and through the aid of pupils and actions, it conveys a message to an audience for purpose of education, entertainment and information” (p. 54). Educational theatre is not a new concept, it has always been an integral part of the society right from antiquity. Reasons in favour of using theatre as a pedagogical tool in teaching and learning include: It is fun and entertaining and, therefore, provides motivation to engage feelings; the discipline can provide a rich experience for both the teacher and the learner because it is inevitably learner-centred which can only operate through active participation and co-operation; educational theatre is a social activity and thus emphasizes the

social-communal concept as opposed to the purely individual teacher-centered aspect of learning.

In the Nigerian educational system, educational theatre can be used to serve as catalyst for curriculum integration which would provide integral learning experiences for children, youth and adults which can promote their deeper involvement in learning activities. We find in *The Republic* by Plato, Book II, a dialogue between Socrates and Adeimantus discussing ways through which their young heroes should be educated basically through the arts:

Socrates: Come then, and let us pass a leisure hour in story-telling, and our story shall be the education of our heroes.

Adeimantus: By all means.

Socrates: And what shall be that education? Can we find a better than the educational sort? – and this has two divisions, gymnastic for the body, and music for the soul.

Adeimantus: True.

Socrates: Shall we begin education with music and go onto gymnastic afterward?

Adeimantus: By all means.

Socrates: And when you speak of music do you talk about literature or not?

Adeimantus: I do.

Socrates: And literature may be either true or false?

Adeimantus: Yes.

Socrates: And the young should be trained in both kinds and we begin with the false?

Adeimantus: I do not understand your meaning.

Socrates: You know, I said, that we begin by telling children stories which though not wholly destitute of truth, are in the main fictions, and these stories are told them when they are not of an age to learn gymnastics.

Adeimantus: Very true.

Socrates: That way my meaning when I said we must teach music before gymnastics.

Adeimantus: Quite right.

Socrates: You know also that the beginning is the most important part of any work especially in the case of a young tender thing: for that is the time at which the character is being

formed and the desired impression is more readily taken
(Dukore, 1974:12 & 13).

From the quotation from *The Republic* above, it is clear that the theatre, which incorporates other arts, is a very strong medium that can help mould the minds of young learners before they grow into adulthood. Education does not stop with classroom instruction and handing down of bits of knowledge. Rather, it is something that involves the whole being which aims at achieving the transformation that comes through full awareness. Educational theatre is a creative process that aims at the development of all the potentialities of the individual, including his imagination, to make him aware of the society and culture around him without discrimination. Imagination is believed to have the ability to change reality. Consequently, if the young adult grows up to imagine a society governed by justice, in the future, these things will become reality. That is why Bond believes that educational theatre is an efficient way of changing the contemporary society. In his words, “the plays young people write, act and watch are blueprints of the world they will have to live in” (p. 91).

The value of educational theatre as an educational force goes beyond moral didacticism. The issue here is to fully grasp the educative nature. The fundamental concern here is the ability of educational theatre to push forward the frontiers of what we know, because its validity as an educational tool resides in the way it compels our involvement and the ability, through its forms, to display before us various facets of human nature, raising questions and helping us to make our decisions.

Anthony Jackson refers to educational theatre as the variety of theatre forms that have been deployed for explicit educational ends, many of which – but by no means all involves some active audience engagement: whether full scale in role participation or performance culminating in a workshop or debate, as commonly found in practices as diverse as theatre in education:.. (p.1).

Despite the worth of educational theatre in the society today, it still occupies an insignificant position in our world of cold science and hard facts. This widespread misunderstanding of the

scholastic nature of the theatre depends largely upon the inability of those who teach theatre to formulate an acceptable philosophy of educational theatre from which its basic objectives and goals can be derived and defined.

As long as theatre is employed for educational ends and for the purpose of enlightenment, such exercise should be considered as educational theatre. Thus there are impressive varieties of theatrical forms that can be associated with the genre of educational theatre. These include: theatre of the oppressed, theatre in education, theatre in health education, theatre for liberation, social theatre, gorilla theatre, theatre for development, museum theatre etc. The list is endless. Oscar Brockett says “the person who wishes to enter the educational theatre should have a sincere interest in teaching and be willing to spend much of his energy in preparing demonstrations, projects and lectures” (p. 541). He further stresses that “training for educational theatre probably should be broader in scope than for other types, for a good educational theatre educates students about the history of theatre, dramatic literature, and the theatre arts, and it produces plays representative of many periods and styles” (p. 541). Implied here is that educational theatre is a very serious business and as such, must be given all the attention it demands. Unlike in other genres of the theatre, achievement is measured in terms of developments attained, the problems mastered and the handicaps that are surmounted.

Professional Theatre

Theatre is said to be a platform for mirroring or reflecting life, exposing prevailing attitudes and beliefs and the age of a particular culture. Sometimes, theatre questions views while at other times, it reaffirms them. It is a projection of how we talk, think and live. It gives us the avenue to express those things we cannot easily find medium of expression for. Theatre as a consummate art, leaves us with opportunities to merge all other forms of arts into one desirable component and compact form. For the above to be achieved, there must be persons that are specially skilled and qualified through training, whether formal or informal, to bring

this to the general public. These persons adhere strictly to the rules, standards and arrangements governing whatever they are doing. An increasing number of colleges and universities now offer courses in theatre arts today in Nigeria. This development obviously has positive impact on the society as more properly trained and qualified hands would be available to drive the theatre as a profession.

Professional theatre is an avenue that provides employment for a would-be theatre graduate to start a career in the theatre profession. For an upcoming theatre professional he or she must be trained through any variety of educational theatre training open to him or her. This is Brockett's argument when he says that. "No amount of persistence and luck will keep an actor employed, however, if he does not have talent and skill" (p. 550). This argument by Brockett is correct because without the development of the raw talent, the personnel may not have the skill that will enable him or her last in the theatre profession.

The theatre should be seen as a business that must be nurtured to maturity and made viable. Thus students/practitioners need to be trained to acquire entrepreneurship mindset in order to understand the process of initiating and organizing productions just like any other good or service. They would appreciate the value of risk taking as it can be associated with the theatre profession. This will help to debunk another view also held by Brockett that "the majority of students who receive theatrical training in colleges do not enter the theatre after graduation" (p. 540).

Professional theatre can be roughly divided into two branches: the commercial and subsidized or not-for-profit theatre. In the contemporary society of today, commercial theatre in Nigeria does not receive money or grant from the Federal, State or Local Governments. Their activities are operated like any other private business, where its money/funding comes from the profit of previous productions and sometimes from those who want to invest in their programme for the purpose of making profit. While most not-for-profit or subsidized theatres receive their funding chiefly from Federal, State or Local Governments. They are not profit oriented, they operate mostly under Arts Councils as theatre

companies. They cannot make profit because even when tickets are sold for their productions, the price is usually very low. This makes them accessible to every segment of the society. The salaries of the workers and the artists are paid by the government. In addition to this, the conditions of the funding given include being a resource for their local communities as well as carrying out awareness campaigns and participating in government propaganda programmes.

Differences Between Commercial and Subsidized Theatre

This presentation will use a table to explore the differences that exist between the commercial and subsidized theatre.

Commercial theatre	Subsidized/not-for-profit theatre
Typically formed as a profit generating body. As soon as production is concluded the crew and cast are disbanded.	They are permanent staff with the Arts Councils of the Federal, State or Local Government as the case may be.
Profit are generated from box office sales. This is determined by the number of shows that run or productions embarked upon.	They perform mainly when there is an assignment by their employer. If tickets are sold it is not mainly for profit generation.
There is employment of well-known actors, designers or directors to encourage excellence in performance and strategies for profit maximization	They make do with the personnel they already have. Most times improvisational is the order of the day.
Profits in an organized society for investors are taxable and if there is a loss, investors take it with good faith.	Income in excess of costs which is called surplus is used to maintain the troupes and some is saved to be used for other productions. But in the case of Nigeria, the surplus is usually shared among troupe members.
Their activities are often planned as open-ended runs, playing for as long as ticket sales support it.	They are only out for awareness programmes, to bring the people closer to the government. Activities are funded with the grants from the government.

They only hire theatre space to produce their plays because in most cases they do not have their own.	Most government troupes have and maintain their own theatre space. Sometimes they move about with their productions.
---	--

The Points of Convergence

Professional and educational theatres are linked by the fact that they maintain a symbiotic relationship where one nurtures the other. Both are communication-oriented. Communication presupposes that there will be an audience. So their activities involve the transmission of information between the encoder (the teacher and the dramatist) and the decoder (which are the students and the audiences).

Both require a great level of imagination and creativity. This enables the teacher and the artist to produce worthwhile products. With creativity and imagination, the teacher imparts knowledge to the students of educational theatre, while through imagination and creativity, the artist through his creative ingenuity produces works that make meaning to the audience.

Professional and educational theatres have always been integral to the the society. It emanates from the society, derives its legitimacy from the society and reflects the society. Any disconnection from the community or society from which it comes makes it a nullity. Therefore, the theatre is an important part of human existence in all societies the world over. Over the ages, the theatre has been a veritable instrument for depicting human activities, achievements, foibles and ambitions. According to Matthew Umukoro, drama and theatre in education “continue to grow in influence and significance, performing the traditional function of information, entertainment and education, in addition to their effective use for political propaganda and ideological persuasion”(P. 115). The very essence is that the process is geared towards producing socially relevant individuals. Educational theatre forms the springboard for the training of sound individuals while professional theatre provides the avenue for professional practice, for further training and for the engagement of the larger society towards engendering a better society.

Within the broad concept of professional and educational theatres is a common thread that is aimed at improving the quality of human life. This ensures that individuals develop their abilities and form behaviours which are of positive or acceptable value to the society. They transmit culture or knowledge that ensures the growth of the society in the right direction as well as enable citizens to live reasonable lives through a more practical education that is relevant to the needs of the society in terms of creativity, skill acquisition and self-reliance.

The points of convergence between professional and educational theatres can also be seen in their mode of operation. This is reflected in the three domains of cognitive, affective and psychomotor and in their functionality in education that is geared towards all round development of the individual socially, mentally and intellectually by the introduction of some innovative concepts.

Virtually everyone in the professional and educational theatres is a specialist in his or her own field. Thus opportunities exist for employment as there is always the need to engage the right personnel for teaching and for productions, particularly as the theatre becomes more sophisticated and more technology driven by the day.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to look at professional and educational theatres and has investigated their quintessential roles in the society. In the course of the study, and in looking at their points of convergence, we have come to understand the place of theatre in shaping and advancing the course of smooth growth and steady development of the society.

Recommendations

After looking at professional and educational theatres at their points of convergence, the following recommendations are made which may help further investigation from different perspectives.

- Theatre should be seen and treated as a discipline that demands responsible commitment as it requires working

towards a creative goal. Practitioners should, therefore, develop qualities that will promote maturity, teamwork, cooperation and dependability.

- Educational theatre programmes should not be certificate based only. More emphasis should be placed on practical participation than is currently the case. In addition, intensive training that will lead to professionalization of specialized areas of the theatre should be pursued.
- Theatre should henceforth be seen as a business that must be nurtured to maturity and made viable. Students should be trained with entrepreneurship mindset in order to easily launch them into business upon graduation.
- Efforts should be made or taken by the government at all levels to stimulate the citizenry through theatre programmes to develop independent thinking habit and creativity which can assist the country in achieving development that can bring about the promotion of employment, peace and stability of the economy.

Works Cited

- Bond, Edward. *The Dramatic Child*. London: Methuen, 1997. Print.
- Brockett, Oscar G. *The theatre: An Introduction*. 2nd Edition .New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969. Print.
- Dukore, Bernard F. *Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski*. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974. Print.
- Ebohon, Oghuan G. “Theatre Arts as a form of Adult Education for promoting National Security and stability in Nigeria”. *Belt Journal of Education in Nigeria* vol. 3, No. 1, 2012 (221-226) Print.
- Fowowe, Sunday S. & Adeleke, Sunday (2007) “Drama: Sine Qua Non for Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools”. Adedina Femi, Anigala Enuma, Adeniyi Bimbo and Ezekiel Bolaji (eds) *Theatre and Nigerian schools: A book of readings*. Ibadan: Joytal Printing Press. Print.
- Jackson, Anthony. *Theatre, Education and the Making of Meanings, Art or Instrument?* Manchester: Manchester University press, 2007. Print.

Umukoro, Matthew M. *Drama & Theatre in Nigerian Schools: A Blue Print of Educational Drama & Theatre*. Ibadan: Caltop publications (Nigeria) Limited, 2002. Print.

Thirty



Publicity in Educational Theatre: Social Media Use as a Novel Approach

Eseovwe Emakunu and Seigha Jammy Guanah

Introduction

The audience is an integral as well as a very important part of every theatre performance. Theatrical performances without an audience are devoid of a very vital ingredient that completes the whole process. In traditional African theatre, the audience are not just there to watch the performance, they form part of the performance, and so are very important to the theatrical process.

The didactic and entertainment value of the theatre is only truly evaluated with the presence of an audience, as it is the audience that are educated and entertained by the performance. Every theatrical performance strives to entertain and to teach, and unless it is recorded for later viewing via films, aired live, or recorded for later airing on television or listening on radio stations, those objectives that the theatrical performance wants to achieve must be watched by an audience.

For this singular reason, it is very important for the theatre manager to carry out effective publicity to get audience for the theatrical performance. Publicity is the act of bringing a product or service to public consciousness, in a bid to get the public to patronise such product and/or service.

Publicity, in its simplest form, according to Laura Lake, “is the means of conveying information to the general public through the media. The information being publicized could be news, awareness about a product and service, etc. It is the process of creating awareness of new products and services.” Theatre productions fall in the product divide of the publicity mix. Each

theatre production, as long as it is a new production, is a new product that an audience has not benefited from, and so the value may be lost on the audience. This is why publicity must be carried out to inform the potential audience of the value added production and appeal to their emotions to be in attendance.

Just like every product and service has a targeted audience, so does every theatre product have a targeted audience. Laura Lake opined that “depending on the type of product or service being publicized, certain categories of people may be the target audience.” Theatre productions must identify their target audience for them to carry out effective publicity. For example, if the theatre production is basically a children’s theatre and geared towards teaching morals to children, children should be the focus of the publicity; in this case the publicity stunt of the business manager should not be adolescents but children.

Publicity is precise and concise, straight to the point and unambiguous, so that the message will not be lost. And in a world where time is of essence, the quicker people get the message of the publicised products or services, the more efficient and effective we would say the publicity was. It is at this point that the social media come in; the social media being forms of electronic communication through which users can create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (Merriam-Webster).

The social media can be effective means through which the audience can be reached and invited to be part of educational theatre performances. With the help of mobile phones, social media have brought about a total change and shift in the way individuals and organisations communicate the world over.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is hinged on the *media richness theory*. According to Daft and Lengel, this theory shares some characteristics with social presence theory. It posits that the amount of information communicated differs with respect to a medium’s richness.

The theory assumes that resolving ambiguity and reducing uncertainty are the main goals of communication. Because commu

nication media differ in the rate of understanding they can achieve in a specific time (with “rich” media carrying more information), they are not all capable of resolving uncertainty and ambiguity well. The more restricted the medium’s capacity, the less uncertainty and equivocality it is able to manage. It follows that the richness of the media, for instance the social media, should be matched to the task so as to prevent over simplification or complication.

According to Hemsley and Mason, the aspects of social media that make them important and accessible tools in development communication are their easy access through mobile phones, mass-personal communication and mass-self communication; however, the twosome note that social media platforms have many factors that militate against the receipt of novel ideas, high degree of connectedness, linkability and content sharing.” This theory is quite appropriate for this study because the social media are „rich” and adequately equipped to effectively reach out to the target audience of the educational theatre with publicity information about performances that are to take place. In addition, the social media can avail those who are not physically present at the venue of the performance to be part of it through live streaming and other means. This buttresses the assertion of Michelle Chmielewski (in Cohen), that social media are not about what each one of us does or says, but about what we do or say together, worldwide, to communicate in all directions at any time by any possible digital means.

Educational Theatre

Just like the professional theatre carries out publicity, so should theatres in educational institutions carry out publicity. It is very important to note that these two types of theatre, even though they do the same thing, like churning out play productions, their objectives are different. While the professional theatre is mainly profit oriented, the educational theatre is mainly for the training of would-be professional theatre performers. The term *performers* is used because the theatre encompasses the actor, musicians/singers

and dancers. Although these arts are distinct in their own right, they are, as has been the case in most times, a combined art form.

The productions and performances in a professional theatre are strictly to entertain the attending audience. Although the educational theatre also entertains, it is more of a medium that educates the students who are part of the performance and the audience, on the arts of the theatre. The publicity campaigns of both the educational theatre and the professional or commercial theatre are not the same. This is because they work with different budgets. While the educational theatre's budget is mainly funded by the participating students in Nigeria, the professional theatre is funded mainly by sponsors. Thus, as Erling Kildarh observed:

At the outset I wish to make clear that I realize educational theatres cannot afford to employ full-time publicity experts, and that we cannot compete on equal monetary terms with commercial theatre, motion pictures, radio or television. Nevertheless, I am convinced that educational theatre, including its professional groups and associations, must compete more intelligently and imaginatively with these media for the consumer's time, interest, and entertainment dollar (306).

It is widely known that, since the theatres in educational institutions are domiciled in the campus of the institutions, their primary audience are members of the institution's community made up of students, academic staff and non-academic staff. Although this has its advantages publicity wise, as it allows the publicity to be focussed on a particular microcosm of the town where the institution is, and it helps the production to spend less for publicity, however it limits the scope of people who would have attended, enjoyed and learned from the theatre performance. For this reason, it is now important for production publicity of educational theatre to look outside the box and widen its scope of audience, and conduct publicity that targets more potential theatre goers, and are sustainable within the limitations of the budget.

Publicity in Educational Theatre

While it is good to have a ready market share that is interested in buying your product and make use of your services, it is better and

much more profitable if you are able to penetrate new market and win over skeptics. This increases your market share and your profit base. Every product wants to penetrate new markets and increase their market share. According to Paul Bloom and Philip Kotler, “capturing a dominant share of a market is likely to mean enjoying the highest profits of any of the companies serving that market. It can also mean winning the leadership, power, and glory that go with such dominance.” This can be applicable in the theatre where frantic and conscious efforts must be made to invite people to attend and witness performances.

Although educational theatre is a not-for-profit theatre, and is not actually competing with any other theatre for market shares, it is still important that it increases its audience participation, as it seeks to educate and entertain more people. The narrow-minded publicity of only publicising a production within the school community is that, most of the time, you only get to reach out to those who are already interested. So, you will keep on having the same set of people coming to watch the theatre shows. Erling K. Kildarh observed this fact when he stated that “it is obvious, however, that more often than not we are reaching people who: are already interested; our publicity is not doing much pioneering. We find ourselves talking to each other, like party members at a political rally; few of the opposition or the apathetic are persuaded.”

This publicity, which is not more than posting a banner at the theatre and probably other strategic places, words of mouth from students to their fellow students, and also lecturers urging the classes they are lecturing to attend the production, which some students do because of fear of failure, and with some jingles here and there, does not change the composition of the would-be audience.

Novel Approach to Publicity in Educational Theatre

With the above in mind, it is pertinent to change the approach to publicity in educational theatre. This change in approach encompasses both the scope of audience and also the media of publicity. This will not in any way compromise the objectives of

the educational theatre, which is mainly to groom potential professional theatre performers.

Publicity can go beyond the convention prism in educational theatre to a more innovative and 21st century prism. This period of time that we are in calls for innovations to engage in financially sustainable and effective publicity.

As earlier stated, it is important to evangelize the people outside the academic community and get them interested in theatre productions and eventually make them regular theatre goers. This means that publicity in educational theatre should not focus on the academic community only, but also the immediate community outside the location of the academic institution.

Educational theatres do not also give equal entertainment as other theatres or forms of entertainment that are outside the school community; the entertainment also comes in a cheaper rate than what is obtainable outside. The education theatre provides a cheaper alternative, and this can really be a selling point to potential audience outside the academic community. But the publicity drive of the educational theatre must take a new and modern turn. And here is the real deal of this paper.

Social Media Publicity

Recent publicity drives of organisations worldwide have employed the use of social media. Every known brand in the world not only has a presence on the internet, they also have lots of social media platforms they are taking advantage of to expand the reach of their brand to new frontiers. Today, the Internet is part of our daily life and for most people they can not do without the internet. Any individual, organisation, institution, parastatal who really wants to reach out to the world must have a presence on the internet. Christian Fuchs accentuated this fact when he stated that:

The Internet is ubiquitous in everyday life. On the Internet, we search for information, plan trips, read newspapers, articles, communicate with others by making use of email, instant messaging, chat rooms, Internet phone, discussion boards, mailing lists, video conferencing; we listen to music and radio, watch

videos, order or purchase by auction different goods, write our own blogs, and contribute to the blogs of others...(5).

The Internet opens us to a lot of opportunities to connect with people world-wide. Since the Internet became available to the general public in August 1991, its potentials have been limitless and organizations, institutions and individuals have taken advantage of it. According to Dave Evans, “the World Wide Web – described by Sir Tim Berners-Lee as an interactive sea of shared knowledge...made of the things we and our friends have seen, heard, believe or have figured out – has dramatically accelerated the shift to consumer-driven markets” (xviii). Continuing, he said that “the Social Web dramatically levels the playing field by making information plentiful, just as it also levels businesses and organizations that operate on the principles of making information scarce” (xviii). With so much shared knowledge going on in different platforms.

Today, the Internet is the hotbed of information. With the click of a button, you are open to a whole lot of information. Although, we all recognize that the Internet has not been all too clean, as it has been used by people for the wrong reasons, but its positive impact on the world is enormous. Through the Internet information sharing from one end of the world to another has been made possible. As such, this more widespread sharing has exposed information more broadly. Information that previously was available to only a selected or privileged class of individuals is now open to all (Dave Evans, 5).

With advancement in technology, Virtual meetings, interviews, and the likes have been held, regardless of how far apart the people involved are, through the Internet. The advent of the Internet revolutionised so many things in the world.

Today, media in settings, the Internet is called “the new media”, as it has served as a veritable alternative to relaying news contents just like the traditional media; television, radio, newspaper and magazine. The traditional media were, before the advent of the Internet, the news centre of the world; they have been serving as a means to advertise and publicise issues. Today, nearly all recognised traditional media in the world have a presence on

the Internet. It will be an aberration if they are not even on the Internet, because the Internet is now the fastest medium to transmit information and news today.

Although there are various media on the Internet, the Social media are by far the most popular. Social media platforms, according to Jamie Turner, include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, Houseparty, Hi5, Periscope, SnapChat, MySpace, Yahoo, Pinterest, Hootsuite, Scribd, SlideShare, Reddit, Bing, Delicious, Flickr, Skype and their likes. To Andres and Woodard, social media refer to Internet-based digital tools for sharing and discussing information among people. Social media are user generated information, opinion, video, audio, and multimedia that is shared and discussed over digital networks. In summary, according to Suchiradipta and Saravanan, social media are web based tools of electronic communication that allow users to interact, create, share, retrieve, and exchange information and ideas in any form (text, pictures, video, etc.) that can be discussed upon, archived, and used by anyone in virtual communities and networks.

These platforms have billions of people in them, with Facebook having more than two billion active accounts. This presents the opportunity to get across to billions of people with any information that you want to, sometimes at no cost at all. With these social media platforms, what is today known as social media marketing is thriving. According to the SEOP Social Media Consulting Team:

Social media is online content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies. At its most basic sense, social media is a shift in how people discover, read and share news, information and content. It's a fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologues (one to many) into dialogues (many to many) and is the democratization of information, transforming people from content readers into publishers. Social media has become extremely popular because it allows people to connect in the online world to form relationships for personal, political and business use (4).

Social Media Marketing makes use of social media sites to raise visibility on the Internet and to promote products and services. Social media sites are useful for building social (and business) networks, and for exchanging ideas and knowledge. The social media visibility is key to engaging and connecting with customers and end users of the products and services. Through social media marketing, one is not only trying to get end users to patronise him/her, but is building a community of people with shared value, taste, thoughts and desires. This makes the interaction process mostly seamless as it retains one's customer base, which also has the likelihood to increase, as the social interaction continues.

With the social media, customer reviews are instantaneous as they are able to share their experiences with the products and services they've enjoyed on the platforms one created, or on their own platforms. These shared experiences are testament of the value-added services and products they have enjoyed will act as referrals to other potential customers that are not within the market share of the products and services and this will broaden the market base of such products and services.

Educational Theatre and Social Media Publicity

With the intention of gaining more audience for its performances, educational theatre in Nigeria can engage the use of social media to market and publicise its productions. Social media campaign will not only engage more people, both students, teaching and non-teaching staff in the academic community, but it will also reach out to inhabitants of the community the school is located. Institutionalising the process is the very key to its sustainability.

The Institutionalised Approach

One of the ways to ensure a long lasting and era-to-era sustainability of a venture is to institutionalise the said venture, and make the process revolve around an institution instead of individual drive. This has been one of the banes of our development as a country, where our policies are driven by

individuals and present governmental administration of the day. This challenge has hampered continuity of policies and general lack of direction, as every incoming government runs its own programmes and policies, and most times, they are in opposition to what was the norm before they came into power. This has had an adverse effect on our institutions and stunted our growth.

But if policies are institutionalised and run with set down objectives that are sustained by successive governments, and tweaked by the same institutional process from time to time, so as to align with present day realities, our development as a nation built on strong institutions instead of strong individuals will be sustainable.

Institutionalising social media publicity is not a one way street. There are processes that must be taken for the desired end, which is to do an out of the box publicity. The first process is to establish the office of the Business Manager, who will be in charge of the educational theatre. He oversees all the goings around of the theatre, that is, the performances, rehearsal schedules of the various classes so that there will be no clashes, making sure the theatre paraphernalia are intact and always ready for performances. Each session of all the performances that will take place in the theatre must be communicated to the business manager. With this, the business manager will have foreknowledge of the performances and work closely with the class through the directors and stage managers of each production.

Since the new publicity is going to focus on social media, it would be very important for the department to have social media accounts on the different platforms on the Internet. These platforms which will be operated by designated person among the non-teaching staff, in conjunction with the business manager, as the purpose of the accounts is mainly for the publicity of performances that will be holding in the theatre. With the social media accounts operated by a non-teaching staff of the department, and supervised by the business manager who is a teaching staff, and with this being part of the running of the department, it will be institutionalised and will become part of the yearly plan of the department.

With these social media accounts, social media publicity will be carried out to publicise the performances that will be taking place in each semester. The dates of the productions will already be known through the semester and session schedules of the institution. Normally, productions, which are part of examination, always come at the end of the semester. So, early social media campaign and publicity can kick off as soon as the performances that will hold in the semester have been communicated to the business manager. This will be done every semester, and be made a tradition by the department.

Publicity contents should be developed, and a campaign strategy should be outlined. For example, the targeted audience should be ascertained and in this case, they are the potential theatre goers in the specific academic community and within the immediate community the institution is located. Then, the social media platforms for the campaign should be established, and that should be done with the mind that the targeted audience are on the chosen platform(s). In this part of the world, more people are on Facebook than on any other social media platforms. And Facebook has the advantage of having a designated demographic and geographic target for sponsored publicity campaigns. After this is sorted out, the publicity content should be developed. The contents could include pictures and video of rehearsals, graphically designed posters, short clips of the directors and actors talking about the performances, and outlining the things to expect for those who will be seeing the performances. The contents should be periodically changed, to add variety to the publicity campaign.

Financing the publicity campaign, which is relatively cheap, especially on Facebook, would be from the budget of each class performing and not necessarily from the budget of the department. Each class putting up a performance will include the social media publicity campaign funds in their budget, and should communicate it to the business manager through the stage manager of the production.

Benefits of Using the Social Media for Publicity

Apart from increased audience that will be witnessing the performances of the educational theatre, there are other benefits

that this process will engender, and the educational theatre will enjoy; they include:

1. Increase visibility of the department: The Department of Theatre/Performing Arts will gain visibility among members of the immediate community, and they will get to know the department for what it is.
2. Acceptability: The department will gain more acceptability among members of the community.
3. Impact Creation: Through the performances, the educational theatre will have a direct impact on members of its audience from within and outside the university community, entertaining and educating them at the same time.
4. More Gate Takings: With more audience members there will be more gate takings which will go a long way in financing some little projects in the theatre to make it more performance and audience-friendly.
5. Arousal of Interest: This singular act will resurrect the dead theatre-going culture among the people of the academic institution and immediate community. The social media publicity campaign will build up this interest as the engagement with the potential theatre goers continues. And with a relatively cheap gate pass, cost will not be a mitigating factor.

Respondents' Views on Social Media Use for Publicity

To appreciate the role the social media can be put into in educational theatre, in-depth interviews were carried out to find out what respondents, from within and outside the campus of University of Benin, Ekehaun Campus, think about: Would social media publicity be viable alternatives to the current publicity done by educational theatre? What is the effectiveness or otherwise of social media publicity campaigns in getting members of the community outside the university to attend performances? Would they want social media publicity to be institutionalized in the educational theatre and be made part of its process, and do they

think students will key into the usage of the social media more than the current mode of publicity in educational theatre? among other questions.

When asked to express their views on the current publicity style of educational theatre, and how effective the current state of publicity of educational theatre is; majority of the respondents described the current publicity style of educational theatre as poor and inadequate, as it involves only the posting of banners and blast, which are limited to the academic community. They are of the opinion that the present style of publicity is ineffective, and that much more practical approaches should be introduced.

When asked if they think the social media will be veritable outlets of increasing the audience members of educational theatre from within and outside the academic community during performances, a large percentage of the respondents are of the opinion that the social media are not just viable alternatives, but rather the most potent for now, and therefore should be inculcated as major publicity techniques. One of the respondents, Dele Akinloye, corroborates this assertion by saying that, “of course students will key into their usage to spread educational theatre information, as 65% of social media users are students.”

Majority also agree that the social media would be very effective in enhancing the awareness of educational theatre since individuals can access any information they desire since anyone who controls the media has a vital tool in his hands. This is more so because many people have a lot of friends and families on their social media pages which could in turn help to pass across the information about educational theatre performances that are billed to take place.

Responding to the question of whether the present publicity efforts are adequate Chinwe Mentee said, “I don't think educational theatres publicise enough. Most times, publicity is limited to banners and public blasts, with little or no attention given to Internet publicity, the current publicity state of educational theatre is poor, it is about 25%.” Jennifer Terekeme says the current publicity style of educational theatre is just basic and quite limiting, “it's not entirely effective.” Using Ekehuan

campus of the University of Benin as a case study, Jennifer says, “Plays usually get a full house only when compulsion is applied on the students to attend. There’s a lackadaisical and unappreciative attitude towards banners and posters.” This shows that Plays are welcome only when the actors are familiar and when staying off the campus for a while has been boring.

What can be deduced from the foregoing responses is that the current state on publicity style of educational theatre is still conventional and traditional in style because it emphasises more on hard copy poster or banner designs. To a certain extent this has been effective in reaching an enclosed audience where the publicity is visible. But since the educational theatre performances are not meant to be for just the educational community, the society at large should be welcomed to learn from the theatre and its improvement by students on research.

The social media publicity, though viable and important, are definitely not to replace the present styles of publicity, but rather they are to compliment them. Most Nigerians are tech savvy, and are connected on one social medium or the other; which means that it will be a very good way to reach wide audience especially outside the education community in a short time; this will allow for a better and wider reach with less cost, stress and time.

Therefore social media publicity should be institutionalised in educational theatre because the world is now digital that it is very difficult to reach people easily except via digital means, and the theatre should also adopt such media to explore its reach to a larger audience.

Conclusion

The educational theatre needs a new approach to publicity. It needs to broaden its horizon and think out of the box in its approach to publicising its performances. With the social media, this can be achieved in a sustainable way. While it is important to note that a poor social media publicity campaign will yield negative result, the campaign must be meticulously planned. The department will be better for it and the theatre going culture that is comatose will be

revived if the social media are properly used for publicity of the educational theatre.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby made:

1. A publicity unit should be opened in theatre arts departments.
2. The departments should have visibility across social media platforms.
3. There should be a business manager of the theatre in an educational theatre. He or she should be teaching staff.
4. An Internet-savvy non-teaching staff should be in charge of operating the social media accounts of the department. He should work with the business manager and the stage managers of the productions to carry out the social media campaign.
5. The students should be carried along. They should be encouraged to share, comment, and like the campaign contents to enable it go viral and reach more people.
6. The social media campaign must be well planned as advocated above.

Works Cited

- Andres, Dustin & Woodard, Josh. Social media handbook for agricultural development practitioners. USAID and FHI 360, 2013.
- Cohen, Heidi. 30 social media definitions. Retrieved from <http://heidicohen.com/social-media-definition/>, 2011. Accessed on 9th November, 2017.
- Daft, Richard & Lengel, Robert. Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design, In *Management Science*, 32(5):554-571. 1986.
- Dave, Evans. *Social Media Marketing: The New Generation of Business Engagement*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2010.
- Fuchs, Christian . *Internet and Society. Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge Research in Information Technology and Society, 2008.

- Erling, K. Kirdarh. Educational Theatre Publicity. In Educational Theatre Journal, Vol. 9, No. 4. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1957.
- Hemsley, Jeff & Mason, Robert. Knowledge and Knowledge Management in the Social Media Age, Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce, 23(1- 2):138-167, 2013.
- Jamie, Turner. Top 57 Social Media Platforms Everyone Should Know. Retrieved 26th October, 2017.
<http://60secondmarketer.com/blog/2010/04/09/top-52-social-media-platforms-2/>
- Laura, Lake. Publicity and Why is it Important. Retrieved 24th October, 2017. <https://www.thebalance.com/what-is-publicity-2295550>.
- Merriam-Webster (2015) Social media. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/social-media/>, 2015. Accessed on October 5, 2017.
- Paul, Bloom & Philip, Kotler. Strategies of High Market Share Companies. Retrieved 24th October, 2017.
<https://hbr.org/1975/11/strategies-for-high-market-share-companies>
- SOEP Media Consulting Team. Social Media Marketing: Validated, Time-Tested Way of Growing Your Business. Retrieved 26th October, 2017. <http://socialmediamarketing.com/eBook.pdf>.
- Suchiradipta, Bhattacharjee. & Saravanan, Raj. Social media: Shaping the future of agricultural extension and advisory services, GFRAS interest group on ICT4RAS discussion paper, GFRAS: Lindau, Switzerland, 2016.

Thirty-One



Traditional Music Theatre in Contemporary Contexts: Perspectives From Aniocha Igbo of Nigeria

Josephine Mokwunyei

Introduction

In African societies, musical idioms exist within contexts that sustain particular modes of interaction. Drama is one of the basic modes through which significant levels of cultural meaning are communicated in such contexts. Accordingly, musical performances tend to have a theatrical orientation which is why among the Aniocha Igbo, the term *egwu* meaning play is used to describe performances of music and dance.

As has been observed in African music traditions, a performance does not merely occur as something incidental. It is the primary focus of organized music-making which goes beyond the physical act of producing sounds by instrumental and vocal means to the generation of attitude and moods that lead to interaction of music-makers and audience.

The prevailing state of theatre in Nigeria reveals two main categories, namely traditional and contemporary. While traditional includes all forms of ritual defined generally as verbal or visual expression of cultural values (*Sofola*), contemporary forms include social and literary drama. On the other hand, social drama includes agitprop and popular travelling theatres while literary drama refers to the contemporary drama in written tradition studied and propagated mainly by university intellectuals.

Ritual/ Literary Drama

Although ritual contains the basic features of dramatic art, it differs from drama in the sense that it is a group re-enactment of a past experience for a specific purpose of spiritual atonement and or renewal of faith in the worth of man in life, while drama on the other hand is an artistic creation, a concept which centers around the artistic vision of a single dramatist. However, drama and ritual are related because the former emerges from the latter. As a source material, ritual provides the artist with the myths, belief systems, philosophies, mytho-poetic images and concepts required for an artistic realization of human experience (Sofola). Thus as a mould, the traditional ritual serves as “a living cosmos in which existence is seen as a chain of interrelationships with a centre that holds” (Sofola 316).

While the social drama of Nigeria has warmed its way to the hearts of the audience judging by their popularity, the experimental literary drama is yet to adequately attain such a status because it failed to grasp the essence of African performance which in the real sense is a confluence of ideas from one cultural frame to the other, resulting in the integration of traditional and contemporary theatre in a creative process. The solution lies in critical investigation of our traditional performance culture.

Nomenclature

In Aniocha Igbo culture, the term *egwu*, encompasses most of its performance art culture. *Egwu* denotes play, drama, music or dance as separate entities or together as an integrated art where **play** means entertainment, recreation, pass-time or more specifically an action geared towards fun, amusement, relaxation or and enjoyment. It could be a game, a representation of a real life situation or a dramatic enactment; where **music** means the resultant product of instrumental music making, with or without a vocal compliment; and where **dance** means the kinetic reaction to rhythm emanating from organized sound or musical accompaniment. It is important here to note that *egwu* does not include song as a separate entity except as part of the *egwu* (music)

situation which integrates singing and instrumentation to generate a dance stimulus.

There is a separate word **abu** for song, when it exists by itself. However, most types of *egwu* when not purely instrumental have their repertoire of songs. Single instrumental situations are also not covered by the term *egwu*. Such solo instrumentation is referred to specifically by the name of the instrument being played such as *ufie* for (giant gong) music and *agogo* for bell music. *Egwu* is therefore used in reference to an integrated artistic performance medium which includes the act of instrumentation, singing, dancing, as well as dramatization as a means of interaction among the performers and between the performers and the audience. The other complimentary objects such as costume, props and even the instruments are referred to as *ife-egwu* meaning *egwu* implements or literally things for *egwu*. *Egwu* therefore translates as performance or theatrical presentation. This chapter is guided by the above outlined scope of *egwu* as music\theatre genre as follows.

***Egwu* Situation as Total Theatre**

An *egwu* situation could be defined as a total theatre situation encompassing as its major components; music, dance and play. It assumes the presence of musical instruments/props and participants which include the performers, singers, instrumentalists, dancers and the audience; music making and interaction in a designated location, for a communal purpose. *Egwu* normally takes place in some suitable location that avails appropriate and adequate space for performers and audience, depending on the occasion and context of performance. The occasion which determines the size of the audience also determines the choice of location and setting. This could be a courtyard, a grove, the front of a homestead, a shrine, the palace ceremonial grounds or even the street in the case of processional performances.

Centrality of music

Since music is a dominant aspect of the social lives of the Aniocha Igbo, music making constitutes an important agenda at social and

ceremonial occasions. The choice of music, however, depends on the context of the performance. Therefore in order to deal with issues arising from the presentation of traditional theatre materials in contemporary contexts, it is pertinent to examine the traditional contexts in which they originally occur. Accordingly, the various contexts in which *egwu* features, could be grouped into three broad categories: **Occasional**, **Recreational** and **Incidental contexts**.

Occasional Contexts

Occasional contexts include performances linked with rites and ceremonies such as; celebrations of life cycle (birth, marriage and death), ceremonies and festivals of installation, ceremonies of occasional groups such as hunters organizations and activities of cult groups.

The typical *Aniocha Igbo* expresses extreme joy by dancing, which usually starts with rhythmic hand clapping and lip smacking, dramatization, followed by dancing. Thus, as soon as the good news of a new born baby is announced, the grandmother or any other close female relative, claps a few beats of danceable rhythm while gesticulating and proceeding with a short dance motif while she smacks her lips to an imaginary gong rhythm sometimes with interjections of an appropriate song such as; —*Nei nu nwa-o, nwa nwa nwa!* meaning “behold a child, child child”. The *Aniocha Igbo* traditional marriage features joyful songs accompanied by dance. This happens while escorting the bride along with her dowry which includes a box full of clothes, cooking utensils and other household items, to her new home by the *ikpoho idumu* (married women from the brides homestead). This is done in a procession while singing to the rhythm of stylized foot-stamp-steps, as choreographed by tradition.

Certain musical types are performed when a man is initiated into manhood, in a ceremony known as *ichimmo*. Before the ceremony the uninitiated is known as *ikolo* (youth) but after the *ichimmo* is performed, the *ikolo* attains the title of *ikpala* (titled man) with all its attendant privileges, such as the right to be heard at the meetings of elders and exclusion from community sanitation and manual labour duties. The musical type associated with

initiation and title taking includes *ukpukpe*; a processional war dance depicting youth and vigour by the *ikolo* and a slower tempo *egwu ndi eze* a ceremonial royal dance signifying a more mature, elegant and graceful leadership status to which the initiate is being heralded.

The Aniocha Igbo bury their dead by performing various traditional rites accompanied by music. The *okwa akpele* (solo virtuoso gourd trumpeter) plays his instrument to calm the living by enriching their vital force and to assure at death, a new birth through resurrection. Other types of music associated with burial rites and ceremonies include dramatized dirges, marches, laments and poetic praise songs. The poetic renditions which are performed in recitative form are known as *ngigo* or *mkpukpo*.

In the early hours of the morning following a death, the bereaved relatives pass on the sad news from house to house around the homestead in groups of three or more, processing and singing to hand claps and regular footsteps. This is performed as an enactment of a “musico-dramatic” search for the dead relative by the bereaved family. The purpose is well reflected in the song text and the enactment in itself is one of the traditional *Aniocha Igbo* ways of paying one’s last respects to a dead relative.

Recreational Contexts

Recreational contexts feature all forms of performances not ritual or ceremonially bound, but with entertainment as the main objective. These types of performances occur at festivals, social and ceremonial occasion not as part of, but preceding, accompanying or following the actual programmes of events. These are *egwu ohiho* (named after the way the ensemble is formed: by selection) a contemporary membership social dance group and *idegbe ani* (named after the type of female class of indigenes who originated the dance. Thus *idegbe ani* which started as an exclusive amusement of the *idegbe* women has developed into the main music/dance type of the Aniocha Igbo with an almost equal male membership.

Any indigene would normally belong to one or more of these social groups, depending on his/her interest, ability and versatility.

Participation in various associations is considered a worthwhile investment, since they perform at a member's funeral, a child's wedding or other important ceremonies in which a member is involved, thus adding to the conviviality and grandeur of such occasions. A member can also arrange for his guild to play at the funeral of a relative, if as is the case with some associations, performances are not restricted to the rites of members only (Nicholls 70).

Incidental Contexts

Incidental contexts constitute performance types that are contingent upon, associated with or accompany other social activities of neither ritual nor ceremonial nature. These include; folk-tale songs that accompany folk tales, game songs that accompany games, work songs that accompany various forms of domestic chores or manual labour and cradle songs which are associated with child raising activities.

The import of this study is that these activities which are aspects of normal Aniocha Igbo living or that of any other culture, could be infused or integrated in contemporary performances as a simulation of real life in the traditional music theatre situation with due regard to how the accompanying music and other elements are fused in the making of a composite artistic genre.

Egwu in Contemporary Contexts: Theoretical Issues

The use and function of music and dance in contemporary African performance is of dramaturgical importance because apart from verbal dialogue they are the two other means of communication in African culture. The solo singer attempts to articulate the motor beat or controlled responses to the energy flow of the music or dramatize the verbal text. The instrumentalists interact amongst themselves for accurate integration, unity/harmony of parts through eye and body gestures. In addition, messages are sent through surrogate instruments such as drums and the *Akpele* which play recognizable tunes, calling for specific behaviour by instrumentalists or dancers. This interaction also takes place

between the other instrumentalists and the dancers and between the performers and the audience.

African music encourages spontaneous interaction but purposeful interaction depends on the impact of the prevailing music and dance. The interaction and participation that take place during musical performances are associated with various levels of cultural meaning. This is usually matched with the right choice of music appropriately applied. An awareness of these as practiced by indigenes with local knowledge imbibed from the culture is of paramount importance to the contemporary theatre director in order to reflect correct indigenous perception of cultural modalities.

Although this infers an assumption of fixed meaning based on local culture, but meaning can change when contexts change. However the artistic structure (derived from the particular tradition) which characterizes a particular set of presentations even when the contexts change is sustained. This structure depends largely on the tradition for as Nketia 1982 puts it,

... the cultivation of music depends on oral tradition and performers' memory of repertoire, codes and procedures, emphasis is given to short forms rather than extended or developmental forms, to repetition and sectional structures, improved variations and substitutions and the use of forms based on cumulative structures.

In order to maintain authenticity and for identity to be retained, the contemporary producer or choreographer must have a grasp of the tradition from which the resource materials originate. This knowledge facilitates the choice of setting, casting, costume, props, music/dance and accompaniment to match the repertory codes.

The contemporary setting could be an open space, a stadium, a hall or even a proper stage for, as has been noted, one of the most important characteristics of play is its spatial separation from ordinary life. A closed space is marked out for it, either materially or ideally, hedged off from the everyday surroundings. Inside this space the play proceeds, inside it the rules obtain (Huizinga, 1976).

All that is required therefore is the space even with little or no stage setting and simple necessary props earlier defined as *ife egwu*.

Contemporary Details: From Ritual to Theatre

Until recently *egwu* was an indigenous art form locally performed by persons indigenous to the community with the native participant audience in a traditional everyday setting for the renewal of musical experience and interaction occasioned by it. The disintegration of the traditional social systems and the consequent displacement and exodus of members of the society to more industrialized and developed cities, in search of modern standards of living, has caused the exportation of *egwu* from its original setting. This exportation, invariably resulting in creative transformations, is not without consequent implications and questions on what happens when traditional materials are presented in modern contemporary contexts.

One major difference between a traditional music situation and a contemporary performance is the context and one of the advantages of traditional music theatre in contemporary contexts is the fact that these hitherto exclusive experiences and practices can now be shared with a wider audience. Since it is viewed primarily for the purpose of aesthetic pleasure and satisfaction rather than in fulfillment of social ethics, emphasis is laid on the artistic dimension and the subsequent development of the material as fine art.

A change from traditional to contemporary context which implies a change from real life enactment to acting and make belief involving a transformation of ritual technique into entertainment and an invention of characters who act out real life and ritual as fictional events, necessitates a change in choice and modification of materials. These modifications in production are in consideration of the fact that the native audience is replaced with a foreign, alienated audience at a distance, who unlike the native audience would not spontaneously express their feelings about an ongoing experience by clapping when they are pleased, spraying money on the performers as a sign of appreciation or stepping into

the ring to dance when they are motivated. As is expected, the contemporary audience on the other hand would watch in controlled observation and only reserve their “cultured” appreciation to the very end of the performance.

While music in the traditional setting is a means of communal expression, in the contemporary contexts the performance merely simulates the act without the ritual intention. For instance when libation is poured or kola-nut broken in Aniocha ritual, the content of the verbal incantation is real: the prayers recited by the elder and chorused by the others are meant for the real ancestors of those participants present. There are stock phrases to which new texts may be added or substituted to reflect the particular context of a situation as follows.

Stock phrases for incantations

(A)

Ka aho ofuu me'nyi ofuma-- Ise
Ife anyi choko, anyi g'afua --Ise
Maka nif'onye cho k'ofu--Ise

Translation

May the New Year do us good --Amen
 May we find what we are seeking--Amen
 Because what you seek is what you get, Amen

(B)

Nwata g'adi Ise
Anyi g'adizikwa----- Ise
Chukwu wehe nwa g'eweh'ife wa ji g'azua—Ise

Translation

The child shall live ----- Amen
 We shall also live-----Amen
 God who gave the child will provide for its upkeep ----- Amen

(C)

Uno bu olokoto.....Ise
Ofu ofu uno eju.....Ise

Ak'ene ah'ene anyi ezuzikwe ga gu nwa afa -----Ise
Boji si puha ga 'nochi.....Ise

Translation

The home be blessed-----Amen
One after the other the house fills up with children -- Amen
Next year we shall meet to name another child --- Amen

These prayers inherent in the preceding incantations are believed to work, since the ancestors are traditionally expected to answer prayers and grant requests in keeping with the Aniocha Igbo world view. In contemporary practice, the same contextual materials could be used in contemporary performances where similar contexts have been chosen by the director, this time with neither real intentions/expectations nor consequent effect.

One of the advantages of traditional music theatre in contemporary contexts is the fact that these hitherto rare cultural experiences/practices, formally exclusive preserve of the owners of the particular culture can now be shared with a wider audience.

When traditional materials are transferred to the contemporary stage or arena, certain modifications should be effected to take care of the dramaturgical issues that arise. In transforming the original material from tradition to performance, real life to acting, the ability of the producer to utilize the still vital theatrical vocabulary of the culture is put to test. First, is the separation from ordinary life on to a closed space clearly marked out from everyday surroundings within which a new set of rules obtain. (Huizinga). Secondly, the context becomes important in the choice of relevant materials for presentation. Thirdly, emphasis is laid on the artistic dimension to ensure that materials presented are primarily aesthetically satisfying and capable of entertainment.

Although most contemporary creative artists: playwrights, dramatists, choreographers, musicians derive their themes and content from indigenous culture, most of them tend to neglect the associated vital artistic elements which cannot be meaningfully separated from its practice as well as the issues that surround it in its social and cultural contexts needed to complement the total

impression of a creative piece of art work. This prevailing situation is probably attributable to the fact that there has been no systematic analysis on which the application of such procedures may be based. This is also why there appears to be a lull in the development of a truly African theatre that is truly reflective of the African experience. The confluence that results from moving ideas from one cultural frame to the other should ensure that what is being contributed from the African experience is not overlooked.

Summary and Conclusion

Although music is often described as a universal phenomenon, non-the-less every culture has a way of describing or talking about their music. According to the Aniocha Igbo world view, music is an integrative art which usually does not separates music from whatever extra-musical content there may be. The Implication of Aniocha Igbo Concept of Music is *egwu* which translates as Theatre.

Among the Aniocha Igbo, the organization and presentation of music is characterized by a dramatic orientation and so it is not enough to listen to music, it is more important to see the music (in performance) because apart from the spectacle it provides, there are various levels of tradition and cultural interaction which manifest and are transmitted during these presentations.

To highlight those elements that characterize *egwu* as a music theatre genre this chapter goes beyond the question of how the music sounds to examine the generative processes within the performance context and discuss relevant theoretical, practical and contextual issues by analyzing the Aniocha Igbo concept of music and the implication of *egwu* as theatre. This chapter also examined the issues that arise when traditional music theatre is presented in contemporary contexts or used as a creative resource.

Note

Idegbe ani: *Idegbe* is an Aniocha Igbo terminology for women who are not given out in marriage but left in their fathers homes to keep the family name alive by bearing children in their fathers"

name. This is legitimately entrenched in the tradition as the real fathers remain anonymous, *ani* meaning land.

Works Cited

- Huizinga, Johan. "Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon." Schechner, Richard and Schuman, May (eds). *Ritual, Play and Performance*. New York: The Seabury Press, 1976. (46-66). Print.
- Nicholls, Robert W. "Igede Funeral Masquerades". *African Arts*. UCLA: XV11/3. 1984. Print.
- Nketia, "The Play Concept in African Music". *Laura Boulton Lectures*. Tempe, Arizona: Hurd Museum, 1974. Print.
- Nketia, *The Music of Africa*. New York: WW. Norton and Company, 1979. Print.
- Nketia, J. H. Kwabena. "Makings of Music" *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 4. 1982. (639-656). Print.
- Sofola, J. A. *African Culture and the African Personality: What Makes an African Person African*. Ibadan: African Resources Publishers Co., 1972. Print.

Thirty-Two



A Study on Trauma Aesthetics in Mahmood Ali-Balogun's *Tango With Me*

Lauretta Nkiruka Ike

Introduction

Trauma is an emotional, depressing and distressing experience. It leaves functional irregularities and developmental problems in its victims. Unpleasant events occur at one time or the other in people's lives, which when recalled, painful memories. The concept of trauma is a broad phenomenon; but basically it causes stress in the individual's brain that leads to the shutting down of normal emotional responses, and furthermore triggers danger on the internal and external human psyche. The experience as a whole redefines perception of life generally.

Traumatic events that occur in an unpredictable fashion are quite damaging to its victims. Various kinds of traumatic events abound; hence, the disparity in its definition. The plurality of trauma studies spans across multiple disciplines ranging from history, cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, psychology and so on. The discourse is profoundly captured in the theory of trauma by scholars of varying interests. The Holocaust of World War II is significantly the precursor of studies in trauma (www.encyclopaedia.com/topic/trauma.aspx).

In his seminal study on trauma theory, Balaev (149) asserts that "trauma creates a speechless fright that divides or destroys identity". This serves as the basis for a larger argument that suggests that a traumatized identity is formed by the intergenerational transmission of trauma. One cannot easily think of an acquired expertise to render traumatic experiences thinkable, readable and speakable. In fact, "the wholeness, purity, and

propriety of this subject have been built on the very particular ways it has always-already been gendered, sexed, and, of course, raced” (Stephens, 3). One thing trauma is known for, is that it is individualized, however, its occurrence could be collective.

Trauma theory is a fundamental shift in thinking from the former belief that those who have experienced psychological trauma are either sick or deficient in moral character. The traumatized victims validate crucial feelings of fear and helplessness without necessarily overwhelming *the self*. Emotionally challenging is our world today. The global media of communication (such as CNN, BBC, Aljazeera, CCTV and others), are stemmed with news cum stories of traumatic events. In the light of the above, Leys Ruth in Giang (4) states that, “trauma is originally a term for surgical wound, conceived on the model of a rupture of the skin or protective envelope of the body resulting in catastrophic global reaction in the entire organism”. In furtherance of the above statement, Stevens (1) articulates that:

Notions of class, race, gender and sex have all been central to the formation of popular ideas about whose sensibilities can be disturbed by near death experiences, whose civility can be upset by the horrific, and who can be overwhelmed by fear; who, in short, can be traumatized.

The above assertion points to experiences that hold sway in individuals irrespective of their gender, race, and culture. For instance, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, caused widespread shock, depression and devastation that the event was a defining tragedy in many lives. The attacks were immediately seen as dispelling the luxury of security in which many Americans had enjoyed. In reality, it cannot be denied that it was one of the most traumatic events of contemporary period in the United States of America.

In a broader perspective, trauma is an intensive experience that creates fear, diminishes self-confidence and disrupts the standard with which one evaluates the society. It is that crisis in an individual that causes a dislocation in one’s identity. Traumatic events are often not within the victims’ control. Thus, “desiring to

control external events sets us up for anxiety, frustration and misery” (Allen, 46).

The incorporation of trauma aesthetics into film and media studies is as a result of the influence of psychoanalytically informed film theory, through the relationship of complex historical events. Thus, Beja (52) notes that, “films surround us every day of our lives and can hardly be avoided in modern society. As a result, they are tremendously important forces in our culture”. But as scholarly vibrancy evolved, interdisciplinary studies developed between psychology and the humanities. In the works of scholars such as Caruth (1996), Tal (2004), Antze and Lambé (1997), Elm (2014), Kabalek and Kohne (2014), we see a representation of trauma through literature, film, cinema, photography and others. Other scholars in trauma studies such as Felman and Laub (1992), La Capra (1996), Herman (1999) and Leys (2000), with their theoretical and clinical analysis of trauma have shed light on contemporary psychic understanding of individual pain and that of the society at large.

Using the literary investigative approach, and content analysis method, this paper examines how trauma patients recuperate from traumatic experiences. It is an examination of trauma aesthetics in Mahmood Ali-Balogun’s *Tango With Me*.

Conceptual Clarification and Literature Review

The development of trauma studies and „trauma theory” in particular can be traced to its first appearance in Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). The theory’s seminal origin stems from her interpretation and elaboration of Sigmund Freud’s deliberations on traumatic experiences. Charcot, a French physician, who first discovered that hysteria, which could be as a result of violence, rape or sexual abuse in women, was not physiological but a psychological experience in nature proved this theory through his presentation of live demonstrations. He posits that “traumatic state arose from unbearable experiences thereby trying out a repeated recall as a way out of their symptoms” (John, Theodore & Sandra, 6). It is significant that Freud’s development

of his ideas about trauma was only prompted by what happened to soldiers in World War 1.

In the same vein, Leys (19-20), notes that Freud cemented the idea of psychic trauma, the trauma of sexual assault, his „seduction theory“; claiming that he followed Charcot in attributing traumatic hysteria to being psychological. Freud is also a founding figure in the history of the conceptualization of trauma, based on his postulations on “traumatic neurosis”. The American Psychiatric Association in 1980 officially acknowledged his view and termed it as “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)”. The Holocaust and other collective historical traumas, specifically the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder from symptoms of Vietnam War veterans are all events that contributed in theorising trauma.

In addition, Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot who worked on dissociative phenomena and traumatic memories, investigated the influence of patients“ traumatic experiences on personality development and behaviour. He recognised that “patients“ intense affects were reactive to their perceptions of the traumatic events that happened to them, and he found that through re-exposure to the traumatic memories, patients“ symptoms could be alleviated” (Howell, 9).

In Kaplan“s *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, the author questions why there shouldn“t be substantial analysis that criticizes the actions of the United States on the attacks of 9/11. Actions that seemed less possible for the leaders to rise to the occasion rather than lapsing into isolationist, or revenge attacks, and yet welcome public discussions about trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, vicarious traumatization, and ways to help those suffering these disorders. She says that:

Already, doctors understand that whether a person experiencing a distressing effect of fright, shame or psychical pain depends on the particular sensitivity of the person – something even now not sufficiently recognised. In addition, they hint at the belatedness of the onset of the symptoms, attributing this to the fact that traumatic memories are not available to the patient to the

way his commonplace ones are, but act as a kind of foreign body in the psyche (26).

Interestingly, Kaplan believes that Freud and his peers did not set out to write a theory of trauma. She notes that their writings merely explain processes in hysteria rather than a concept that has to be theorized. Her writings on this, namely, *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, and *Why War?* deal with man's binary for love and hate. She further argues that, "in drawing meaning from personal experiences and communicating what happens to others, there is a need to examine the artistic, literary and cinematic forms that are often used to bridge the individual and collective experiences" (Kaplan, 28). Catastrophic experiences of this nature, which borders on political and cultural contexts within which it takes place, should be uniquely managed by institutional forces.

Individual and Collective Trauma

Traumatizing events can take a serious emotional toll on its victims, even if the event is devoid of physical damage. It is sometimes, worse on individuals who are witnesses to such occurrence. „Individual trauma“ is a horrible event or events, an extremely negative event or events that happen to an individual which affects personal adaptations to life. Conversely, „collective trauma“ is that which “transcends the individual to every meaning system, the symbolic universe as a whole” (Veerman & Ganzevoort, 7). They further explained that “individual trauma challenges fundamental assumptions and personal identity”, while collective trauma “affects the shared frame of reference, basic values, and the way the community understands itself and the world” (Veerman & Ganzevoort, 7).

Causes, Symptoms and Effects of Trauma

It is essential to recognise the basic causes of trauma which are not limited to: rape, domestic violence, natural disasters, severe illness or injury, the death of a loved one, witnessing an act of violence and so on. The following are common effects or symptoms,

classified in three categories may occur following a traumatic event:

Physical	Emotional	Cognitive
i. Eating disturbances	i. Depression, spontaneous crying	i. Memory lapses, especially about the traumatic event
ii. Sleep disturbances	ii. Despair and hopelessness	ii. Difficulty in making decisions
iii. Sexual dysfunction	iii. Anxiety	iii. Decreased ability to concentrate
iv. Low energy	iv. Panic attacks	iv. Feeling distracted
v. Chronic, unexplained pain	v. Fearfulness	
	vi. Compulsive and obsessive behaviors	
	vii. Irritability, anger and resentment	
	viii. Emotional numbness	
	ix. Withdrawal from normal routine and relationships	

(www.helpguide.org/mental/emotional_psychological_trauma.htm)

The above symptoms/effects are often seen in the individual. Veerman & Ganzevoort, (5) maintain that there are further symptoms which they term „common phenomena“, i.e. “withdrawal and isolation, identifying enemies and scapegoating, or surrendering to external forces”.

A Conceptual Clarification on Aesthetics

Aesthetics has long concerned itself with the arts. The word is used as an adjective and a noun and relates with the yardstick by which a work of art is evaluated. The word also serves as a modifier of an object, experience, attitude, practice or a property. Aesthetics is

relative. Aesthetics has been defined as a sensory perception; dealing with the philosophy of the beautiful, pleasure, style, taste, form, structure and so on. In fact Fenner (10) elaborates that:

The habit of suggesting by claiming that something is *aesthetic* that it is *aesthetically* good is a matter of convenience, not a matter of definition. Aesthetics must cover the good and the bad, else we cut out an entire range of aesthetic experiences.

For Berleant (23), beauty and other aesthetic satisfactions have long been valued as personal matters. He opines that: “our pleasures and our pains are personal, even though they occur as part of situations that involve other things and perhaps other people”.

Tenets of Trauma Theory

Emotions are knitted to experiences that occur under extreme abnormal circumstances. “Every vital organ is closely tied through the autonomic nervous system, with our emotional system” (Bloom, 7). She explains further that “it is a part of our mammalian heritage”, which continues to profoundly impact, at a physiological level, our response to all stresses, even those caused by our sophisticated social environments.

In significant ways, the effect of suffering on the victim produces the tendency to alienate himself from the experience – *The flight response*. After a traumatic event, there is an initial breakdown, which Curnow (1) points out as the “disruption of functioning”. *The fight response* brings to the fore, the need to find a solution to extreme traumatic experiences by seeking comfort. This experience will only turn out, at the long run, to be a comforting temporary measure, e.g. alcoholism, sex, etc. Through the repeated experience of overwhelming stress, victims may reject the belief that they can impact the course of their lives in a positive way.

In addition, an individual with a history of trauma may function well in his/her life after so many years due to a learned coping mechanism called “dissociation”. Curnow (4) sees

dissociation as, “a splitting off from emotion”. It is a “disruption in the usually integrated functions of consciousness, memory, identity or perception of the environment”. The flight response, fight response and dissociation however, are responses to perceived trauma because of the critical and profound activation of personality development.

Synopsis of Mahmood Ali-Balogun's *Tango With Me*

The film, *Tango With Me* by Mahmood Ali-Balogun conveys a depth of problematic issues about what a couple caught in psycho-emotional trauma go through. The story surrounds Lola and Uzo, who begin to face the challenges of marriage on their wedding night. As one would assume that one's wedding night is supposed to be the sweetest night ever but theirs turns out to be disastrous. Uzo dreams of the passion to make his wife a woman on the night of their wedding, but the barbaric animalistic drive of armed men, missing the real target's room number, violate his precious desirous bride by raping her.

Thereafter, she has trouble having sexual relations with her husband, and they both struggle under the emotional and psychological burden that the rape imposes on them. Struggling to live together, despite the obvious signs that signal the collapse of their marriage, they resort to visiting a marriage counsellor. However, things get worse when Lola becomes pregnant.

Analysis of Trauma in *Tango With Me*

Visible in this movie is trauma as a central motif upon which other issues of thematic concern are raised. *Tango With Me* is produced with a conscious exposition to the degrading societal values, teaching priceless lessons about love and life. Though simplistic in a predictable style, the story indeed imposes sobriety on the viewer, in its revealing formula of the challenges ravaging a marriage. For instance, although Lola and Uzo's marriage is seen as a fairy tale union by friends, family members and relatives, it is so shocking that barely three months after tying the nuptial knot, they are already seeing a marriage Counsellor. Lola obviously

must have thought through this because of the love she has for her husband and the danger that trauma poses to her „yet to be matured“ marriage.

Curiosity looms at the opening scene where the drama begins with the couple talking with the Counselor. We see the couple, in their expressions, trying hard to analyze the problem. There is a mission - to solve whatever the problem is. Lola and Uzo suggest the idea of telling the counselor what really their problem is. But then the question of who will tell first, arises. The conversation below is instructional:

Uzo: Did you tell him?

Lola: (responding with a negative nod) Did you?

Uzo: Will you?

Lola: Should I?

Uzo: Maybe you should, maybe it would help.

Lola: Why not you?

Uzo: (*with a sorry look*) I don“t know if I can (*Tango With Me*, 2011).

From the above, it is obvious that each character is reluctant to identify with telling their problem to the Counselor, maybe due to the gravity of the incident or because the stigma associated with the act of rape is still seen as shameful in the African purview.

People analyze trauma from the political, religious, social and cultural dimensions. But in all of these analyses of varying degrees, whether the trauma is man-made or caused by natural event, there is a relative dependence on clichés and assumptions about the world and about humanity. This gives rise to questions like *who we are, what we are, why we are* within this global society. Consciously or unconsciously, individuals develop a benign view of their place in the world. Trauma calls into question these ways of viewing the „self“ and the „world“. In most cases, positive assumptions about the individual“s place in the world are eroded by trauma.

Lola narrates how she becomes a woman on her wedding night. Using her exact words, “a damaged and broken woman, except unlike a toy I cannot be returned”. She turns out to be a

victim of circumstance after crossing the emotional bridge of years of celibacy in agreement with Uzo, waiting for just their wedding night. The trauma of this nature made her see herself no longer as that charming, desirable and priceless wife of Uzo. She loses grips with her positive self. The positive assumptions of a sweet wedding night and blissful marriage are eroded by this singular traumatic blow.

In the light of the above, when the unprecedented event occurred, her husband gets drowned in the quest to unravel the barbaric act. He follows suit with her suggestion to see a marriage Counsellor, but soon gives up because he concludes that the sessions are not working. This is because he recoils against the idea of discussing his marital problems outside of his home. Because a traumatic experience is so unforeseen, and its impact so threatening and harmful, he abandons the sessions with the marriage Counselor. He desists from talking about the experience and even listening to her update with the Counselor, rendering their atmosphere at home melancholic. They hardly talk and if they do, they argue:

UZO: Lola, not now...*(reluctantly)*

LOLA: Then when? I mean... if I'm going to be the only one trying to fix things... because it happened to me...

UZO: *(cuts in angrily)* It's all about you right? Why do you think I was not as raped as you were? Why do you think nothing happened to me? I'm the one who has to sleep in the bedroom because my wife can't bear me touching her. I'm the one that has to watch you wither away, become a shadow of yourself. I'm the one that can't concentrate at work. I'm the one that might be losing my job (*Tango With Me*, 2011).

The above lines of dialogue in the movie reveal how the trauma of rape not only affects the victim that is raped but the witness as well. Little wonder Uzo is sexually weak, unable to make love to his wife due to the recurring images/flashbacks of the gruesome events of the wedding night along with the screams of his precious wife. One certain night, the memory haunts him and

he can't rise to the occasion, but Lola, in a hushed tone, tells him, "we don't have to do anything; we can just hold each other".

The grave consequence of this trauma in Uzo's mentality is, by no means, traumatizing in his psyche which out rightly has an adverse psychological effect on his early marital demeanor, as well as in his job performance. At work, he fails in his responsibilities, making the company go bankrupt. His boss at some point summons him to her office due to his failure to meet up with the job requirements:

MISS BANKOLE: We have lost a huge amount of money because of your negligence. And I don't care how you do it. Im giving you two weeks to make that money back. Good luck (*Tango With Me*, 2011).

Trauma looms large in their matrimonial home when Uzo takes to drinking, his boss ironically becoming his mistress, and his regular late home coming. Lola reflects on this:

LOLA: Uzo I don't understand you anymore. The way you are carrying on is beginning to look like you are the victim here and this happened to me! Me! For all I care maybe you are impotent; yes, maybe you can't get it up, and here you are hiding under the umbrella of psychological trauma. Who should be traumatized here? You or me? (*Tango With Me*, 2011).

Struggling with the effects of the trauma on her husband's sudden behavioural problems, dissociation and isolation, Lola discovers she is pregnant. This obviously drags the marriage towards collapse. She opts out of the initial abortion agreement and insists on keeping the baby. Even her mum advises getting rid of it because of all that's at stake, but she's adamant. She fears the risk. She can't bear the trauma of the rape as well as the trauma of terminating the growing innocent child that didn't ask to be conceived that way. She feels the act of abortion is not different from the act carried out by the insane men (the rapists) that night, who succeeded in robbing her of her innocence. She further tells her husband in the lines below while he responds conclusively:

LOLA: I'm not doing it. I cannot have an abortion.

UZO: Then we do not have a marriage (*Tango With Me*, 2011).

If Lola had her husband close to her when she needed him most, it would help to minimize the post-traumatic stress disorder all through her pregnancy period. She goes back to her father's house but her father wants her back in her husband's house without caring what the problem is. Her father obviously doesn't want to have anything to do with the situation.

Trauma Aesthetics in *Tango With Me*

From the definition of trauma aesthetics in this study, the film uses the bedroom setting, dialogue and characterisation as indices for trauma presentation to the viewing audience for a deeper understanding of the dramaturgy within the plot and storyline. It also adopts the absence of sound, or the limited use of attractive sound throughout the film, viewers will attest to this in the in-house scenes, mostly between Uzo and Lola, which further portrays a dark psychological experience.

The shots at the beginning of the movie aesthetically signal trauma; taken from the angle of the couple giving themselves a non-verbal response even in the presence of the Counselor who appears faceless throughout the film. The aesthetic techniques are well caught up too in their partitioned sitting, which negates the supposed jolly ambience that is characteristic of most newly married couples.

Also, Uzo is seen exploring adultery, having sexual relationship with his boss, thereby displacing the love he has for his wife. He derives satisfaction but the movie captures it as a short-lived experience. This reflects the implications of seeking comfort in temporary measures to extreme traumatic experiences as it will only turn out to haunt the victims in their later life. The film thus captures the dramaturgy of trauma aesthetics in the act of Uzo.

Consequently, Lola stays away from her matrimonial home. She reiterates in one of the scenes that she can't run away from the heat. She pulls through, against everyone's (her husband, her

mother and the Counselor) advice. In one of the scenes with the Counselor, the following conversation is recounted:

LOLA: I'm the one who's pregnant. I'm the one who has to make a choice. I can't run away from it no matter how much I want to.

COUNSELOR: No one would blame you if you opt for an abortion Lola.

LOLA: What kind of Christian would I be if I did this? (*Tango With Me*, 2011)

When Lola learns that emotional wounds would only end up crippling her life, marital relationship and destiny, she begins to exercise her faith. While many would think the talking sessions with the Counselor would change her psychological state as well as the idea to terminate the pregnancy, they did not achieve those goals. It is obvious then that the individual needs to openly identify, within the immediate environment, an abundance of opportunities to remain focused in the „fight response“. This, therefore, explains Lola's passion for dance, i.e. teaching little children the art of dancing in school. Upholding this further, Bloom (6) says, “programs that focus on nonverbal expression - a description that includes art, music, movement, and theatre programs as well as sports – are vital adjuncts to any community healing efforts and should be funded, not eliminated, in the schools”. The film thus employs the mechanism of exposing trauma in all its complexity. But by this exposure, what could pose as an obstacle on the road to recovery becomes the path to the solution to trauma.

Drawing attention to the problematic representation of trauma, the movie's form prompts self-reflection on the issue of handling trauma. Since the focus is on the process of understanding, as well as healing the victim, viewers are allowed to place themselves into the character's story, and reflect on the possible results and worth of certain responses to trauma. Thus, while the movie already exposes much of the complexity of trauma, narration clearly facilitated the working through of personal traumas.

Lola is presented as neither sick nor deficient in moral character, carrying on even in the face of dejection by her husband. Here, there is awareness, a successful measure of awareness that realisation to containment of her distress, of her traumatic experience, of her anxiety is a possibility. And just as it is with a physical condition, the amount of time or assistance needed to recover from emotional trauma varies from one person to another as seen in these characters.

Conclusion

Trauma is a psychological response to an experience in the face of life threatening circumstance. An integral characteristic of trauma is the alienation factor in which victims seclude themselves from others. Trauma challenges the logical human perception of the world. In this study however, the film portrays how situations differ for individuals who suffer personal traumas. They often suffer in silence as they struggle to find a path towards survival and healing. This is clearly seen in Lola who could not bear her husband's sudden change in attitude and abandonment when she refuses to abort the pregnancy. She makes all efforts to stay strong even to the point of delivery, where her husband openly admits his regret.

Interestingly, *Tango With Me* reveals that even in the face of such experience, people can successfully integrate their trauma-challenges into their own personal history and reclaim their lives with a renewed sense of purpose. Although unresolved trauma can take a high toll on relationships and quality of life, this study reveals that the process of real recovery varies with victims and their families, but that there is always a need for accrued time and sensitivity to an individual's recovery. Thus, trauma victims and survivors attempt to return to their normal lives by seeking rational explanation for their predicaments.

Recommendations

In the light of our findings, this chapter recommends that films that are rooted in trauma should endeavour to project a sense of

containment and narration, a reflective capacity i.e. the dialogic exploration, as this creates insight for dealing with trauma without limitation to other tools for living a positive life after the traumatic process. More so, this narrative tendency will develop a cognitive ability for survival in severe state of catastrophe as well as repressed anxiety, with the challenge to establish measures to resolve individual and collective trauma.

Works Cited

- Allen, J. G. *Coping with trauma: Hope through understanding*. 2. London: American Psychiatric Publishing, Inc. 2008
- Alexander, J. C. *Trauma: A social theory*. USA: Polity Press. 2012
- Antze, P. and Lambek, M. *Tense past. Cultural essays in trauma and memory*. New York: Routledge. 1996
- Balaev, M. Trends in literary trauma theory. *Literature Resource Centre*.41 (2). University of Manitoba. 2008
- Balaev, M. *Contemporary approaches in literary trauma theory*. UK: Palmgrave Macmillan. 2011
- Berleant, A. Ideas for a social aesthetics. In: A. Light and J. Smith (Eds.), *The aesthetics of everyday life*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2005.
- Beja, M. *Film and literature: An introduction*. New York: Longman. 1979.
- Binion, R. *Traumatic reliving in history: Literature and film*. London: Karnac Books Ltd. 2011.
- Caruth, C. *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. London: The John Hopkins University Press. 1995.
- Caruth, C. *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1996.
- Cori, J. L. *Healing from trauma: A survivor's guide to understanding your symptoms and reclaiming your life*. New York: Marlowe & Company. 2007.
- Elm, M., Kabalek, K. and Kohne, J. *The horrors of trauma in cinema: Violence void visualization*. UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2014.
- Felman, S. and Dori L. (1992). *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history*. New York: Routledge.
- Fenner, D. E. *Introducing aesthetics*. London: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. 2003.

- Giang, B. T. Trauma and psychological losses in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels: A Dissertation presented to the Graduate School of Literature, Fukuoka Women's University. 2014.
- Herman, J. L. *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books. 1992.
- Herman, J. L. *Trauma and recovery*. New York: Basic Books. 1999.
- Howell, E. *The dissociative mind*. New York: Routledge. 2005.
- Jerrod, B. and Ringel, S. *Trauma: Contemporary directions in theory, practice and research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. 2012.
- John R., Theodore C., Sandra B. et al *Healing the hurt: Trauma-informed approaches to the health of boys and young men of color*. California: Drexel University College of Medicine. 2009.
- Kaplan, A. E. *Trauma culture: The politics of terror and loss in media and literature*. London: Rutgers University Press. 2005.
- LaCapra, D. *Representing the holocaust: History, theory, trauma*. 1. London: Cornell University Press. 1996.
- Leys, R. *Trauma: A genealogy*. USA: University Chicago Press. 2000.
- Pablo, F. Shadows between memory and propaganda: War and holocaust trauma in Defa's Thaw films. In: M. Elm, K. Kabalek and J. Kohne (Eds.), *The horrors of trauma in Cinema: Violence void visualization*. (pp.142-270). UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2014.
- Roger, L. *The trauma question*. New York: Routledge. 2008.
- Stephens, M. From the past imperfect: Towards a critical trauma theory. The semiannual newsletter of the Robert Penn Warren Centre of the Humanities. Vanderbilt University. 17(2), 1. 2009.
- Tal, D. The nature of reconciliation as an outcome and as a process. In S. Tov (Ed.), *From conflict resolution to reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2004.

Web

- Bloom, S. L. *Trauma theory abbreviated*. Retrieved 18th January, 2016 from www.sanctuaryweb.com. 1999.
- Curnow, R. *Trauma: A psychoanalytic perspective*. A public lecture note. 2007 Retrieved 20th February, 2016 from www.ptgi.uncc.edu/posttraumatic-growth.
- Perry, B. D. *Effects of traumatic events on Children: An introduction*. 2003 Retrieved 27th January, 2016 from www.ChildTrauma.org.
- Veerman, A. and Ganzevoort, R. Communities coping with collective trauma. A Paper presented at the conference of the international

association for the psychology of religion, Soesterbeg, the Netherlands. 2001 Retrieved 27th January, 2016 from www.scholarworks.smith.edu/cgi/viewcontent
www.encyclopaedia.com/topic/trauma.aspx. Retrieved 18th January, 2016
www.helpguide.org/mental/emotional_psychological_trauma.htm. Retrieved 18th January, 2016.

Filmography

Ali-Balogun, M. (Producer and Director). *Tango With Me* [Movie]. Nigeria: Brickwall Communications Limited. 2011.

Thirty-Three



The Poet as a Town Crier: G^o Ebinyo Ogowei's Socialist Engagement with the Public in the *Town Crier's Song*

Stephen E. Kekeghe

Introduction

Modern Nigerian poetry has constantly, and will persistently be confrontational. This is informed by the varying imperialist and bitter experiences that engendered its emergence. Colonialism gave birth to anti-colonial literary expression which repudiates the unfair manifestations of colonial domination. Similarly, post-colonial or post-independence literature also laments another disquieting experience of political repression by fellow black leaders; and this stimulates a new critical theorization known as neo-colonialism. No wonder Eurocentric judgment of African literature reveals that literary works from the African continent are situational, anthropological, and filled with reprimanding laments, protesting what they perceive as repressive and bad moral attitudes (Chinweizu, Jemie & Madubuike, 1980: 7). While they base their judgment mostly on the novel, such Eurocentric critics concentrate on the aesthetics of language and surface meanings in African poetry, ignoring the vast socio-political and cultural issues that reverberate in them. This concentration on the synthetic rather than the informative indices informed a deliberate artificial defamiliarisation of poetic images by the African poets, which is the characteristic Euro-modernist consciousness of Soyinka, Okigbo, Clark and Echeruo. However, as Chinweizu, Jemie & Madubuike (1980: 166) highlight, "A poem cannot just be, it must also mean regardless what anyone says to the contrary".

Bearing the consciousness to communicate meaning to Nigerians and the globe, the contemporary Nigerian poets show an admirable commitment to art and society. This is the characteristic artistic vision of Niyi Osundare, Tanure Ojaide, Odia Ofeimun, Ogaga Ifowodo, Femi Fatoba, Funsho Aiyejina, Okinba Launko, Ademola Dasylva, Remi Raji, Ebi Yeibo, Gbemisola Adeoti, Ibiwari Ikiriko, Ebinyo Ogbowei, Hope Eghaha, Ben Nnnimo Basse among others. These poets redefine African poetry and produce committed art works that are geared towards righting the wrongs in the society. Thus, if poetry should be functional as Osundare highlights, it must be less artificial and more socially engaging. In "Poetry is...", Osundare stresses that poetry should no longer be clothed with complex misleading images, but that the language of a poem should be assessable to the less literate in the society, including the peasants and hawkers. Here, Osundare unfolds the socialist and ideological vision of the modern African poet.

Effort is made here to examine Ogbowei's manifestation of his socialist vision in *The Town Crier's Song*. The terms social reality and socialist reality differ remarkably – the former is a product of a mere reflection of what is, while the latter bears a refractionist tendency leading to Marxist determinacy. In other words, the socialist writer both reflects and makes radical suggestions for improvement. As Moody (1968: 3) reveals, the writer, in his criticism of human behaviours, does not speculate on "only what is, but on what ought to be, or what might be" (Umukoro 1994: 10). The socialist poet therefore employs poetry as an instrument of condemning bad socio-political practices thereby suggesting healthy political and cultural ideals for the wellbeing of the society. It is on this premise of socialist or revolutionary praxis that informed Emmanuel Ngara's criticism of Lusophone poetry as regional poetry that is committed "to the fight for justice" (Ngara, 1990: 103).

Former Head of the Department of English and Literary Studies, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, G^o Ebinyo Ogbowei, has gained his status as a contemporary Nigerian poet from the Niger region. Besides individual poems in national and

international anthologies, Ogbowei has the following collections of poems to his credit: *Let the Honey Run* (Shortlist NLNG Nigerian Prize for poetry, 2005), *The Heedless Ballot Box* (Kraft, 2005), *The Town Crier's Song* (Kraft, 2009), *Song of a Dying River* (Kraft, 2009) and *The Marsh Boy* (Kraft, 2013). Ogbowei is known for his naked images that criticize socio-political infidelities. As a socialist, Ogbowei regards poetry as “a legitimate weapon of war” which is aimed at sensitizing his “people of the impending doom” (*Blue Prints Newspaper*, February 24, 2012). He further reveals that the kind of humiliating and ferocious poverty which the masses are persistently exposed to in Nigeria requires a confrontational tone of depression and rage (Kekeghe, 2014: 61). Ogbowei’s poetic activism is such that bears raw metaphors characteristic of avant-gardism. Hence, in *The Town Crier's Song*, he engages the general public particularly, the gullible and undisruptive masses to take charge of their condition from political repression. Thus, the poet becomes the crier with a vitriolic voice, pricking the sensitivity of the public.

***The Town Crier's Song* and Ogbowei's Vitriolic Voice against Socio-political Repression**

Though the poems in this collection might not be aesthetically pleasing as in Ogbowei's other collections, there is something impressive about the title of this volume – it unfolds the naked mission of a poet who is embarked on a talkative undertaking of creating conscious awareness for the ignorant masses. John Povey in Olafioye (1984: XI) notes that considering the frustration which the African man is made to face, it becomes fundamental for the voice of the poet “to be loud and vitriolic”. This is the significant role played by Ogbowei in this collection through the metaphor of the crier. Ogbowei, no doubt, borrows this image from his homeland. The role of the town crier in the traditional society is significant – he informs and cautions the public on prevailing happenings as well as looming dangers. The modern Nigerian poet is always attached to his homeland which is the primary source of his inspiration, as Kekeghe (2014b) submits:

From the onset, the modern Nigerian poet possesses a dual consciousness – first, of his immediate environment and second, and often more universal, of his nation. However in the poet's sense of patriotism to his nation, private, domestic and homeland images are often encountered. This implies that as a humanist, the modern Nigerian poet finds himself in an apparent dilemma – the quest to save himself, his immediate environment and region; and of course, the Nigerian nation which harbours multifaceted ills and quandaries (66).

The title of the collection is therefore suggestive of the socialist consciousness of the poet whose creative ideology is geared towards moulding the conscience of his society for the better. Thus, the social vision of Ogbowei as a collectivist is evident in the title poem of the collection, "The Town Crier's Song", which reveals the poet's resentments over the various forms of socio-political injustices that haunt the masses and the society. The poet is torn between reporting these ugly trends as well as provoking the conscience of the ruled into taking radical decisions – such resolutions are capable of liberating them and the society from the claws of the tormentors. As we are made to understand from the expository lines of the poem, the poet, owing to his socio-political awareness is regarded as the highly reputed eagle bird; while the ignorant masses are denigrated as colobus (monkeys) and coward cows:

This is the song of the harpy eagle
To the colobus
A song like flaming shuffle
Running through formless patterns of dream
This is the song of the cattle egret
To the wandering herd
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 13)

The metaphor of "cattle egret" and the "wandering herds", "harpy eagle" and "the colobus", underscores the relationship between freedom and slavery, pride and humiliation. Consequently, the masses are like monkeys (colobus) and better-still, cows which wander to the slaughter without resistance. This image highlights the diffidence and spinelessness of the people

who tend to stomach all forms of oppressions. It seems that Ogbowei is sad at the masses' hesitancy to take revolutionary stance to emancipate themselves from the present dismal position. Thus, he likens them to cows, which in spite of their horns and prominent body mass could not resist man's hostility. Cow has become a common metaphor of timidity, cowardice and ignorance in poetic expression. A memorable case is J. P. Clark's "Fulani Cattle" which uses the image of herd of cattle being led to the slaughter to comment on the coward Nigerian masses that are too nervous to oppose the various forms of political tyranny meted on them by insensitive political leaders. As in Ogbowei's poetic reflection above, Clark likens the fearfulness and inanity of the masses to the Fulani cattle which are "undulating along in agony/[their] face a stool for mystery" (line 4-5). Evoking revolutionary tempers, Clark interrogates "That not demurring nor kicking/You go to the house of slaughter?/can it be in the forging...?"(Line 10-12). It is this metaphor of the cowed Nigerian masses that is taken to a transcendental level by Ogbowei. Thus, in the succeeding lines Ogbowei employs avant-gardist images which he considers the only alternative left for the masses to confront and collapse all instruments of oppression deployed by the irresponsible political elite:

This is the song of the leopard
To the pregnant goat
A song twining a cowering village
Running through a forest of flaming coffins
...
This is the song of the cobra
This is the song of the combat dance
Calling out of the fire of passion and hunger
Squadrous battalions flotillas
Saluting with booming guns and bombs
These Babylonian anglers
Sucking us in the mud of greed
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 13-14)

The image of the goat in the above line invokes Clark's metaphor in his play, *Song of a Goat* – an image of repression, of

gloom and the quest for fulfillment. Ogbowei therefore suggests violent insurrection as the only option left for the masses – he charges them to meet head-on, the oppressors and crumple every apparatus of coercion. Thus, Ogbowei demonstrates that “the door of tyranny/opens into shrieking streets of cutlasses” (15), implying that radical step is an imperative option to end political cruelty. This idea is euphemistically regarded as “combat dance” in the above lines. Ogbowei’s revelation above brings to the fore the relationship between the political elite and the poor masses, the haves and the have-nots. There is an evident experience of social disparity and exploitation. To Ogbowei, the distressing masses “who plough the vineyard/dig the trenches and graves” (15), should employ the same instruments of persistent striving to fight and defeat the arrogant leaders. He therefore reminds them of their strength as warriors “who wield the axe for Ogun”. Ogun is the god of war in Yoruba mythology.

In “The Home Front”, one perceives the rhythm of social reality in Ogbowei’s matter-of-fact presentation of his experiences. The title unfolds the poet’s attachment to his homeland, and his persistent quest to better the living condition of his people. Ogbowei deploys indigenous images of his native soil to comment on varieties of decadence and repression which his people are prone to. Images of “an owl in a jinxed tree” and “the noology of gods bribed” (17) draw attention to the poet’s mission to disclose the worrying incidents in his community and society. The reader can deduce indices of moral degeneration and political siphons from the above poetic canvas, since the ancestors themselves have been bribed. This implies that the morally deviant have a smooth ride to manifest their vicious practices without caution. As the poem progresses, the mood becomes apprehensive, revealing the suffocating experience of military and political brutality. With terrific sirens intimidating the nervous masses, activists who are opposed to oppressive rule are beaten to stupor. This idea is captured in the following lines:

Siren strains
The syncopation of slaps

Cracking across the face
Of a rioter chained to a rafter
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 17)

Owing to the desperation and arrogance of these political leaders, anyone who opposes them is exposed to different forms of intimidation such as brutality and imprisonment. In order to cow the rebellious citizens, some of them succumb to political bribes to sheath their swords. Ogbowei therefore ridicules the bribing of a few rioters who celebrate their “lean gains” (17). He further derides such coward protesters as “home front heroes/defending garbage bins/and refuse dumps” (17). One can conclude on Ogbowei’s idea of a hero from the above lines – one who fights and dies for the cause. Here Ogbowei seems to romanticize the idea of bravery, because not many rational beings would deliberately walk into the staring flames of death. However, the above metaphor bears an appealing universality – it recalls the contemporary experience in the Niger Delta where few ex-militant leaders take the gain of their protest, ignoring the ideology and the general public. One could conclude conveniently that the general mood of the poem is that of military tyranny and repression in the Niger Delta region. The temper of military repression is also conveyed in the following lines: “where bolekeja generals/debrief broken virgins/breached with grievous pumps” (17).

As a revolutionary, Ogbowei invokes the radical steps of prominent and fearless activists who have exhibited commendable stance to change the wrong steps of governance. In “Gani Fawehinmi” for instance, Ogbowei idealizes the notable Nigerian human right lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi and other activists who “clamour for change and range” (38) in the Nigerian society. He seems to implore the hapless masses to rise and fight their own fight rather than snaking their necks, expecting others to fight for them. He intones:

We who with Solarin and Soyinka
Staked in vanquished eden
Desire to eat the ripe fruit
Of a tree not planted

Desire to glean from a dream farm
Lush in the fertile plans of misrule
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 38)

It is this ostensible admiration of the socialists that resounds in "Fela Anikulapo-Kuti" where Ogbowei reveals that in the music of Fela, "the acoustic guitar" captures the heart of the people revealing the injustices and poverty in the society. He observes that Fela's music "echoes the cries of ragged children/Quarrelling with dogs/Over the contents of rubbish bins" (48). Ogbowei's poetic tines unfold that Fela is a committed activist who exposes political infidelities through his music:

Adroit drumsticks finding
The pulse of this throbbing throng
Provoke the brute of Abuja
To the threat posture dance
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 48)

These lines evoke Fela's bold censure of military dictatorship, particularly in Abacha's regime. Here we see Ogbowei as a socialist who is armed with poetic art as a weapon of fighting political oppression. Ogbowei's consciousness of Nigerian political failings is evident in "October 1" where he ridicules Nigerian Independence, likening it to a "confederacy of corruption" (54). According to him, it was "the courage of youth" that inspired Nigerian actualization of her Independence; but the Nigerian government hardly recognizes the place of youths. He laments: "we are the fuel of this fire in which foul spirit dance" (54). As the poem progresses, one can expediently conclude that it is a critique of Abacha's military dictatorship, as evident in the following lines:

Here is the testament of freedom
The map of a desert-dry-ideology
A map outlining the great landmarks
Of our bang bang sovereignty
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 57)

Ogbowei's phobia for military dictatorship is apparent in some of the poems in the collection. He resents the activities of the political tyrants who clamp down the Nigerian masses, and subject them to persistent penury. In "Letter to the Minister" Ogbowei reveals vast political vices and electoral malpractices:

These pepper soup coups d'etat
These pounded-yam elections
These landslide victories
That leave us hungry mouths
Wailing cheering despots
Grown too fat on cricket legs
Would bury us all in mudslides
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 25)

Here again, one is confronted by the Nigerian reprehensible political process. From military era to civilian leadership, the selection of Nigerian leaders has always been a dishonourable exercise – it is not an objective practice that seeks for the best, but a bloody, shameful game that gives credit to those who have enough money to buy the people's consciences, those who possess instincts for violence and are ready to perpetrate corruption at all times. Since the politicians placed themselves into power through rigging or coup plotting, the masses have no say as to their governing strategies. This is what Ogbowei regards as "pepper soup coups d'etat" and "pounded-yam elections" in the lines above. In other words, since the politicians attain political power through their own making, they do not have the masses' interest at heart. Ogbowei asserts further in "October 1" that as a result of the desperate nature of the Nigerian politicians, the masses experience "a harvest of grief"; and it is imperative for them to fight the "rushing whirlwinds of greed" which has left "moan and groan in the land" (54). Here, Ogbowei seems to interrogate Nigerian independence since it has failed the wishes and aspirations of the masses. Ogbowei's radical perception in the crusade against oppression is probably borne out of the arrogance of the Nigerian political elite, who do not retreat their cruel and repressive manifestations on the vulnerable masses.

The repression and alienation of the masses by the politicians is astutely conveyed in “The Hawk and the Hare”, where Ogbowei metaphorically exposes the frozen relationship and social disparity between the politicians and the masses. While the politicians are privileged and have enough within their disposal, the masses are unfortunate and cannot survive the season of hardship. In essence, the politicians prey on the masses and they do not suffer starvation in any season since they have cornered all that belong to the masses. This idea resonates below:

Only the hawk
 Is happy in harmattan
 Energized by fires
 Where moulting snakes
 Lay prey to the owl
 And the hare and bush rat
 Scamper for cover scoured by scrag
(The Town Crier’s Song, 68)

It is this temper of plunder and political tyranny that resounds in “Woodpeckers and Saviours” where Ogbowei employs forest-side images to comment on the exploitative and autocratic nature of the Nigerian politician – a characteristic trait that endures from military to civilian rule. Ogbowei intones:

These khaki green saviours
 These orioles in decree songs
 Preying on caterpillars of government
 These figbirds ravaging the farmland
 Are woodpeckers in tree
 Are woodpeckers in flight
(The Town Crier Song, 75)

Ogbowei further captures the pomposity and arrogance of the politicians in “Sirens”, by ridiculing the excesses of the Nigerian political elite and the military Heads of State who intimidate the same masses they ought to protect: “Tanks take possession of the city squares/Sirens take possession of pompous hearts/Sirens shrilling and wailing flush stubborn streets” (39). Ogbowei mocks the guards of these desperate politicians, referring to them as

“guard dogs” who are “leading to captivity a god/spoil to feed the flock of the slaughter” (39). This implies that the guards and the thugs are helping the tyrants and irresponsible leaders in actualizing their selfish desires; hence he regards such entourage as a “serpent roll” (39).

Ogbowei’s criticism of Nigerian political failings bears a radical consciousness. He has undoubtedly assumed his position as a humanist, and the fearless voice of the voiceless. From his poetic-narration, it is apparent that Ogbowei is pained by the wretched condition of the Nigerian masses, while the political elite live in opulence. This idea reverberates in “February 6” where Ogbowei records what seems to be a personal experience that turns out as a revelation of different resenting issues in the Nigerian society such as poverty and exploitation:

The faces of men I see.
At bus-stops and roadblocks
In court and church
The faces of children
...
Extravagating home demitted
The faces of house-helps
Mafficking at public pumps
Whipped and hungry
These crates their sunken cheeks and bellies
Excavated by garrison forces
Their cane waist
Too thin too fragile
Vulnerable to budgetary winds
(*The Town Crier’s Song*, 58)

The images in the above lines evidently expose the reader to the yawning gap between the elite and the poor masses. Nauseated by the force of frustration in Nigeria, Ogbowei laments that the Nigerian masses are “a people marooned on a sacrifice island” and they are made to bear a wave of anger which is the resultant effect of the many years of despairing experiences. Considering the deplorable condition which the Nigerian masses are subjected to, it becomes crucial for them to react to the injustices meted on them

by the political elite who squander the national cake and plunge the ruled into perpetual penury. Ogbowei enthuses his audience, deploying the image of revolution:

A new drum plays
Let us dance who can
A new anthem in the air
Let us sing who can
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 59)

Ogbowei reveals that the Nigerian politicians discourage all forms of protest by the masses as such protests would reveal their pettiness to the world. Though such activists are intimidated by the arrogant political elite, Ogbowei charges the masses to be steadfast and dogmatic so that justice will be achieved at the end. This combative relationship between the ruler and the ruled is remarkably conveyed in "The Soldier and the Hunter":

The hunter has a gun
...
The hunter hunts a dog
The soldier has a gun
The soldier hunts a dog
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 91)

From the above lines Ogbowei illustrates that the military head of state is the soldier and the hunter, while the societal activist or socialists are likened to the angry dog or the hunted. He stresses further that the activists or the dogs are

haunted by generals
Out of the twilight of liberty
Into fulminant swamps
Where charges and decrees
Act out the rank promises
Of a trowelled nation
(*The Town Crier's Song*, 91)

In poems like "Heroes of the Wasteland", "The Wasted Age", "The Fisherman's Dilemma", "Lament of Overcropped land",

Pauperised Farm hands” and “Song of the Waterside” are expressions of the poet’s lamentation of the lost glory in his homeland. Thus, the Niger Delta experiences come to bear in such poems. In “Heroes of the Wasteland”, for instance, Ogbowei unfolds the suffocating experience in the Niger Delta region. According to him, “the creeks burning at shoulders/.../the rivers on fire foam at mouth” (77). The tense images in the above lines summarize the decade of pillage and spillage in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ogbowei further laments the dearth of freedom fighters in the land:

The talking drums have gone on sick-leave
The talking drums have caught aids
Have lost their voices
The talking drums cannot speak swelling words
Of the head and cutlass
(*The Town Crier’s Song*, 78)

The metaphor of the now silent talking drum underscores the level of mental degeneration of the masses – they are so cowed that they have refused to ask questions about their existence. This allegory exposes the reader to the coward nature of the Nigerian masses who are too timid to confront oppression. It becomes a worrying experience that the political elite have a free ride on the masses. Ogbowei therefore charges the cowed masses to wake up from their slumber and fight the oppressors.

Conclusion

The above examination reveals the revolutionary consciousness of Ogbowei in *The Town Crier’s Song*. The critical discussion of the poems exposes different worrying issues of political oppression and repression, and how Ogbowei’s caustic voice pricks the sensitivity of the masses to reexamine the conditions of their lives. Ogbowei, owing to his consciousness of Nigerian political problems since independence, poeticizes the suffocating atmosphere of military and democratic failings. Bearing the image of the traditional crier, Ogbowei reflects and refracts these experiences, such that the oppressed is provoked to take radical

steps for a better living condition. It is at this point that Ogbowei's acerbic voice becomes characteristic of his socialist ideology. He does not merely reflect, he charges and also bites.

Works Cited

- Chnweizuet'al. *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985.
- G' Ogbowei, Ebinyo. *The Town Crier's Song*. Ibadan: Kraft Books, 2009
- Kekeghe, E. S. "Ebi Yeibo's The Fourth Masquerade: Allegiance to Homeland or Nation?" In *Visual Arts Journal*, Vol. 4. Ed. Ogwu, G. N. Lagos: B& B No. 1. 2014 , pp. 66-80.
- Kekeghe, E. S. (2014). "The Paradox of Loss and Hope in Ibiwari Ikiriko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* and G. Ebinyo Ogbowei's *Song of A Dying River*". In *Abraka Humanities Review: A Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka*, Vol 6. 2. 2014a
- Ngara, Emmanuel. *Ideology & Form in African Poetry*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1990.
- Olafioye, Tayo. *Politics in African Poetry*. Martinez: Pacific Coast Africanist Association, 1984
- Osundare, Niyi. *Songs of the Market Place*. Ibadan: New Horn Press, 1983. Print

Thirty-Four



From *Marxist* Ukala to *Postmodern* Adeoye and the Politics of Experimental Theatre in Nigeria

Stephen Ogheneruro Okpadah

Introduction

Colonial and Postcolonial Nigerian theatres have been involved in a progression of conventions, styles, approaches, counter-styles and techniques. This is because of the influence of western theatre modes, which are a result of imperialism, colonialism and neocolonialism. These western models were sometimes coalesced with traditional modes. From Ola Rotimi's *Holdings Talks* (1989) which is directly influenced by the theatres of Beckett, Adamov, and Absurdism, through J. P. Clark Bekederemo's *Song of a Goat* (1982), which is situated in the canon of Greek Classicism, the dramaturgy of the western tradition is inherent in Nigerian theatre. In fact, the sociology of plays in the Nigerian theatre corpus is replete with questions of class struggle, revolution, counter-revolution, culture and counter-cultures. Femi Osofisan's theatre of *Class Struggle*-which discusses the polemics of dialectical materialism, is seen as an attempt at popularizing the dramaturgy of revolution initiated by the marginalized, the voiceless, nay, Antonio Gramsci's Subaltern and Marx's Proletariat.

Modern Nigerian theatre took a radical dimension, by incorporating Marxist aesthetics. The dramaturgy of Nigerian playwrights such as Bode Sowande, Ola Rotimi, Sam Ukala and Abdul Rasheed Adeoye are also products of the spirit of revolution. This is elaborately portrayed in Sam Ukala's Folkism and Abdul Rasheed Adeoye's Neo-alienation. To this end, Austin Anigala in his seminal paper titled "Folkism and Dramatic Development in Africa" defines Folkism as „a dramatic concept

derived from the African folktale narrative technique. It is a strategy of using traditional folktale aesthetics in creating a dramatic work that is reflective of the African way of life" (5). It is a clear attempt to place the traditional African folktales' tradition on the modern stage.

Folkism is not only situated in the traditional African performance culture, Sam Ukala's dramaturgy is also located in revolutionary cum Marxist aesthetics. In fact, Ukala's folkist technique and the sociology of his dramaturgy is Marxist embedded. On the other hand, Abdul Rasheed Adeoye's Neo-alienation theory is established in the aesthetics of postmodernism which is a conglomeration of the features of postmodern theatre. Neo-alienation therefore, is a Nigerian version of Bertolt Brecht's alienation. In fact, neo-alienation is knitted in the theory of Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. It is in the light of the above that this study investigates the aesthetics of Marxism in Sam Ukala's dramaturgy, and the poetics of postmodernism in the theatre of Abdul Rasheed Adeoye, with a content analysis of Adeoye's play, *The Smart Game* and Ukala's *Akpakaland*.

Experimental Theatre in Nigeria

Sometimes referred to as avant-garde, experimental theatre is a deviation from the traditional or conventional theatre. The word experiment is often accrued to the sciences in the academia. However, experiments are not restricted to the sciences. Hence, art is also predisposed to experiment. However, when should a theatre be called an experimental theatre? Everything no doubt is a subject of experiment. In fact, the creation of the world is a product of experiment. Experimentation is a continuous process and a continuous action. Art is to create, to design and to originate. Hence, experimentation is an art. Theatre is an art. It is in the light of the above, that we situate the theatre in the culture of experimentation. Experimental theatre then, is a negation of the conventional theatre. In other words, in experimental theatre there are no fixed canons. Experimental theatre therefore discards all conventional theatre principles. John Gassner (7) avers that

modern theatre is replete with theatrical experiments. He notes that:

The first ruling idea of modern theatre, and the one that is still dominant and most productive, although also conducive to some anarchy, is the idea of freedom. Its emergence was associated with the revolt of romanticism against the rigours of neoclassicism. Under the influence of romanticism, the theatre became an open rather than a closed, strictly conventionalized.

Experimental theatre in Nigeria is not a recent phenomenon. Adeoye notes that „„it can be strategically located among the four dominant theatre traditions in Nigeria. These four theatre traditions, although not adequate enough to capture the total essence of the Nigerian theatre are the indigenous/traditional theatre, the popular theatre, the literary theatre and the postmodern theatre” (Adeoye, 23). The first tradition no doubt is the dramaturgy of the pre-colonial and the colonial era. Paradigmatically, in the Yoruba theatre compendium the Alarinjo theatre compendium or Egungun Apidan’s emergence is not circumstantial, it also came to the fore as a result of the experiment facilitated by Ologbin Ologbojo, when the chief administrator of the seven murmurs performed at the palace of the Alaafin in Oyo. The crux of this experiment was the theatrical productions of Chief Hubert Ogunde of the popular tradition. “The Oyo State born policeman turned theatre practitioner, made a blend of some traditional elements of the Egungun performance mode and the drama of English expression” (Clark, 1979, p.35). This culminated in operas such as *The Garden of Eden and the throne of God* (1945), *Yoruba Ronu* (1966), *Africa and God* (1957) and *Otito Koro* (1966). His theatres were social and political commentaries, blending traditional and modern elements. In fact, his theatre was syncretic, with the fusion of the traditional and modern theatre aesthetics. Other artists in the category of experimentation, include Kola Ogunmola and Durodola Adisa Ladipo. Although Hubert Ogunde had previously experimented with the historical or folktale genre, Ogundeji (59-60) argues that:

It is to DuroLadipo that the credit of the popularization of folkloric plays should go. This assertion is informed by the fact that Ladipo elevated the hitherto relatively insignificant status of folkloric tales to a fully developed theatricalized status. He made use of folk tales, legends, myths and histories for thematic and plot constructions. He also employed in his dramatic constructions a lot of traditional poetry and musical materials including other cultural elements.

Furthermore, Durodola Ladipo was an ardent experimental theatre artist. „„He felt that the conventional church songs were too classical, boring and less inspiring“ (Oyelade, et al, 5). Unfortunately, his spirit of experimentation cost him his position as a lay preacher in church. Although the literary theatre in Nigeria could be traced back to the late nineteenth century, it fully took root in the late 1950s through the early 1960s. This was when playwrights, theatre directors and technical directors such as Wole Soyinka, Demas Nwoko, Ola Rotimi and J.P. Clark forayed into the educational theatre. Much later, Femi Osofisan and Bode Sowande came into the scene. In the context of experimental theatre in Nigeria, Osofisan notes that “without dispute, Soyinka is today the greatest living African dramatist-*alas!* Like the great artist, Soyinka stands in the world of letters like an elephant, massive in his productivity, and colossal in his artistic vision” (25). Osofisan’s statement is due to the contribution of Wole Soyinka to the Nigerian theatre. However, theatre critics such as Anigala hold a different view of Soyinka’s experimental plays as they believe that Soyinka is an obscurantist writer. Anigala states that “the high sounding language, impregnated with poetic symbols has widened the gulf between these artistic creations and their audience” (Anigala, 39).

Beyond Soyinka’s experiments is J. P. Clark’s research. Osofisan notes that “Clark’s growth from the neo-classical *Song of a Goat* to the neo-traditional *Ozidi* is a case in point” (123). In other words, Clark’s plays such as *Song of a Goat*, set in Izon, in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, conform to the convention of classical Greek tragedy. However, his play, *Ozidi*, is located in the traditional African folktale and storytelling mode.

Femi Osofisan, in his attempt to create a theatre that would reflect the Nigerian socio-political structure, brought to the fore a revolutionary theatre located in the Marxist tradition. Furthermore, Muyiwa Awodiya observes that Osofisan “has adapted and re-interpreted Yoruba mythology to suit his revolutionary philosophy of the victory of forces of change over reactionary elements” (cited in Omoni 182). His plays such as *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1984) and *Morontondun* (1997), are sound examples of plays in this grouping. Other playwrights in this category include Bode Sowande and Austin Anigala. Austin Anigala’s play, *Dance of Death* (1996) is a discourse on the socio-economic and political miasma and appropriation of public funds by politicians in Nigeria and the Diaspora. Furthermore, Ayo Akinwale – another experimental playwright – introduced the „Straight Take Technique, a theatre lighting style in which stage lights remain on from the beginning to the end of the performance. In the light of the contribution of numerous dramaturges cum theatre directors on the Nigerian stage, Adeoye states:

Chief among them, in the last fifty years, are Hubert Ogunde’s operatic theatre experiment, Wole Soyinka’s supposed ritual aesthetics, J.P. Clark’s neo-classical theatre and ritual aesthetics, Ola Rotimi’s Festival Theatre (a model for theatre in the round) and Dapo Adelugba’s *Daoduisim*- a password for excellence in theatre directing. Others are Femi Osofisan’s “fabulous”, “malleable” and “theatre of poverty” in the Grotowskian mode, Sam Ukala’s successful poetics of Folkism, Olu Obafemi’s socialist reformation’s contextual aesthetics, E.O. Kofoworola’s unity integrative model... S. E. Ododo’s *Facekuerade* theatre... A. A. Adeoye’s neo-alienation style and most recently too, Felix Emoruwa’s *Choreoclecy* are particularly worthy of mention (28).

For more than two decades two dramatic theories that have come to the fore in the Nigerian theatre landscape are Sam Ukala’s „Folkism“ and Abdul Rasheed Adeoye’s „Neo-alienation“. Folkism is not only situated in the traditional African performance culture, Sam Ukala’s dramaturgy is also located in revolutionary and Marxist aesthetics. On the other hand, Abdul Rasheed Adeoye’s

Neo-alienation theory is established in the aesthetics of Postmodernism, hence the crystallization of the terms: Marxist Ukala and Postmodern Adeoye. This study therefore investigates the aesthetics of Marxism in Sam Ukala's dramaturgy, and the poetics of postmodernism in the theatre of Abdul Rasheed Adeoye, with a content analysis of Adeoye's play, *The Smart Game* and Ukala's *Akpakaland*.

The Dramaturgy of Marxism in Ukala's Theatre

The Soviet Union's socialist government could be said to have fully popularized the Marxist ideology. However, the German economist Karl Marx and the French political economist, Friedrich Engels are the pioneers of the philosophy. George Lukacs, a Hungarian critic appropriated what is known as *reflectionism* „named for the assumption that a text will reflect the society that has produced it, the theory is based on the kind of close reading advocated by formalists. But it is practiced by the *reflectionists* for the purpose of discovering how characters and their relationship typify and reveal class conflict, the socioeconomic system, or the politics of a time and place” (Dobie, 87). Furthermore, Marxism “is a radical approach to the issue of man's exploitation in society” (Bamidele, 15). Marxist ideology contends that society is characterized with two classes of people, the upper and lower classes. While the lower class is instrumental to the production of the wealth of the society, the upper class reaps the dividend of the proceeds of production-wealth. A major feature of the bourgeoisie is their conspicuous consumption. Hence, there is a dislocation of the lower class in fair distribution of the wealth accrued from his toil. This forms the core nucleus of all capitalist societies. Hence, Dobie (90) posits that “capitalism preys on the insecurities of the proletariat”. The proletariat is the lower class - the prey, while the bourgeoisie is the upper class - the predator who controls the means of production. They control the values of the people, their art and legal processes all summed into what Karl Marx called the “superstructure”. This is done consciously and unconsciously. Literature one of the superstructures, is a “powerful tool for maintaining that social status quo because it operates under the

guise of being entertainment, making it possible to influence an audience even when its members are unaware of it” (Dobie, 94).

Literary art which is a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie, in recent times became a weapon in the arsenal of liberation struggle. In fact, experimental dramaturgies and theatres in Nigeria and the world all over, in recent times have been situated in Marxist ideology. This is because of the relevance of Marxist doctrine in contemporary societies. As earlier stated, Bertolt Brecht’s plays (which are built on experiments), focus on the economic state of the society, which forms the nucleus of the Marxist condition. Marxist plays in this perspective, function as a tool in sensitizing the populace- or the oppressed (the voiceless such as women and the proletariat) in the society of the implication of his subjugation by the bourgeoisie, with a view to taking action against their oppressors. In corroboration of the above assertion, Dobie (95) notes that “the function of literature is to make the populace aware of social ills and sympathetic to action that will wipe those ills away”.

In the Nigerian situation, the dramaturgy of playwrights such as Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Ben Binebai, Abdul Rasheed Adeoye and Sam Ukala, focus on class struggle or the struggle for socio-economic and political liberation. Their plays are critical of the economic suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie who hold the base and the superstructure. In addition, Sam Ukala’s plays are a reflection of Marxist ideology. His plays which incorporate Marxist aesthetics include *The Placenta of Death* (2007), *Akpakaland* (2011) and *Break a Boil* (2011). These plays are homilies on class struggle. They are imperative in a Nigerian society where there is an ample disparity between the rich and the poor.

In *Akpakaland*, Fulama, the head of the wives of President Akpaka, the eponymous character, tells her husband that Unata, the President’s favourite wife has a tail. This leads to a rancor between her and the king. There is a decision by Fulama and President Akpaka for the wives to do a strip tease, to know who among the wives has a tail. All the wives, except Fulama, display their bottoms to the view of the people of Akpakaland. Iya Fulama, who

is from the province of the rich, restricts her daughter who engineered the strip tease, from indulging in it. However, due to pressure from the people of Akpakaland, Fulama gives in. She turns out to have a tail. Instead of being executed out rightly, the bourgeoisie decide to pervert justice. Hence a revolution ensues.

Akpakaland is a discourse on the antics of the upper class and the privilege accorded the rich, to the detriment of the poor. Out of jealousy for the love accorded Unata by their husband, President Akpaka, Fulama diabolically inflicts her with a tail. As the eldest wife, she wants to be accorded full attention and respect by her husband. Having tried all she could to no avail, she resorts to evil means in disgracing Unata by inflicting her with a tail.

Unata eventually ostracizes herself from public view. This is without doubt, a metaphor for the inferiority complex the bourgeoisie instill in the proletariat. The latter try to find their place in the society, but their exploitation by the bourgeoisie, surmounts this quest. As a socio-political discourse, *Akpakaland* mirrors the trend in the inhibition and subversion of justice in the Nigerian system. This is a true reflection of postcolonial African societies where being in the corridor of power leaders see an opportunity to siphon the national wealth, meant for all. Various characters in the play are a metaphor for the subset and substructures of the society. For instance, Fulama and her mother epitomize the bourgeoisie while Yeiye, Seotu and Iyebi, the wives of President Akpaka, are representative of the proletariat, the common man in society. This is exemplified in Iya Fulama's statement:

Iya Fulama: Abomination! (Tears her way to the centre of the gathering.) If the President has chosen to scrub the floor with the daughters of peasants and petty contractors, he cannot do that with my daughter. Is human memory so short? Have you forgotten who her father was? I am talking about the President of the Fifth republic, Danmali, the Great. A Field Marshal. Owner of Houses of Gold, whose father went to his farm in a space ship. Danmali the Great. The nightmare of students, journalists and other "troublemakers". Have you no fear?

Iya Fulama thus, refuses to let her daughter, Fulama engage in the strip tease. Akpakaland hoots when they discover Fulama has a tail. Like in Nigeria and other societies in the African Diaspora in which the activities of the elites are saddled in corruption, injustice, and nepotism, Iya Fulama bribes Umal, Ogunpa and Afianmo, the ministers of Akpakaland. These fraudulent chiefs are also members of the upper class. Perede, one of the ministers, refuses Iya Fulama's bribe. He criticizes the chiefs' suggestion that Fulama should be imprisoned for a short time, instead of being killed. Corruption is perhaps, a product of the mode of governance. Hence, in undemocratic nations where military government holds sway, corruption of different magnitude holds sway. This has facilitated the call for democratic governance in most African and third world countries where totalitarian governments are practiced. In an attempt to make sure Fulama evades execution, Afianmo, the minister for war, says that Akpakaland lacks the amoury to execute Fulama. President Akpaka quickly accepts this claim.

This mirrors the extent to which President Akpaka is corrupt. From the beginning, Perede refuses to speak against the injustice meted on the poor in *Akpakaland*. President Akpaka who notices his silence over the matter, encourages him to speak. The playwright therefore, posits that protests and revolution are birthed gradually. In the same vein, they are being facilitated by the inability of the poor to bear the injustice, corruption, economic meltdown, political instability which bedevil a society. These elements are products of the actions of the bourgeoisie - the government. The revolution at the end of the play is a portrayal of the subject of political corruption and impunity as well as class struggle. The revolution is not only the result of the socio-political injustice pervading *Akpakaland*, but the socio-economic imbalance in *Akpakaland*. It is the material and historical status quo of a society that determines its societal and political state. The suffering of the downtrodden, their deprivation of the national cake in *Akpakaland*, coupled with the perversion of justice by the government, culminates into the uprising by the proletariat. Ukala's plays are economic and political testaments to economic

exploitation by bourgeoisie Nigerian government, appropriation of public funds by politicians, injustice, and so on.

Adeoye: the Nigerian Postmodern Dramaturge

Postmodernism is a departure from modernism. It “began with an assault on the modernist boundaries of art, a refusal to see art as purely formal and as distinct from life, hence a willingness to appropriate the ready-made objects of everyday living and to subsume them under the rubric of art” (Novitz, 163-164). Postmodernism presupposes that there is not just a single interpretation of a text, but the consumer of a text (audience) automatically becomes the author of the text, instead of a mere superfluous consumer of the text. Therefore, the audience experience is the core of the postmodern ideal. Furthermore, Kadiatu Kanneh (137) notes that “postmodernism emphasizes dismantling the master tales of dominant cultures, narratives which seek to foreground a transcendental truth, in favour of more local, „little“ narratives of contingent, temporary truths, allow attention to what has been marginal or silent”. In other words, postmodern may also adopt a Marxist perspective that social structures have an economic base. Examples of postmodern plays are Romeo Castellucci’s *Hey Girl* and Heiner Muller’s *Hamlet machine*. On the subject of the postmodern, Jack Richardson avers that:

Writing from the 1960s forward characterized by experimentation and continuing to apply some of the fundamentals of modernism, which included existentialism and alienation. Postmodernism has gone a step further in the rejection of tradition begun with the modernists by also rejecting traditional forms, preferring the anti-novel over the novel and the anti hero (136).

Bertolt Brecht is a major influence on the theatre of Abdul Rasheed Adeoye. In fact, neo-alienation is knitted in the theory of Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre. Neo-alienation is a postmodern theatre that is a rebirth and an amplification of Brecht’s Epic Theatre. Brecht’s influence on Adeoye’s (iv) theatre is well explicated when he states that “Brecht is to us, a radical

phenomenon and an unrepentant theatre revolutionary”. Adeoye incorporated the features of Epic theatre which share affinity with traditional Nigerian and African theatre into his theory, neo-alienation, with which his dramatic works are evaluated. In addition, Gassner states that Epic theatre is „a mode of modern theatre in recent decades that has received the greatest attention in intellectual circles, both academic and non-academic”(279) . Furthermore, the spirit of revolution embedded in Bertolt Brecht’s Epic theatre is replete in Adeoye’s neo-alienation. The crux of neo-alienation however, is its strong stand on revolution and counter revolution, culture and counter culture. It is relevant in the Nigerian context as it bridges the gap and disparity between traditional Nigerian theatre and its western counterpart. Adeoye’s aesthetics are a codification of the twelve principles of his theatre (neo-alienation). They are:

1. The Aesthetics of Theme Song of Audience/Players” Systemic Fraternisation
2. Multiple Role-Playing Aesthetics
3. The Aesthetics of Artistic Deconstruction
4. The Aesthetics of Human Props and Demystification
5. The Multiple Narrators” Aesthetics
6. The Aesthetics of De-technicalisation
7. On-the-Stage Make-up and Costuming Aesthetics
8. The Aesthetics of Complete Instrumentation on Stage
9. Photogramic/Captions” Aesthetics
10. The Modern Operatic Aesthetics
11. Trado-Modern Dance Aesthetics
12. The Critical Recalling Curtain Call Aesthetics (Adeoye, vii).

The aforementioned features of neo-alienation are replete in most postmodern plays. For example, in the first law which is The Aesthetics of Theme Song of Audience/Players” Systemic Fraternisation, the audience and players (actors) fraternize. This is an ardent feature of postmodern theatre. In fact, postmodern theatre gives room for intercourse, collaboration and socialization of the performers and the audience. The interpretation process of

the performance by the audience, differs from one another. It makes the audience part of the creation process. This is replete in *The Smart Game* (2009) where the author uses the first song of the play to „ring the bell of the audience/players“ systemic fraternization“. (Adeoyee, vii). Players One, Two and Three walk onto the stage, from the auditorium. With this, the audience becomes fully absorbed in the action, not just empathically (which is Aristotelian), but logically. In fact, they become co-authors of the performance process. Postmodern theatre is a contravention of the conventional theatre championed by theatre theorists such as Aristotle and Horace. Adeoyee's magnum opus, *The Smart Game*, evaluated in the context of conventional or Aristotelian drama, is anti-art. *The Smart Game* shows its author as a militant artist. He is radical in the content and style of his art. In fact, he is anti-tradition and anti-convention. However, unlike the Dadaist, he is not anti-God as he portrays in his play, *The Killers*.

Another component of the postmodern in the dramaturgy of Adeoyee is the mixture of various conventions, styles and techniques. His dramaturgy is eclectic in technique. In other words, he borrows from various theatre aesthetics from different periods. For instance, the fourth law of neo-alienation is Aesthetics of Human Props and Demystification. The performers or players also serve as the props, while elaborate properties are not brought on stage. The actors are the chairs, the tables, the television and other properties. Furthermore, by demystification, we mean the various artistic elements such as language, properties and set, are simple. They are neither elaborate nor larger than life. Consequently, properties, lighting and costumes are not integral part of the artistic process.

Furthermore, the second law of the theory of neo-alienation which is a product of postmodernism, is the Aesthetics of artistic Deconstruction. By aesthetic of artistic deconstruction, is meant a break nay a detour from the conventional theatre. In *The Smart Game*, the components of what constitutes theatre are torn apart. The conventional act and scene modus in playwriting is deconstructed. The dramaturge in this approach uses the themes in the various situations to delineate the scene. Hence, there is

„Rumbling Tongue“, „The Genesis“, „It takes Two to Tango“, „Those who put their Fingers in the Cobra“s Mouth“, „Confusion at Oloriebi“s House“, and „A Plan within a Plan“ (Adeoye, vii). In addition, *The Smart Game* uses the element of Song. Like Epic theatre, songs play a major role in the performance. Hence, the tenth and eleventh laws of neo-alienation are “The Modern Operatic Aesthetics” and “Trado-Modern Dance aesthetics”. Songs used in *The Smart Game*, include *Song of Affluent*, *Song of it is Different*, *Song of Meat*, *Song of the Rich Man* and so on. These songs advance the plot. The dances in the play are a fusion of the indigenous and the modern.

The characters in the play call for an enactment of the *Superman* and the *Superwoman* in Gbenga and Nike“s emphasis. However, the concept of *Superman* and *Superwoman* in this play text is an expression of Patriarchy and Feminism. This is explicated in the statement below:

Player One: I strongly believe that feminism, especially the one coloured in African garb is fustian and quite anti-African: my thesis is that man is the head of the house. For the power of the masquerade goes beyond its mask (Adeoye, 2).

This brings to the fore, the place of individualism, a subject of postmodernism in the dramaturgy of Adeoye. Postmodernism is a fragmentation and a conglomeration of various techniques, styles, forms and doctrines. Like Wole Soyinka, Abdul Rasheed is a wordsmith. This is portrayed in his choice of complex words such as:

Hassan: ... The shrine must be relocated elsewhere. Be rational and critical so as to avoid unnecessary religio-cultural upheavals (Adeoye, 8).

As a social dramaturge, Adeoye dramatizes the society. As an artist, he is a seer, a sage and a prophet. This is because his work is a socio-political construct. Adeoye“s dimension in dramaturgy, carves a niche for a marriage of Western and Nigerian theatre elements. Although he theatricalises the Brechtian and the Grotowskian (by incorporating some features of poor theatre such

as the performers and audience communion, and the utility of limited costumes), he fuses this with Nigerian traditional songs and dances, with a subject matter that revolves around issues that are prevalent in contemporary Nigerian societies.

Conclusion

Sam Ukala's Folkism is patterned along the indigenous Nigerian performance mode, and the sociological thrust of his plays is also committed to a reconstruction of a failing nation such as Nigeria. He uses the aesthetics of Marxism to initiate a call for a revolution in a society such as Nigeria as this would combat Nigeria's socio-economic and political problem. Hence, he is an advocate of Marxist ideology. In addition, with the use of neo-alienation technique, which has features of postmodern theatre, Abdul Rasheed Adeoye constructs a theatre that is an archetype of the trado-western theatre mode. Adeoye's theatre is also committed to the advancement of the betterment of the Nigerian society. In conclusion, the ideology of Marxism in Ukala's dramaturgy and the poetics of Postmodernism in Adeoye's theatre, set the pace for further research by Nigerian playwrights in experimental theatre, as socio-political constructs, Abdul Rasheed Adeoye and Sam Ukala's theatres are populist motivated as they are masses centered. This research recommends that Abdul Rasheed Adeoye, like Sam Ukala, should write more plays that conform to the theory of neo-alienation, to facilitate its popularization in the Nigerian and world theatre corpus.

Works Cited

- Adeoye, Abdul Rasheed. Aesthetics, dramaturgy and directorial poetics of Ayo Akinwale's theatre, In: A. Adeoye (Ed.). *The dramaturgy of a theatre sociologist: Festschrift in honour of Ayo Akinwale*. Ilorin: Department of the Performing Arts, University of Ilorin. 2012.
- Anigala, Austin. Drama as social intervention: Experimenting with Folkism. *Abraka humanities review: A journal of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University Abraka*. 2 (11): 2007.
- Anigala, Austin. Folkism and dramatic development in Africa. *International journal of current research in the humanities*, 2008.

- Bamidele, Lanre. *Literature and sociology*. Lagos: Sterling-Horden Publishers. 2001.
- Clark, Ebun. *Hubert Ogunde: The making of Nigerian Theatre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dobie, Ann. *Theory into practice: An introduction to literary criticism*. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2009.
- Gassner, John. *Directions in modern theatre and drama*. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston Inc. 1956.
- Kanneh, Kadiatu. African identities: Race, nation and culture In: A. Irele (Ed.), *Ethnography, Pan Africanism and Black literatures* London: Routledge: Publishers. 2008.
- Novitz, Dave. Postmodernism: Barthes and Derrida. In: B. Gaut and D. Lopes (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to aesthetics*. London: Routledge Publishers. 2001.
- Ogundeji, Paul. The contributions of DuroLadipo to Nigerian drama and theatre, In: R. Oyelade, S. Olorunyomi and A. Duro-Ladipo (Eds.), *DuroLadipo: Thunder-god on stage* Ibadan: Institute of African Studies. 2003.
- Ukala, Sam. *Akpakaland and other plays*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 2011.
- Ukala, Sam. *Two plays: The placenta of death and The last heroes*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited. 2007.
- Richardson, Jack. *Illustrated dictionary of literature*. Delhi: Lotus Press. 2011.

Thirty-Five



The Politics of Dispossession and the Redemptive Praxis in G“Ebinyo Ogbowe”s *Marsh Boy and Other Poems*

Peter Emuejevoke Omoko

Introduction

The king has soldiers to enforce his orders, and prisons for their infractors; the pontiff has a captive congregation by the “divine sanction” behind his words. But the writer has no such far-ranging temporal and spiritual powers. He can only reach the willing reader through the private antennae of his consciousness (Niyi Osundare 1986:1).

The Niger Delta Poets “do not merely nag; they also guide. They are gravely involved in social criticism of their troubled society. Their howling songs commemorate the ecocide in the Niger Delta region,” (S.E. Kekeghe, 2014:68).

Writers have over the years used their works to shape society; redirect its steps to the path of progress and at the same time, chastise obstinate characters in the society. The early works of Charles Dickens, George Elliot, Jonathan Swift, to mention a few, inadvertently changed aspects of the despoliation of the English country side of the 18th century. Dickens’ *Hard Times* and *Oliver Twist* not only created awareness in the minds of the people about the degrading condition the poor and their children suffer, they instigate the society to redirect her resources to better the conditions of the downtrodden. It is this socialist reality that engendered what has come to stay as modern African literature. From the works of Sol Plaatje, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Ayi Kwe Armah, J.P. Clark, Sembene Ousmane, to mention a few, one apparent decimal that confronts

one is the urgent quest to right the wrongs in the existing social order. This is why G.G. Darah contends that "... all classical traditions of world literature are fostered by environments where there are intensive struggles against great evils for the restoration of human dignity" (100). These evils are those foisted on the masses by society's superstructures whose proboscises are constantly connected to their arteries where they bleed to an unremedied death.

In Nigeria, one of the issues that has engaged creative writers in recent times has been the reckless despoliation of the Niger Delta environment by the activities of oil multinationals in collaboration with the Nigerian government. This crass dispossession cum internal colonialism has generated debates and counter debates from many quarters; and more often than before has inspired literature which interrogates various strands of the injustices that are daily meted on the helpless people whose God-given crude oil wealth has become a curse to their existence. Committed and Radical writers of the region, such as Tanure Ojaide, Nnimmo Bassey, Ogaga Ifowodo, Ibiwari Ikiriko, G' Ebinayo Ogbowei, Ebi Yeibo, among others seem to have heeded Osundare's call for the writer at this moment of grave despoliation of their land to produce more of "literature of praxis, a concrete, activist literature with a clamorous statement about the social situation" (6), by churning out works that interrogate the disenchantment of the peoples of the Niger Delta. Ojaide's *Labyrinths of the Delta* (1986), *The Endless Song* (1989), *The Fate of Vultures* (1990), *Daydream of Ants and other Poems* (1997), *Delta Blues and Home Songs* (1999); Bassey's *Patriots and Cockroaches* (1992), *Intercepted* (1998), *We Thought it was Oil but it was Blood* (2002); Ifowodo's *Homeland and other Poems* (1998); Ikiriko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* (2000); Yeibo's *A Song for Tomorrow* (2003), *The Forbidden Tongue* (2007), *Shadows of the Setting Sun* (2012) and *The Fourth Masquerade* (2014), among others, are ready examples of literary works that examine the Niger Delta predicaments. In other words, the Niger Delta poets, like their English counterparts have constantly used their works to confront squarely, the distortion that the discovery of crude oil in

the region has brought on the life of the people. However, in the Nigeria case, art does not change society because the authorities who benefit from the injustices against the people seem to be allergic to change.

The Niger Delta and Politics of Dispossession

The Niger Delta, comprising geographically, six states of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Edo, Cross Rivers and Rivers; and politically, nine states, with the addition of Ondo, Abia and Imo states, is blessed with abundance of human and natural resources. Crude oil and gas resources have served as the mainstay of Nigeria's economy since the end of the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970. However, instead of progress in terms of development, the discovery of crude oil resources in the Niger Delta has translated to pains and sorrows to the people and their environment. We can therefore say that the Niger Delta is that "region within the political and geographical set-up known as Nigeria that suffers monumental social injustice, political marginalization and economic alienation in spite of its abundant natural resources" (Omoko 2013:180).

The status of the Niger Delta is made parlous by hegemonic forces in high places. As the essayist has noted elsewhere, since the 1970s when crude oil became the mainstay of Nigeria's economy,

Successive military regimes had alienated the people from the affairs of their country. Their resources – land, economic trees, and waterways have all been destroyed by the oil multinationals in collaboration with the military dictators with no corresponding development in the land. Therefore, when democracy was gained in 1999, the people accepted it as a breath of fresh air. They had hoped that the civilian politician would be more accessible and would listen to their demand for social justice. But few years into civil rule, it was clear to the people that the civilian-politicians are a chip off the old block – as gross mismanagement and looting of the nation's wealth become a normal way of life among the privileged few (Omoko, 2014:122).

Owing to these socio-political injustices perpetrated against the people, the youths of the region had no choice but to take up arms as an imperative option to confront their oppressors. And Ogbowei, like his predecessors, cannot fold his arms and watch from behind – he employs his art radically to participate in the struggle for liberation of his people from the hands of their tormentors. This, according to Osundare, is the real duty of the writer:

... a real writer has no alternative to being in constant conflict with oppression. Like the prophet(s) of the Old Testament, he is the guilty conscience of the king, his words the nagging, unremitting images in his mind, his words are an incitement to revolt, to disrupt the deathly equilibrium, the mendacious “peace and stability” of a truly violent system (4).

It is against this backdrop that Ogbowei takes up his pen, cocked with the pellets of defiance against the centrifugal powers that have held his people down for a long time. A course, he bears like an epic hero on a redemptive mission for his people. In other words he is alive to his responsibility as a critic and chronicler of his peoples’ shared experiences, as a commentator on the ills and tribulations of his society (Oyeniyi Okunoye, 2002:19). It is in this regard that Okunoye expresses his thoughts about African literature that “any informed assessment of contemporary African literature must recognize the fact that it is at once a recreation of social reality and a critique of the African condition (19).

G“Ebinyo Ogbowei is among the leading voices of the Niger Delta whose poetic oeuvres rest on the reclamation of the natural inheritance of his dispossessed kindred. He uses his poems to constantly attack various hegemonic structures within the Nigerian state for its connivance with foreign oil multinationals to perpetuate untoward evils upon the hapless peoples of the Niger Delta whose only crime against society is that crude oil deposit is found in their backyard. His foray into the art of poetic craft since his early days at the university, and his thematic thrust in recent years has demonstrated his commitment to the plight of the suffering masses in Nigeria, particularly his people of the Niger

Delta who suffer daily from environment degradation, pollution, and poverty. Faced with these experiences, the Niger Delta poets are committed in the quest to salvage their communities and region. No wonder Awhefeada declares that the Niger Delta poet “is sensible to the plight of his people and the prevailing condition of social decadence to which they have been subjected by political leaders” (380).

In recent years, Ogbowei’s poetry has attracted attentions from different quarters of the society. His collection *Let the Honey Run and other Poems* made a shortlist in the LNG Nigeria Prize for literature 2005, *The Town crier’s Song* and *The Heedless Ballot Box* were joint winners of the ANA Bayelsa Isaac Adaka Boro Prize for Niger Delta Literature, 2008 while the collection *Song of a Dying River* made a shortlist for the LNG Nigeria Prize for literature, 2009. With these robust outputs, Ogbowei has established himself as one of the leading poetic voices in the Niger Delta. In this essay therefore, we shall interrogate the revolutionary engagements of Ogbowei’s poetry. Efforts will be made to address their redemptive mission in the face of serious socio-political realities in the region. Our focus shall be on his collection, *Marsh Boy and Other Poems* (2013). This is because the collection best exemplifies the revolutionary stand of Ogbowei’s poetic oeuvres, who, like other radical poets of the region, believes that violence is a necessary ingredient in bringing the agitation of the masses to the purview of their oppressors.

Ogbowei’s *Marsh Boy and Other Poems* explores the conflict between the forces of exploitation and those of popular struggles as well as the intrigues that have become the fulcrum of the Niger Delta consciousness over the years. He uses various poetic tropes in evoking these thematic engagements. The collection is replete with poems that explicate the suffering and degrading condition of the people of the Niger Delta. In this collection, Ogbowei demonstrates a keen knowledge of the Niger Delta question and personalizes the suffering of the people who must come out of their shell to confront their tormentors, the oil multinationals and their Nigerian political allies. For example, in the title poem,

“marsh boy”, he uses the marsh boy to symbolize all those in the Niger Delta who are

locked in the prison of poverty
denied the right to rise
out of holes in sighing swamps
(*Marsh Boy*, 21)

The entire poem is clothed in revolutionary garbs that are capable of transporting the individual from the realm of apathy to that of anger and reaction. The poet injects into the individual the blood of confrontation, and the spirit to stand for justice even if it means sacrificing one’s life for it. Hence the poet-persona must become the marsh boy who must reclaim the lost land from the hands of the oppressors.

i am the marsh boy
quick and handy with a gun
i am the marsh boy
stalking beneficent tyrants
swept south by cruel storms
stolen in the mean months of „66
(*Marsh Boy*, 21)

The image of „66,” in the last line of the above quoted stanza unfolds the history of the evil of military infidelity and the inherent violence that it birthed. The socio-political events of 1966 in Nigeria that culminated in the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70 are of immense significance to the people of the Niger Delta. This was the period in which Chief Obafemi Awolowo, the Federal Commissioner (Minister) for Finance advised the then military head of state, Gen. Yakubu Gowon to promulgate a law that will invest on the Federal Government the right to own and control all petroleum resources in the Niger Delta. This was done to prevent the breakaway Biafran army from having access to the crude oil resources of the Niger Delta to prosecute the war against the Federal Government. The law, known as the Petroleum Decree 51 of 1969, now Petroleum Act, (Cap. 350, Laws of the Federation, 1990), “empowered the Federal Government to arbitrarily hijack

and nationalize the natural resource rights of the states and communities where petroleum was mined” (Darah, 2014:11). Hence, the resources of the Niger Delta were “stolen in the mean months of „66”. Over five decades after the end of the Nigerian civil war, the status of dispossession has remained the same. Here, Ogbowei’s political stand becomes apparent. The status quo must change to express justice and fair play in the Nigeria project. This, in the views of Peter Nazareth, is the duty of the committed African writer who must produce works that will unsettle the distorted political equation of their nations. According to him, no “African who writes about society in present day Africa can avoid being committed and political... In the sense that every attempt to re-organise society in Africa is a move which affects everybody, the figures at the top and the bottom” (6). In other words, instead of the people of the region, the owners of the petroleum resources to benefit from their God-given wealth, they are starved and pauperized by the authorities. Ogbowei intones:

We’d be decked in royal robes
 But you dress us in shrouds
 (*Marsh Boy*, 22).

It is this abnormality of double standards where the people who own the crude oil wealth of the nation are impoverished that the writers of the region have come out to address in their works. But successive military and civilian regimes have paid deaf ears to the demands of the people. This is because as far as oil remains the mainstay of the Nigerian economy, the status quo will benefit them.

Ogbowei further exposes in the poems that it is indeed the politicians and the military commanders in power that fuel the Niger Delta crisis. In their greed to own all the oil blocks in the region they make sure new entrant to the lucrative oil business is shut out. They work in collaboration with foreigners to recruit hungry youths from the region to help them engage in oil theft/bunkering and sometimes pay them to wreak havoc to oil installations where they make money through repairs and inflated budgets. As the essayist has observed elsewhere, “...the forces

against the African people are those of political and property groups who work in alliance with foreign compradors to milk the people of their self-dignity by impoverishing them through the exploitation of their services” (Omoko, 2013b: 59). In other words, these political and economic vultures benefit from all fronts of the crisis which unknown to them, deepens the level of distrust between them and the people:

angry waves wash away turkey cocks
commanders wrestling for control of oil
clinging to privileges that deny our humanity
establish the objective merits for war

commanders coveting stone to throne
legionnaires would live forever in the soaring city
recruits us to steal for them the useful objects

...
(*Marsh Boy*, 23)

Ogbowei, therefore, blames the environmental ruins and poverty in the Niger Delta on the politics of greed that has become rooted in the Nigerian political landscape. In “the tyranny of greed” he describes the average Nigerian politician as one who “...does nothing but grab and hide” (41). The politicians are selfish and care only about what they can grab from the system. They are entrenched in politics of seductions, killings as well as despoliation of the land. This status of dispossession and greed is well expressed by Chinyere Nwahunanya when he laments that the Niger Delta which “accounts for 98 percent of the nation’s foreign revenue ironically seems not to have been included in the calculations concerning how that revenue would be spent or invested” (xiii). The poet thus makes it clear that,

this is the tyranny of greed
this seductive violence
that snares your scoffing soul
that takes captive your mooning mania
takes it on a tour of killing fields
deep in the despoiled delta
(*Marsh Boy*, 41)

This idea also resonates in the poem, “welcome to our smouldering swamps” where Ogbowei paints the Federal government as a monster whose central focus is on the oil and gas wealth accruing from the Niger Delta, and not on the wellbeing of the natives of the Delta. Their waterways and forest resources have been devastated and all their means of livelihood taken away from them by the activities of the oil multinationals. Whereas, their counterparts in other parts of the world where crude oil resources are found, either in Asian, Europe or in the Americas, are treated like kings. This colossal disaster of the Niger Delta environment is well illustrated by Darah thus:

The oil industry has had a devastating impact on economic and social life. This is illustrated with unquantifiable amount of oil spillages, gas flaring, burst-pipe fires, degrading of exploration sites, and attendant ecological disasters. The negative socio-economic consequences of the petroleum industry are devastating because, being an export-oriented system, there is limited local involvement. The wealth generated from the industry benefits more foreign users and sections of Nigeria that enjoy hegemonic power to divert the wealth to favour their areas of the country (56).

The hostility of the Federal Government to their plight therefore, makes them to question if they are actually part of the general Nigerian project. This according to Nwahunanya, is “the symbol of the ironic contradictions of the consequences of capitalist exploitation by multinational economic interests teaming up with the local comprador bourgeois class” (xiii). This idea is also expressed by Stephen Kekeghe when he avers that the “Niger Delta poetry bears the characteristic rhythm that unfolds the paradox of pains, disappointments and hopes of the natives” (60). Amidst these obvious dislocations between the tormentors and the people of the region is the open coronation of corruption and dispossession with bloated fangs, ready to pounce on anyone who tries to dare the status-quo. These already crowned vices are imposed on the people and sustained by force and violence. This has resulted to a situation where the people are cowed – many with tortured sensibilities mused about aimlessly. Of course, those to

whom they look up have already sold their consciences to the Mephistophelian cabals that have held them down over the years. For the oppressors see anything that comes between them and the oil wealth of the people as an enemy which must be crushed to death. As Ogbowei laments,

you who'd kill your way to oil and gas fields
you who'd cultivate our confidence
pounding cross creeks into submission
waltz with us through the starving swamps
waltz with us through the maze of time

...

(Marsh Boy, 28)

Good schools and health facilities to the oppressors are a luxury to the people. They are non-entity in the Nigerian state that must be kept in a state of abject poverty in order to make them perpetually submissive to the exploiters.

what are schools and clinics to the vanishing ones
what are water pumps and power mowers
what are cruisers and **suv**s to the swamps dwellers

...

(Marsh Boy, 28)

Furthermore, the poet sees the oppressors as people who are always not comfortable with any move of resistance from the oppressed. They want them to be contented with their debased status.

i am the evil child who cries too much
you say
i am the spirit driving the delta round in loops
you say

(Marsh Boy, 22)

It is instructive to note that the poet also engages the sincerity of the so-called freedom fighters who benefit from the struggle of others just because they are privileged to negotiate the future on their behalf. These privileged few are the rural elite who recruit young boys and girls into the various militant camps to unleash

terror on the state. They are the ones who decide when and how temporary peace is needed in the region. They are the ones the insensitive government and the oil multinationals trust and patronize. To the poet, these are the bad eggs who betray the quest for justice and equity by the people. He does not hide his anger against them and their allies in government.

now locked doors are blown open
see scheming cowards and cunning criminals
celebrate the valour of partisans
their watchful practised steps
bringing them to thrones others have died for
(*Marsh Boy*, 25)

To the poet, until the authorities recognize that justice and equity are a prerequisite for peace, the Niger Delta will always be a battle field where the oppressed will continue to fight for their rights:

how can they live in peace
whose seductive symphony
calls out of ravaged rivers
the avenging demons of destitution
(*March Boy*, 25)

The consciousness that derives from the insensitive actions of the politicians in collaborations with the oil multinationals has made the people to be resolute in their quest to reclaim their land and God-given resources from the hands of the oppressors. They must do it by all means necessary to make sure their voices are heard in every quarter of the nation. This idea is well ontologised in the poem, “to brig-gen wuyep”

...
where we’ve resolved to make our stand
...
we’re the lowlifes
crawling out of the cracks
of your hissing hearts

mambas we raise our heads

stare you straight in the eye
stare you back your thieving tracks
lighting out of the undergrowth
(*Marsh Boy*, 46)

Here, Ogbowei becomes confrontational and uses his art as an appropriate instrument of propaganda to sensitise the people about the evils of the Nigerian government which collaborates with the oil multinationals to oppress them. It is against this creative thrust that Kalu Uka contends that all “art is in essence propaganda. Once one writes or dramatizes, one is in it. We must therefore do propaganda – with our art” (30). Ogbowei therefore does not hide his redemptive mission – he uses his art to create consciousness in the minds of the people, spurs them to action and makes them believe, as Ola Rotimi puts it, “not to do something is to be crippled fast” (6). As Ogbowei himself, explains:

... for me poetry is a legitimate weapon of war; to sensitise my people of the impending doom...we have a weak, dishonest government that doesn't represent any region, but a clan of murderous kleptocrats holding down and running a nation with great potentials... They are merchants of death, traders on the soul of the people they claim to serve (qtd. in Kekeghe, 2014:61).

He thus assumes the voice of the voiceless peoples of the Niger Delta, showing them the path that leads to salvation – which is to him, is a direct confrontation with the oppressors. The poet believes that his mission as a writer is “not only to explain the world” but to “change it” (Ngugi 1981:75). Ogbowei therefore explains that, he is

determined to cleanse the contumacious coasts
determined to drain the defiant wetlands
with flattery bribes and broken covenants
written with the blood of her branded braves
...
(*Marsh Boy*, 51)

To make headway in this noble task to reclaim the land from the hegemonic forces that

a wicked wind blows out of the parched north
a thirsty wind blows out of the improvident north
besieged like Leningrad

...

Who'd cleanse a race to advance a clan
(*Marsh Boy*, 33)

the people must be united. This is the means by which the collective call for justice and equity can be heard by those who care. Ogbowei affirms that at this stage of our political maturation, the people must put away fear and be ready to hunt down their disturbing nightmares. This idea is apparently conveyed in the poem, "hunt down ephialtes"

...hunt down ephialtes
clever little pig in brick house
turncoat has turned the truculent plains
over to pillagers and sackers

take our deathless message
take the deathless seed
sprouting in schoolrooms and trenches
take it to the master of the tables
(*Marsh Boy*, 31)

The image of the "clever little pig in brick house" is reminiscent of the character of Squealer in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* who is notorious for using „sweet words“ to deceive the other animals in the farm just to make sure that they are in perpetual submission to the whims and caprices of Napoleon's dictatorial rule. In other words, the people should be weary of vain promises by the government and the oil companies. This according to Osundare is the fulfilment of the writer's aspiration:

The fulfilment of a writer's aspiration is fraught with problems. While the king and, to a lesser extent, the pontiff... have an *instant* power to precipitate change, the writer's strategy is a slow and painstaking process of appeal and

persuasion. But it is the very nature and ramifications of the powers of these two that often give impetus, purpose and meaning to the writer's mission: to help the people, through his vision and inspiration, to demolish the chains and dungeons of the king and rout his task masters, and to disperse the clouds of mystification formented by the pontiff between the people and the firmament of social awareness. So in many ways, the existence of temporal and spiritual oppression which manifests itself in socio-economic and cultural subjugation does not make the writer's mission necessary, it makes it inevitable (3).

The aspect of Ogbowei's activism that strikes us in his redemptive mission is the quest to reclaim the machinery of power from the political and economic gladiators who have woefully failed the people in the provision of infrastructural development in the region. This theme is well fore grounded in the collection in that it is highlighted as his motivating insight.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, Ogbowei has thus shown that he is committed to the reclamation of his peoples' lost glory which has been bastardised by the activities of the oil-majors. He not only confronts evil in all its manifestation in the lives of the people but also lampoons the insensitive nature of the Nigerian government which collaborates with foreign capitalists to defraud the people. With this thematic thrust, Ogbowei has therefore engraved his name in the pantheon of African writers such as Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, J.P. Clark, Dennis Brutus, Lewis Nkosi, Ayi Kwe Armah, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tanure Ojaide and others who have used their works to champion the course of the masses.

Works Cited

Awhefeada, Sunny. "Poetry and National Evolutions: The Nigerian Experience" *Abraka Studies in African Arts 1: African Arts and National Development*. Sam C. Ukala (ed.) Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2006.

- Darah, G.G. *The Niger Delta: Resource Control and the Quest for Justice*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2014.
- Darah, G.G. "Revolutionary Pressures in Niger Delta Literatures" *Nigerian Literature Today: A Journal of Contemporary Nigerian Writing*. No. 1. Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu (eds.) Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited, 2010. Also in Chinyere Nwahunanya's (ed.) *From Boom to Doom: Protest and Conflict Resolution in the Literature of the Niger Delta*. New Owerri: Springfield Publishers Ltd, 2011.
- Kekeghe, E. Stephen. "The Paradox of Loss and Hope in Ibiwari Ikiriko's *Oily Tears of the Delta* and G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's *Song of a Dying River*." *Abraka Humanities Review: A Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka*. Vol. 6 No. 2, 2014.
- Nazareth, Peter. "The African Writer and Commitment" *Transition*. Vol. 19.
- Nwahunanya, Chinyere. "From Boom to Doom: The Niger Delta in Contemporary Nigerian Literature" *From Boom to Doom: Protest and Conflict Resolution in the Literature of the Niger Delta* Chinyere Nwahunanya (ed.) New Owerri: Springfield Publishers Ltd, 2011.
- Okunoye, Oyeniyi. "Exploration in New Nigerian Poetry" *Writing the Homeland: The Poetry and Politics of Tanure Ojaide*. Onookome Okome (ed.) Bayreuth: Eckhard Breitingner, 2002.
- Omoko, E. Peter. "Themes of Environmental Despoliation and Social Justice in Urhobo Popular Songs" *Abraka Humanities Review: A Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka*, Vol. 5, No.1, 2013.
- Omoko, E. Peter. "Marxist Aesthetics in Select Plays of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Femi Osofisan" *Delta State Society of Nigerian Artists: Visual Arts Journal*. Vol. 3, No. 1, January, 2013.
- Omoko, E. Peter. "Urhobo Female Musicians" *ARIDON: The International Journal of Urhobo Studies*. Number 1, 2014.
- Osundare, Niyi. "The Writer As Righter" *Ife Monographs on Literature and Criticism*. 4th Series, No. 5, 1986.
- Rotimi, Ola. *The Gods are not to Blame*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Uka, Kalu. "From Commitment to Essence: A View of African Writing". *Literature and Modern West African Culture*. D.I. Nwoga (ed.) Benin City: Ethiope Publishing Corporation, 1978.

Thirty-Six



Attainment of the Goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): A Historical Appraisal

Chukwuemeka Ojione Ojieh

Introduction

Since the end of colonial rule in Africa, there have been series of "Africa's development thinking" which were "often heroic efforts by African leaders to craft an appropriate and indigenous development paradigm for the continent" (Maloka 2002:1). In this regard, "the first significant attempt was the „Declaration on Cooperation, Development and Economic Independence" adopted by the OAU in 1973" (Maloka 2002:1) In the 1980s, we saw the Lagos Plan of Action for Economic Development of Africa. The African Priority Programme for Economic Recovery (APPER) "was an attempt to reverse the Lagos Plan of Action after five years of unsuccessful implementation of the initiative" (Maloka 2002:2). It was adopted by the OAU in 1985 and was to be used by the OAU to pressure the "United Nations at its Special Session in 1986 to adopt the Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990" (Maloka 2002:2). There were also, other complementary United Nations" initiatives such as the UN Programme for the Economic Redressing and Development of Africa, Alternative Structural Adjustment Programme for Africa and the African Scope of Reference for SAP"s for Socio-Economic Redressing and Transformation (Ekpo 2002:1). There were also, the year 2000-targeted initiatives which included the Protocol for the Establishment of an African Economic Community and the Final Act of Lagos 2000. The current millennium has seen the Conference on Security, Stability,

Development and Cooperation in July 2000 and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which was consummated in October 2001.

NEPAD was conceived as a new thrust in Africa's relations with the rest of the world; particularly the developed countries and was inspired by the need for Africans themselves to launch Africa on the part of growth and development. Criticisms however trailed NEPAD's claim at being a novel initiative and this development largely stems from NEPAD's underpinning in neo-liberal orthodoxy. This is from the point of view that NEPAD principles did not mark a departure from the age-long development initiatives that were in the past well-crafted by Bretton Woods' institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. Hence, NEPAD was said to be a continuation of the old policies. With a heavy dependence on the industrialized North for funding, NEPAD did not depart from the age-long trend of African nations being largely aid recipients. Flowing from the foregoing, there became concerns as to the capacity of NEPAD to actualize its stated goals within its target date of 2015. History has already shown that date to be mere illusion. Why? This article is a historical appraisal of this situation of inability of NEPAD to attain its set goals within its target date of 2015.

Theoretical Framework

NEPAD is deep-rooted in neo-liberal orthodoxy. Its strong point being that market forces are the engines that propel development with states providing the enabling environment to regulate and facilitate same. This kind of theory is replete with a dominance of economic postulations which by "incorrectly assuming that market based prices can allocate resources appropriately ... has ignored the political issues at stake in modernizing institutions" (Scott 2002:161). These include corruption, unstable governments, lopsided allocation of resources, etc. To so ignore such political issues will portend danger because when for instance Europe led world trade for a long time, this was because "the Europeans also led in establishing accountable governments" (Scott 2002:172).

It has been shown that this realization, that is, the need for accountable governments; did not in an unfettered manner inform the insistence of the NEPAD proponents on good governance as a cardinal principle of the NEPAD. It is known that staff of the World Bank and the IMF had responsibility in drawing the draft documents of NEPAD. However, in order that the NEPAD idea receives a Pan-African outlook at least in its conceptualization and ownership, these agents joined African leaders in their claim to NEPAD's African-owned and by so doing, tried to avoid being accused of foisting an agenda on Africa.

The Objectives of NEPAD

When the African El Dorado year of 2000 passed without African states getting out of the woods, an additional fifteen-year moratorium was given via the NEPAD idea. In this arrangement and through a collective resolve of African leaders, Africa was to take its destiny in its own hands by applying African remedies to African problems. This was with the aim of eradicating poverty in Africa and placing African countries both individually and collectively on the path of sustainable growth and development and thus, halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process (NEPAD 2001:15). To this end, Africa was to achieve and sustain an average gross domestic product growth of above 7% per annum for the next 15 years (from the year 2000); ensure the reduction of the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half by 2015, enroll all children of school age in primary school by 2015, to make progress towards gender equality, reduce infant mortality ratio by two-thirds by 2015, reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters by 2015, provide access for all who need reproductive health services by the same year as well as implement a national strategy for sustainable development by 2005 in order to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015 (NEPAD 2001:16).

To this end, NEPAD leaders undertook responsibility for the following objectives:

- (i) strengthen mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution;
- (ii) promoting and protecting democracy and human rights;
- (iii) restoring and maintaining micro-stability through fiscal and monetary policies;
- (iv) regulating financial market and private companies;
- (v) promoting the role of women in several economic development;
- (vi) revitalizing health training and education with a high priority given to HIV/AIDS;
- (vii) maintenance of law and order;
- (viii) the promotion and development of infrastructure (Mbazira 2004).

A Score Card of NEPAD

Suffice to note that from the start, there have been reservations in various quarters on the capacity of NEPAD to attain its 2015-targetted objectives. This pessimism stemmed from the faulty grounds upon which the NEPAD idea was premised. These include:

- (a) Lack of sufficient consultation and involvement of African peoples and states in drawing up the NEPAD initiative.
- (b) NEPAD's bloated reliance on foreign donors for its sustenance;
- (c) Non-originality in its strategies for ensuring good governance since the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) borrowed the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) indexes with just minor changes and hence, does not show relevance to the African situation.

Lack of sufficient consultation and involvement of African peoples and states in drawing up the NEPAD initiative

Suffice it to note that the selling point of NEPAD had been the hype about its being African-owned. A major reason for the less-than-successful scorecards of the previous attempts at continent-

wide development programmes for Africa, included non-African ownership of such initiatives (NEPAD 2001:10). The failure of development in Africa, has mainly been due to the “marginalization of its people from decision-making” (Mshama 2002:1). Hence, it was believed that “the New Partnership for Africa’s Development will be successful only if it is owned by African peoples united in their diversity ... only if our peoples are masters of their own destinies” (NEPAD 2001:13). African peoples were therefore, enjoined to mobilize and allow themselves to be mobilized in support of the implementation of the NEPAD “initiative by setting up at all levels, structures for organization, mobilization and action”, because, “The New Partnership for Africa’s Development is envisaged as a long-term vision of an African-owned and African-led development programme” (NEPAD 2001:15).

But the fact is that through the policies of the World Bank, and the IMF, and the neo-colonial policies of countries like the United States, Britain, France, etc.; who have not only influenced the adoption, but also the execution of the economic and sometimes political policies of many African countries, African economies came under bondage and African countries had had to go cap-in-hand to the west for aid. This reinforced the dependency syndrome which had been the bane of Africa’s participation in the global economy. But NEPAD was said to have set out to arrest this and other neo-colonialist trends. To underscore African leaders’ resolve via NEPAD to halt this trend, then President Obasanjo of Nigeria once declared that African countries will no longer tolerate the situation where “the industrialized nations continue to impose extraneous demands on the continent and their threats to withhold aid if such demands are not met” (Abdullahi 2002: 35). Aptly put, this means that “Africans will no longer, be wards of benevolent guardians; rather, the architects of their own sustained development” (Komolafe 2002:21).

NEPAD was a resolve of African leaders to halt the dependency syndrome, involve African people in the formulation of the strategies aimed at Africa’s sustainable development and ensure that such strategy as NEPAD was incorporated into national

governments and the African Union to underscore its relevance. But how truly Africa-owned was NEPAD? As an initiative that postured as an African framework, anchored on the need for a new relationship between Africa and the developed world and international agencies, NEPAD was apt, but its being truly Africa-owned turned out not to be so and became a factor in its failure to attain its set goals at the end of the year 2015 timeframe. The question thus arises at this point; who were those involved in the initiative or what was the extent of Africans' involvement in bringing NEPAD about?

At inception, frantic efforts were made to give NEPAD an international certification with the African civil society and organized private sector sidelined. In this regard, it had been queried why NEPAD was first presented to the G8 before African governments discussed it. The truth is that the Millennium Partnership for Africa Recovery Programme (MAP) and Omega Plan visions which culminated in the NEPAD, principally aimed at extricating Africa from the debt burden. But conditionalities to bring this about such as Peace, Security, Democracy, Economic and Corporate Governance could only derive from those, set by the „giver“ of the debt waiver. Hence, “in formulating the [NEPAD] vision and project, focus was on the crucial dialogue between African states, the G8 and the Bretton Woods Institutions” (Raji 2002:47).

This led to criticisms of the NEPAD initiative as lacking in collectivity as a continental project after all NEPAD had to be presented to the outside world first, before Africans whose problems it was meant to solve could deliberate on it. Hence, the efficacy of the NEPAD therapy to Africa's development problems was in doubt. This is so given the rather non-public engagement in support of it. Thus, it was not well known, understood and embraced because of non-sufficient involvement of the people in articulating it. The South Africa Bishops Conference had accused NEPAD to have “completely failed to meaningfully engage with communities and civil society organizations. NEPAD completely sidelined civil society ... given the perception of civil society as an irritating animal by African politicians” (Wameyo 2003: 84), and

hence ignoring their role in shaping Africa's development. Civil society is the heartbeat of the people and for NEPAD, civil society continued to fault its framework. The truth is that:

On a more ideological plane, civil society critics contend that NEPAD is an unquestioning endorsement of the neo-liberal framework for seeking uncritical integration into the world economy, and that such an endorsement, besides many other misgivings it may give rise to, fails to recognize that it seems to assign a subordinate role to the African economies in the current globalization process (Mshama 2002:4).

Wameyo (2003:87) notes that "Development cannot be the exclusive monopoly of the elite, it must necessarily have popular anchorage." So, when the New African Leadership Group made up of Nigeria's Obasanjo, South Africa's Mbeki, Senegal's Wade, etc., having assigned to themselves the role of "deciders" of the fate of Africa and hence, in conjunction with the G8 decided to foist on Africans the neo-liberal features in the Washington Consensus, they reduced NEPAD to "a marketing exercise" and "a heads-of-state project." (Mshama 2002:2).

In all, whereas, NEPAD claimed ownership of the process by the African people and indeed exhorted Africans to mobilize themselves behind NEPAD, they were not consulted in the process and herein lies the democratic deficit of NEPAD, which though, had put the promotion of democracy and good governance on high priority, yet the formation plan began without the full involvement of the people and the 2015 date for the actualization of NEPAD's goals became a mirage.

NEPAD's bloated reliance on foreign donors for its sustenance

Here, we talk about the funding of NEPAD as a factor for its failure to meet its set target in 2015. The curious question is that of how NEPAD was to be funded. NEPAD was premised on the assumption that the G8 would fund it. Actually, when Mbeki presented the "African Renaissance" idea to G8 meetings and particularly at the World Economic forum in July 2001, his striving was to drum up support from the super powers for Africa's

“realization that it must be responsible for its own development so long as donor community plays its part” (Nabudere 2002:17). When at the G8 summit at Genoa, it (the G8) accepted this plea by instituting an Action Plan for Africa, it did not disguise its self-seeking interest when it gave conditions for partnering with Africa in NEPAD. African states were to demonstrate further commitments to conflict prevention, management and resolution, consolidation of democracy and rule of law, operation of free market economies so as to attract foreign investment. The G8 “acceptance speech” read thus:

We have decided today to forge a new partnership to address issues crucial to African development. We are committed to promoting this objective with our African partners and multilateral fora – in the UN, the World Bank, and the IMF, and in a new Round of WTO negotiations. Our partnership will support the key themes of the New African Initiative, including:

- Democracy and political governance
- Prevention and reduction of conflict;
- Human development by investing in health and education, and tackling HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria including through the Global AIDS and Health Fund;
- Information and communication technologies;
- Economic and corporate governance;
- Action against corruption;
- Stimulating private investment in Africa;
- Increasing trade within African and between Africa and the world
- Combating hunger and increasing food security (Nabudere 2002:20).

African leaders accepted these terms and by so doing turned blind eyes to the inequalities of the current globalization process. This amounted to agreeing that for African states to benefit from the current globalization exercise, they have to have World Trade Organization (WTO) compliant laws and thereby, “accepting all

the unfair measures that exist in the WTO rules which they are struggling to change in the WTO” Chakraverthi (2003:1).

In Uruguay – 1995, African leaders had endorsed the unequal terms of the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement. In subsequent talks principally in Seattle (November, 1999), Cancun (September, 2003), and Hong Kong (December, 2005), etc., African states which constitute the chunk of the 80% third world membership of the WTO (Ojeh 2004:6), have not been able to effect an outright re-write of these terms of trade. The consequence has been the further widening of the very gap, which NEPAD sought to fill. This is so because, now as before, “if there is any evidence of the disadvantage of the new states in international law, it is in the area of International Economic Law” (Okhonmina 2004:8).

Like defeated Generals, African leaders, via NEPAD submitted to uphold the unequal clauses of the WTO trading system. The truth is that, from that moment when African leaders declared; “We therefore, call on our development partners to assist us in this endeavour” (NEPAD 2001:16), they signaled a return to the status quo. That is, the beggarly, aid-driven, dependency-based development strategies as depicted satirically by a popular photograph of the kneeling camel and its master/rider (Osahon 2002:30).

In what looked like a platform for the scrutiny of its annual scorecard, the then OAU, and later the African Union in conjunction with the Non-aligned Movement and the G77, since the year 2000, met annually with the G8. At these fora, after ascertaining the level of the new nations’ compliance with Western development strategies, aid packages were handed out to them by the great nations. But it can be precarious for development strategies to be predicated on the goodwill of donors because such goodwill could be withdrawn without notice should the donor feel otherwise. For NEPAD, from the beginning, the donors never disguised this possibility.

How altruistic can the donor nations be? Their aid gestures can only be self-serving, currying the favour of the so-called “failed states” to fight terrorism and when dealt with, aid could

decline or even cease. This was the case after the Cold War when aid to African declined “from \$17.2 billion in 1990 soon after the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989, to \$12.3 billion” (Nabudere 2002:26). Military aid halved from \$2 billion in 1985 to just over \$1 billion in 1997 and development assistance from \$820 million in 1991 to \$541 million in 1996 (Tilton 1998:1). It is from these same donors that African leaders were expecting \$64 billion annually to float NEPAD – the famed Africa-owned project which ironically “must be implemented with the [aid of] countries that have the necessary financial means” (SARPN 2002:1).

In all, African leaders failed to realize “that Africa was doomed to perpetual poverty and backwardness unless African leaders free themselves of egocentricity ... [and that] no country in the west had an obligation to baby-sit or spoon-feed independent African nations” (Osahon 2002:35). Failure to accept this fact, however unsettling, and do a rethink about Africa’s developmental strategy, resulted in the 2015 target-year of achieving the set goals being a mirage for NEPAD.

Non-originality in its strategies for ensuring good governance since the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) borrowed the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) indexes with just minor changes and hence, does not show relevance to the African situation

This is all about the touted novelty of the APRM as acclaimed by African leaders. A selling point of NEPAD was the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), The APRM was conceived on the assumption that even though extraneous factors subsist, the bane of Africa’s prosperity had been mal-administration. Good governance therefore, became an overriding premise for the achievement of NEPAD goals. The APRM therefore, was to carryout assessment of African governments’ good governance credentials. The purpose of the APRM was “to foster adoption of policies, standards and practices that promote political stability, high economic growth and sustainable development, as well as accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration” through sharing of experiences and reinforcing best practices

(NEPAD and African Union 2003, July 29:10). Also, areas of deficiencies were to be identified and need for capacity building assessed. Others included, institutionalizing peace and security, democracy and good governance and economic and corporate management.

These reviews were to assess accomplishments, shortcomings and make recommendations. All these came under four principal headings:

- (i) Democracy and good governance;
- (ii) Economic management;
- (iii) Corporate management;
- (iv) Socio-economic development.

There was a list of 90 indicators used as check-offs to measure nations' levels of facilitating these principles.

- (i) Democracy and good governance had 41 indicators ranging from the existence of an effective independent judiciary, operational human-rights' principles to the existence of an independent and effective Electoral Commission.
- (ii) Economic management had 15 check-offs including among others, the enactment of and enforcement of effective anti-corruption and anti-money laundering laws, publication of interim financial reports to ensure positive impacts on socio-economic development to enhance employment in both formal and informal sectors.
- (iii) Corporate management principle had 10 check-offs ranging from effective regulations of accounting and auditing professions, to the protection of property and creditors' rights and the existence of effective environment impact assessment.
- (iv) Socio-economic development had 27 indicators including among others, food security, indexes of human development through poverty eradication, promotion of small medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and

credits available to them and sufficiency in national efforts at addressing health issues including pandemics such as HIV/AIDS.

In as much as these therapies to Africa's problems are laudable, the fact remained that they were not home-grown. This is notwithstanding the fact that when then President Obasanjo of Nigeria first muted the idea of evolving "a code of governance for Africa as part of the strategy to engender good governance in the continent", he noted that this peer review mechanism would be, "something separate from international bodies dominated by the western powers, but credible world-wide" (Ajayi 2002: 1-2).

But the good governance indexes adopted by the APRM were anything but separate from those pandered from international bodies dominated by western powers. At its first high level meeting, the NEPAD Panel of Eminent Persons on the APRM, more or less, settled for a rehash of the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) which were developed by the World Bank as its indexes for measuring countries' compliance with acceptable norms and standards in governance. (NEPAD and African Union 2003, July 29:10). The APRM's argument that its intention "was not to re-invent the wheel, but to take advantage of already existing processes ..." runs counter to the term of reference which stipulated "something separate from international bodies dominated by the Western powers ..." thereby reaffirming the dependency syndrome in NEPAD (NEPAD and African Union 2003, July 29:10).

Moreover, the APRM sought to extract discipline from African leaders in order to receive the "good governance" certificate was neither demanded by the African people themselves, nor were there evidence that this was what they desired. Again it had the consequence of not being sustained in the long run (Nabudere 2002:30), being only temporarily sustained by force because if African leaders failed to discipline themselves, they would be punished. The consequence was the failure of NEPAD to meet its target date of 2015 for attainment of goals.

The foregoing should not however, take away from the isolated achievements of the NEPAD project. In consonance with NEPAD's good governance initiative, it has become the practice of African leaders not to recognize illegitimate governments. For instance, in 2003, coup plotters in Sao-Tome and Principe on the threat of non-recognition by the African Union did a retraction and President Fernandez was restored. About same time, Foure Eyadema of Togo was denied recognition by ECOWAS and AU leaders until he went through the process of an election to legitimize his accession to the presidency of his country. The story has been the same in Cote d'Ivoire where Alassane Ouattara was recognized in place of Laurent Gbagbo in 2011 and Blaise Compaore was rejected in Burkina Faso in 2014. When in January, 2017, then President Yahya Jammeh refused to relinquish power to Adama Barrow who had defeated him in an election, the threat of force by the African Union and ECOWAS forced Yahaya Jammeh to concede defeat (Ojeh 2017:213-214).

Through the peer review devise a couple of countries were peer-reviewed to ascertain the levels of their good/co-corporate governance compliance. They included Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and Mauritius. On account of poor good-governance credentials, on January 26, 2006, Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir was denied the chair of the AU. Also, NEPAD's new structure for peace and security is worthy of note. In May 2006 for instance, the long elusive peace/cease fire agreement between the Sudanese government and Dafur rebels was signed in Abuja.

In the area of partnership with the West, because of NEPAD's international acceptance, African nations received appreciable debt forgiveness. The World Bank and ADB in a measure of response started funding regional projects in Africa. There were strong evidence of synergies between NEPAD goals and development initiatives from the West. The Washington-based Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) pledged to assist in NEPAD's call to strengthen the private sector. The CCA established "structures that would facilitate the financing of select development projects and programmes, beside harmonizing the programmes of actions of

governments and providing amenities fit for their execution” (William-Adigun 2002:35).

Conclusion

Despite the forgoing evidence of some kind of achievement for NEPAD, the conclusion is that this did not match the targeted goals set against the 2015 terminal date. This is so because, contrary to the set goals, by 2015, NEPAD did not:

- (a) eradicate poverty in Africa nor place African countries both individually and collectively on the path of sustainable growth and development
- (b) halt the marginalization of Africa in the globalization process and make Africa to achieve and sustain an average gross domestic product growth of above 7% per annum
- (c) ensure the reduction of the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half
- (d) enroll all children of school age in primary school
- (e) make progress towards gender equality, reduce infant mortality ratio by two-thirds
- (f) reduce maternal mortality by three-quarters, provide access for all who need reproductive health services by the same year as well as implement a national strategy for sustainable development by 2005 in order to reverse the loss of environmental resources. NEPAD’s declaration that by 2015 “The hopes of Africa’s people for a better life can no longer rest on the magnanimity of others” has been turned inside-out by the abundance of evidence that Africa still cannot succeed without the good-will of the west.

While admitting that the vigor of re-envisioning Africa via NEPAD was unparalleled, its inclusion in the present globalization exercise that is operated on Breton Wood’s recipes of deregulated and free market economies has left Africa not only continually dependent but perpetually subservient in this partnership. But

Africa can check this trend. African and other third world countries' insistence on the redrawing of the WTO agreement had stalled successful outcomes of trade talks since the Uruguay Round of Talks in 1995. Sufficiency in consultation was required for a programme like NEPAD to have gained the followership and commitment of those whom it was to directly impact upon. The driving force behind NEPAD should have been the people represented in institutions like the NEPAD secretariat and not personalities like Obasanjo and Mbeki, etc. All of the pitfalls that hunted NEPAD, must be addressed as Africa journeys through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for another fifteen years.

Works Cited

- Abdullahi Abdulazeez (2002, May 23). NEPAD: African leaders flatter to deceive. *VANGUARD*, p. 35.
- Ajayi Rotimi (2002, March 27). Obasanjo makes case for Code of Governance in Africa. *VANGUARD*, pp. 1-2.
- Chakravarti Kaghavan (2003). *Africa: NGOs Start Campaign Against US AGOA*. Retrieved July 7, 2003, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title.agoa.html>.
- Ekpo Akpan (2002). Economic Governance and the Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Being a paper presented at the African Forum for Envisioning Africa, 26-29 April, 2003, Nairobi, Kenya, p.1.
- Komolafe Babajide (2002, May 8). Observations and resolutions of civil society on NEPAD. *VANGUARD*, p. 21.
- Maloka, E. (2002). Introduction: Africa's Development thinking since Independence. In African Institute of South Africa. *Africa's Development thinking since Independence A Reader*. Pretoria: African Institute of South Africa.
- Mbazira Christopher (2004). *The New Partnership for Africa's Development: Implications for the Realisation of Socio-Economic Rights in Africa*. Retrieved undated from the World Wide Web, @ <http://www.community law center.org.za/ser/esr 2004/2004 May - nepad.php>.
- Mshama Rogate (2002). The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Its success depends on participation of African people. *Echoes*, No. 21. Retrieved December 12, 2002 from the World Wide Web, @ <http://www.wcc.coe.org/wcc/what/jpc/echoes/echoes-21-10.html>.

- Nabudere Dani (2002). *NEPAD .HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND ITS PROSPECTS*. Retrieved from the World Wide Web July 18, 2003 @ [http://216.239.53.104/search? q=cache:s6SstWhFO MJ:www.worldsummit2002.org/texts/](http://216.239.53.104/search?q=cache:s6SstWhFO MJ:www.worldsummit2002.org/texts/)
- NEPAD and African Union (2003, July 29). High level meeting discusses the African Peer Review Mechanism. *NEPAD Dialogue Focus on Africa*, 10.
- NEPAD Implementation Committee, (2001, October). *The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*. Abuja, Nigeria.
- Ojieh Chukwuemeka Ojione (2017). The Swearing-in in Senegal: Evaluating the Extraterritorial Status of Nation's Embassies in Validating the Inauguration of President Adama Barrow of The Gambia. *University of Uyo Journal of Humanities* 21 (1), 210-229.
- _____. (2004). The World Trade Organization Agreement and Third World. Reactions: Evidence From Nigeria. *Journal of Law and Diplomacy.1.1* pp. 1-7.
- Okhonmina Stephen (2004). The Impact of New States on International Law. *Journal of Law and Diplomacy.1.1* pp. 8-11.
- Osahon Naiwu, (2002, August 21). What African Union? *VANGUARD*, p. 25.
- Raji, Remi (2002, August 1). NEPAD: Questioning the Forgotten Component. *Thisday*, p. 46.
- SARPN–South African Regional Poverty Network, (2002), *NEPAD Paris meeting (8 February, 2002).Joint Press Conference*. Retrieved from the World Wide Web on December 27, 2002 <http://www.sarpn.org.za/NEPAD/PressConference Feb2002/page2.php>.
- Scott, B. R. (2001). The Great Divide in the Global Village. *FOREIGN AFFAIRS* 80 (1), 160-177.
- Tilton Douglas, (1998). U.S. – African Economic Initiatives. *Foreign Policy InFocus* .Retrieved from the World Wide Web August 16, 2002, @ infocus.org/briefs/Vol.3/vzn//af.html.
- Wameyo Hamboka (2003). The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): The Role of Civil Society. In ObadareEbenezar and OyewoleDapo (eds.) *The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): Challenges and Developments*. Lagos: Centre for Democracy and Development.
- William-Adigun Shola (2002, September 20). Agenda for boosting private sector initiative in Africa. *VANGUARD*, p. 35.

Thirty-Seven



The Dynamics of Folk Culture in the Aesthetics of Yoruba Ifá and Chinese I-Ching

Bífátifé Olúfémí Adeseye

Introduction

If a boy has not seen another man's farm, he may revel in the illusion that his father's farm is the largest ever. In other words, the knowledge of the size or importance of someone else's possession may affect his level of appreciation of his possession or heritage. The desire to juxtapose Ifá system with I-Ching is therefore justified in this study.

What is Ifá?

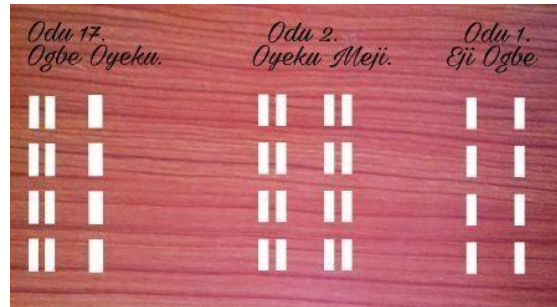
Ifa is an indigenous complex system as old as the inception of the Yoruba race. Yemi Elebuibon (2004, p. vii) extols Ifá as "a principal divinity in Yoruba religion, culture and belief systems." According to Elebuibon, Ifá is the repository of all wisdom and the controller of life and death. Hence, the description of Ifá as:

Akere finu sogbon
Ako eran ti nsoku ale ana daaye.
Ela isode
Ti nkomo loran bi iyekan eni.

Transliteration

The tiny embodiment of wisdom.
The wizard who turns the corpse of yester-night to a living being.
The Ela Isode
One who teaches one wisely like one's kinsman.

Ifá ancient philosophy is presented in an organized record which utilizes 16 simple combinations to name and identify principal divinities, and from pairing one half of each principal to that of another, the record achieves 240 sub-divinities; thus identifying 256 literary corpuses or books of Ifá. Interestingly, the 16 principal Odu (as the books are called) also derive their identities from two distinct notations of Ogbe and Oyeku. See Ifá signature/imprint of Eji Ogbe and Oyeku Meji; also explaining the first of the 240 mixed grill Odu(s); Ogbe-Oyeku:



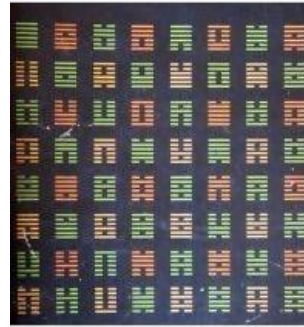
1.

Eji-Ogbe and Oyeku Meji are oftentimes rationalized as containing mainly two complementary phenomena of positive and negative forces of light and darkness respectively. These are essential indices in the development of arts and sciences. Indeed, Olu Longe in *Ifá Divination and Computer Science* (1998) argues that Ifá conforms to the discovery made by Arthur Cayley, an Englishman who originated the matrices.

It may be observed that Ifá is not a static ancient custom; it is capable of dynamic dispositions. The relevance of such dynamism is enhanced by the adaptability of the characters in its narrative poems. It follows, therefore, that the vehicle for the communication of Ifá's message in every *EṣẹIfá* is the narrative poem that is oftentimes a literature that moves and talks.



2.



3.

Odu-Ifa CORPUSES IN 16X16 OR² 64 hexagrams of I-CHING in 8x8 or 2⁴

What is I-Ching; Also called the Book of Changes?

Raymond Van Over provides a comprehensive explanation about I-Ching:

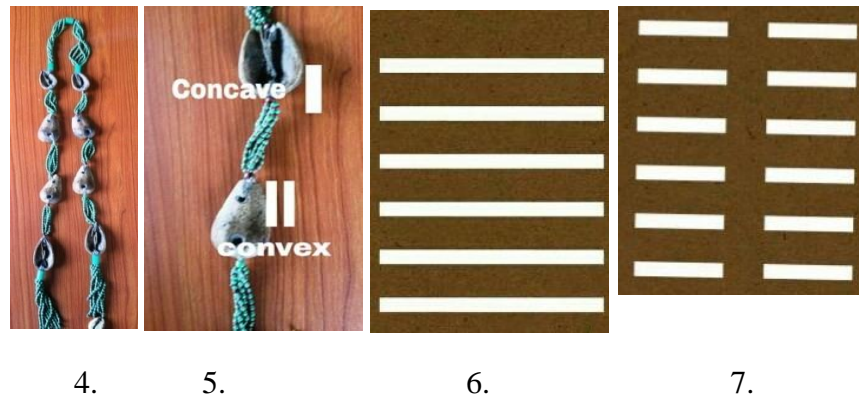
The picture of the world as laid down by the *Book of Changes* is that each questioner and the oracle with which he is answered have been preceded by a coherent and purposeful cosmos. The *I Ching* translates this ordered universe into a system of parallel symbols and organizes and presents them as sixty-four individual hexagrams. Each hexagram is composed of a six-line figure and symbolizes a specific attribute of life. These hexagrams are the framework within which the book presents its ideas. Each hexagram is, in effect, an essay. Its name, which represents ideas symbolic of human condition, immediately brings us to the sphere of the book.

The sixty four hexagrams of I-Ching, according to Raymond Over, were considered sufficient classification by the ancient authors of the *Book of Changes* to express the various human situations. They believed that more refinement would only engender confusion. The practical limitation of the number of hexagrams also allows the number of subdivision and combination

of sixty-four that a questioner can receive to remain within manageable proportions. The most permutations or answers that can be achieved with the *I Ching* is 4,096. These sixty-four hexagrams, their permutations and additional comments, are considered to provide a comprehensive description of the human condition at any given moment in an individual's or nation's life. It is written in the *His Tz'u*, or Appended Judgment, that:

The sages set up the symbols in order to express fully the ideas; they devised hexagrams in order to show fully truth and falsehood; they appended judgements in order to give full expression to their words. The sages devised hexagrams so that symbols might be perceived therein; they appended judgments so that good fortune and misfortune might be made clear (Van Over, 1971: 18-19).

The six lines of the hexagrams are composed of two types of lines- a solid line and a broken line. In composition, this bears a resemblance to the eight seeds of the *Òpèlè* chain in *Ifá*; in which every nut has a convex and a concave side like head and tail in the tossing of a coin.



The Chinese cosmogony indicates that these lines and their symbolic significance were devised by the legendary Emperor Fu-Hsi around 2852 B.C. The symbolic representation of the broken and the solid lines are *yin* and *yang*, which in turn represent two primary cosmos principles that correspond to the dynamic of

change. They are like the seasons, opposite poles that alternate and in alternating depend upon each other for their existence.

A correlation could be established in the naming patterns of both oracles. For instance, the names of the Odu Ifá (the corpuses) are situational to living beings. Literarily, Ogbe means support or backing; Oyeku alludes to warding off death; Iwori asserts loyalty; while Odi explicates secrecy.

Research Query

If our ancestors had been able to lay the foundations for a computer friendly encyclopedia of philosophy and total wellbeing at such a remote time in history and achieved such technological feat like the building of the ancient pyramid in Egypt, one wonders where our generation got it wrong that our continent became real back benchers in the comity of nations. This research also queries the unwholesome importation of foreign fads and the dependence on same in our socio-political and religious dispositions when there are proven indigenous potentials lurking in our folk cultures and begging for continuous relevance in our modern dispositions. It is pertinent to investigate what has been responsible for the relative lack of development of such a potent school of philosophy. A parable from one of the books in Ifá Corpus provides a plausible explanation for the lull. Irete „gbe or Ate „gbe, book number 212 in Ifá literary Corpus provides the needed explanation: (a similar parable can also be found in Ogbe Alara):

Ohun abinibi kii wu won They don't cherish their heritage
Ohun Olohun ni ya won lara They prefer things alien
A difa fun Iwo Woroko, This was divined for the Hook
Tinse alabarin Eja A peer to "fish"

This is an abridged version of the real poem. In the real story, the seven children of Orisa Nla (Obatala) were each sent on a voyage to bring elements of propitiation needed to save their ailing father... One of the imports of the message in the parable, quoted in part, is that, even though the oceans belong to the fish (as a God-given abode) it could not cherish it, and therefore, does not do anything to protect it, hence, the hook, a peer, who employs

material and intellectual capabilities, enslaves the partner. This is a metaphor on the eventual colonization of the whole continent of Africa by White “hooks” (hook, being a metaphor of the hook-like nose of most whites). We are dealing with culture here; we need to relate the two systems on the basis of cultural relevance to their respective environments.

Theoretical Framework

This study explores the dynamics of folk culture as explained in the extension of the meanings attributable to Sam Ukala’s theory of *Folkism*; especially relating to the largely unrecorded traditions of a people; which, according to him, “includes both the form and content of the traditions and their style or technique of communication from person to person”. Folk culture, like folklore is (mostly) the traditional, unofficial, non-institutional part of culture. It encompasses all knowledge, understandings, values, attitudes, assumptions, feelings, and beliefs transmitted in traditional forms by word of mouth or by customary examples.

However, the I-Ching had been an institution which had been an integral part of the socio political growth of the Chinese. The study observes that Ifá system would have enjoyed the same level of relevance to the Yoruba nation and beyond, if its documentation had been expanded beyond the oral transmission format, the way it had remained, for too long.

I-Ching and the Chinese Culture

According to Eliot Weinberger (2015), in *China and East Asia*:

I Ching has served for thousands of years as a philosophical taxonomy of the universe, a guide to an ethical life, a manual for rulers, and an oracle of one’s personal future and the future of the state. It was an organizing principle or authoritative proof for literary and arts criticism, cartography, medicine, and many of the sciences, and it generated endless Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, and, later, even Christian commentaries, and competing schools of thought within those traditions.

The *Book of Changes* has been by far the most consulted of all books, in the belief that it can explain everything. In the West, it has been known for over three hundred years and, since the 1950s, is surely the most popularly recognized Chinese book. With its seeming infinitude of applications and interpretations, there has never been a book quite like it anywhere. It is the center of a vast whirlwind of writings and practices, but is itself a void, or perhaps a continually shifting cloud, for most of the crucial words of the I Ching have no fixed meaning.

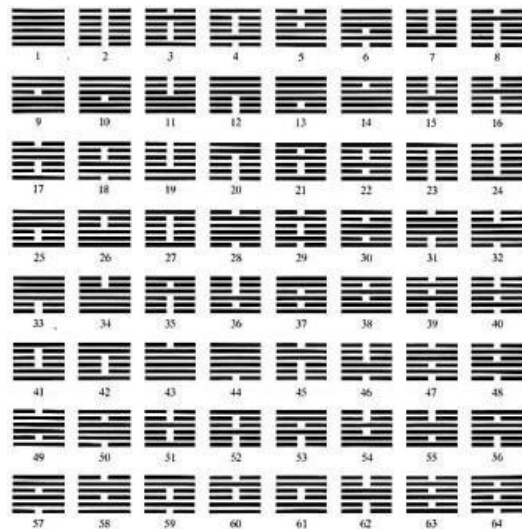
The origin of the text is, as might be expected, obscure. In the mythological version, the culture hero Fu Xi, a dragon or a snake with a human face, studied the patterns of nature in the sky and on the earth: the markings on birds, rocks, and animals, the movement of clouds, the arrangement of the stars. He discovered that everything could be reduced to eight trigrams, each composed of three stacked solid or broken lines, reflecting the *yin* and *yang*, the duality that drives the universe. The trigrams themselves represented, respectively, heaven, a lake, fire, thunder, wind, water, a mountain, and earth.

The historical account states further that; around the year 1050 BCE, according to the tradition, Emperor Wen, founder of the Zhou dynasty, doubled the trigrams to hexagrams (six-lined figures), numbered and arranged all of the possible combinations – there are 64 – and gave them names. He wrote brief oracles for each that have since been known as the “Judgments.” His son, the Duke of Zhou, a poet, added gnomic interpretations for the individual lines of each hexagram, known simply as the “Lines.” It was said that, five hundred years later, Confucius himself wrote ethical commentaries explicating each hexagram, which are called the “Ten Wings” (wing, that is, in the architectural sense).

The archaeological and historical version of this narrative is far murkier. In the Shang dynasty (which began circa 1600 BCE) or possibly even earlier, fortune-telling diviners would apply heat to tortoise shells or the scapulae of oxen and interpret the cracks that were produced. Many of these “oracle bones” – hundreds of thousands of them have been unearthed – have complete hexagrams or the numbers assigned to hexagrams incised on them.

Where the hexagrams came from, or how they were interpreted, is completely unknown.

Sometime in the Zhou dynasty – the current guess is around 800 BCE – the 64 hexagrams were named, and a written text was established, based on the oral traditions. The book became known as the Zhou Yi (Zhou Changes). The process of consultation also evolved from the tortoise shells, which required an expert to perform and interpret, to the system of coins or yarrow stalks that anyone could practice and that has been in use ever since. Three coins, with numbers assigned to heads or tails, were simultaneously tossed; the resulting sum indicated a solid or broken line; six coin tosses thus produced a hexagram. In the case of the yarrow stalks, 50 were counted out in a more laborious procedure to produce the number for each line.



8.

64 Hexagrams I Ching; Courtesy iupui.edu

By the third century BCE, with the rise of Confucianism, the “Ten Wings” commentaries had been added, transforming the Zhou Yi from a strictly divinatory manual to a philosophical and

ethical text. In 136 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty declared it the most important of the five canonical Confucian books and standardized the text from among various competing versions (some with the hexagrams in a different order). This became the I Ching, the Book (or Classic) of Change, and its format has remained the same since: a named and numbered hexagram, an arcane “Judgment” for that hexagram, an often poetic interpretation of the image obtained by the combination of the two trigrams, and enigmatic statements on the meaning of each line of the hexagram. Confucius almost certainly had nothing to do with the making of the I Ching, but he did supposedly say that if he had another hundred years to live, 50 of them would be devoted to studying it.

Salient Similarities in Ifá and I-Ching Systems

This study observes that none of the two systems involves the use of spirit mediumship in its divination techniques. Rather, they both employ permutations based on the outcome of physical random sorting that are highly mathematical. A careful investigation of some of the tools employed by both systems revealed more similarities in the two systems.

Tossing the Coins and casting the Òpèlè

In I-Ching, every coin has two spheres; the head and the tail. Every seed in the Òpèlè Ifá chain has two faces; the concave and the convex. The convex is the head, that is, digit 1; while the concave side is the tail or digit 0. Digit 1 is represented by one stroke on the imprint while digit 0 carries two strokes. It follows therefore that when every seed on the chain turns the concave face up on both sides of the line, 8 vertical strokes; 4 on each side are recorded on the imprint. In I-Ching, the diviner also records the results of the casting of the coins or the yarrow stalks in horizontal lines.



9.



10.



11.



12.

The Tools of Ifá (see plates 13 – 18 – all photographs and designs by Bifatife Adeseye)

The tools used for Ifá divination include ikin (the sacred nuts), Òpèlè (the divination chain), opon Ifá (the divination tray), iyerosun (the powder usually spread on the tray), iroke (the tapping stick), iranse (the voting icons) and Agbigba (the 16 half-nuts), eerindinlogun (the sixteen cowries and Obi (kola-nuts/kola nitida) The listed items may also be grouped according to the technique of divination.

For divination with ikin (the sacred palm nuts; the following items will be required; (a) 16 special palm nuts having not less than four eyelets each; (b) ajereIfá (the container to house the ikin when it is not being used; (c) opon Ifá (the tray – usually wooden, may also be in ceramics); (d) iyerosun – the powder usually spread on the tray, on which divination signature is recorded; (e) iroke - the tapping stick (f) iranse – the voting icons, that help the inquirer to determine yes or no to specific questions posed to the oracle via the diviner.



13a



13b



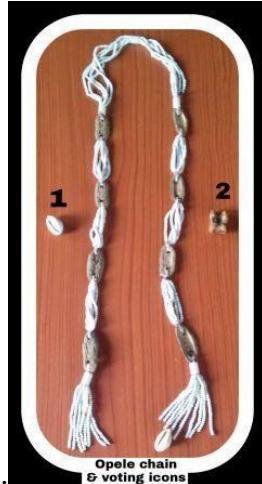
14



15

Contains eight coins or half nuts of special fruits with each nut having a convex and a concave side; see plates 8 and 10. One positive and one negative icon are required, as in plate 14; (b) ApoIfá, also called apo-agbira is a usually beaded bag that the

itinerant priest may use to carry potable divining items (see <http://www.imodara.com/apoifa>).



16.



17.



18.

Tools for inquest with I-Ching (Plates 19-21 courtesy www.tryskelion.com> ichg_ichstick)

Tryskelion Resource site (accessed October 30, 2017) indicates that there are two popular tools to cast the I Ching; the yarrow sticks and the coins. It is observed that the two tools do not carry equal effects, and can yield very different results based on numerical probability and statistics. The Chinese ancients said that the stalk of the yarrow had a special spiritual nature and was, therefore suitable for divination. It has been noted in plates 8 and 9; that tossing the I ching coins is similar to casting the Òpèlè chain. Other techniques that are not as ancient as the yarrow stalks and coins include; the use of multiple and single dice in casting.

Irrespective of the technique, the imprint of the divination is usually recorded in rolls of solid or broken lines. This is a very important similarity with the Ifá divination, especially with ikin, in which the signature of the inquest is recorded with 8 to 16 vertical strokes of two columns (compare plates ten and eleven).



The differences, however, show in the statistics. Both the coin method and the yarrow stalk method yields lines numerically. The final numbers obtainable with both methods are 6, 7, 8, and 9. The

following tables show the statistical probability of obtaining those numbers with both methods.

YARROW COIN

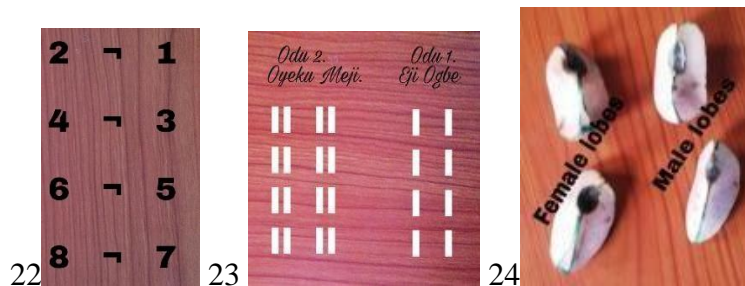
6 = 1 in 16 6 = 2 in 16

9 = 3 in 16 9 = 2 in 16

7 = 5 in 16 7 = 6 in 16

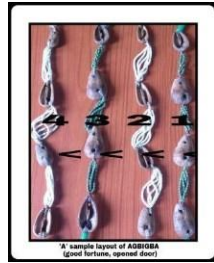
8 = 7 in 16 8 = 6 in 16

Similar to the situation explained above is the difference in the speed of casting Òpèlè, Agbigba and that of ikin. In Ikin, it takes eight times scooping of the 16 nuts from which the left-over of 1 or 2 is recorded in reverse order; to obtain the complete imprint for an Odu. If the first scooping leaves behind 2 seeds; 1 stroke which is also Column 1 segment 1 = 1 in 16. If the scooping for column 2 segment 1, leaves behind 1 nut; it reads 2 strokes in 16. The imprint is recorded following the zig-zag numbering in plate 22. If each of the scooping from the first to the eighth, left behind 2 seeds; a single stroke will appear 8 times; in 4 vertical strokes per column - Odu 1. Eji-Ogbe, (plate 23). Perhaps, the quickest method in Ifá is to divine with Òpèlè or Obi – *kola nitida* (plate 24). Like the *Yin* and *Yang*, every four-lobe kola-nut has 2 female lobes and 2 male lobes.

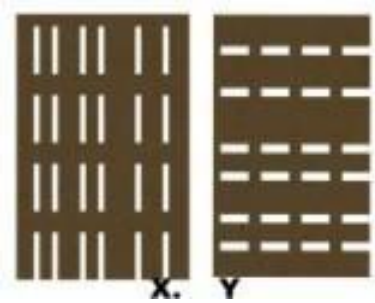


The most complex of all the Ifá tools is Agbigba. This is probably the reason that very few diviners dare to venture into its use. If we spread out the imprint of the four columns recorded by a cast of Agbigba; it will present an image very close to I-Ching register. Still on Agbigba and I-Ching; peradventure, *Eji-ogbe* and

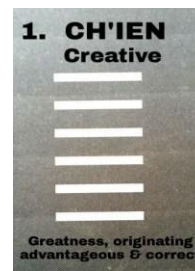
Oyeku-Meji, the first two principals in Ifá Hex-Code may appear together on *agbigba* divining mat. The imprint will be X-image on plate 26. If we rotate the image 180° anti-clockwise, the result will be Y-image of plate 26. The image will read CH'IEN; (plate 27) the very first hexagram of I-Ching.



25



26



27

Conclusion

The study further examined the intra-textual content analysis of the two folk communication systems and came up with more revelations about probable ancient links between the two cultures. For instance, scholars like Olu Longe and Wande Abimbola had variously indicated the relevant life-symbols for the 16 principals in Odu Ifá. Four of such life symbols are compared with another four from I-Ching hexagrams in Plate 28 below.

I-Ching Imprint & Life Symbols			Odu-Ifa Imprint & Life Symbols			
I-Ching Imprint	Name	Associated Life Symbols	Ifá Imprints	Name of Odu	Ifá-Hex Code	Associated Life symbol
	1. CH'IEN	Creative firm		Eji-Ogbe	0000	Light Accommodating
	2. K'UN	Receptive		Oyeku-Meji	1111	Shade Challenge Death





	3. CHUN	Initial Difficulty		Iwori- Meji	1001	Impetus Motivation
	4. MENG	Youthful Inexpe- rience		Odi- Meji	0110	Containment Dark-valley

Plate 28: Life symbols in I-Ching and Odu-Ifa (all designs done by Bifatife Adeseye)

It may be concluded that an overdose of contentment became the major obstacle that made the full development of the Yoruba Ifá into societal concurrency to suffer a debilitating delay. The situation was further compounded by the neo-colonial ideology of measuring every standard by Western or Arabian yardstick; such that whatever is indigenous to African is perceived as inferior, not only by non-African, but by the natives themselves.

This study has noted that, as early as 136 BCE, Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty declared I-Ching the most important of the five canonical Confucian books and standardized the text from among various competing versions. There had been no such political leader in the Yoruba nation up till a surface scratching effort by the Governor of Osun State, South West Nigeria, Mr. Rauf Aregbesola who called for the study of Odu Ifá to be made compulsory in primary education in 2010. His proposal is yet to be fully passed into effective law; even in his home state, which is one of the five Yoruba states in Nigeria.

Recommendations

If a man labels the best plate in his home as a mere dust-pan, others will help him to use the plate to gather refuse. Every Yoruba person needs to acknowledge Ifá as the custodian of authentic Yoruba tradition and custom. The call by Governor Aregbesola should therefore resonate in every Yoruba home; such that Yoruba

language is no longer seen as outdated vernacular for Yoruba children. This, perhaps, is a small measure that may prevent the imminent extinction of the Yoruba language and culture.

Secondly, too much attention is currently being paid to selling the core Ifá values for financial gains only. The ready buyers are the Americans and Yoruba in the diaspora. More attention should be paid to developing eco-tourism and faith tourism around the core values of the Yoruba culture, to attract more people to appreciate the essences of the Yoruba world-view and philosophy.

Works Cited

- Abimbola, Wande. *Ifá: An Exposition of Ifá Literary Corpus*. Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- Abimbola, Wande. *What is Ifá?* Lagos: Nigeria Magazine Festac Edition, Adeseye, Femi. Ibagere, Elo. *Communication and Man: A Theoretical Base for the Student*. Akure: Ola-Olu Enterprises, 1999.
- Bascom, William. *Ifá Divination – Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa*. London: Indiana University Press, 1969.
- Elebuibon, Yemi. *Ifá – The Custodian of Destiny*. Ibadan: Penthouse Publications, 2004.
- Isola, Akinwumi. "The Role of Literature in the Intellectual and social Development of the African Child" in Owolabi, Kola (Ed.) *Essays in Honour of Ayo Bamgbose*. Ibadan: Group Publishers, 1995, 311-322.
- Longe, Olu. *Ifá Divination and Computer Science: Inaugural Lecture – 1983* Ibadan: University Press, 1998.
- Odeyemi, Idowu. What is Ifa? <https://oloolotof.wordpress.com>
- Salami, Ayo. *Yoruba Theology and Tradition - The Man and the Society*. Lagos: NIDD Publishing Company, 2008.
- Ukala, Sam. "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy". Researchgate – <https://www.researchgate.net> > publication.
- Van-Over, Raymond (ed) *I-Ching: The Definitive New Rendering of the Chinese Book of Divination* Paperback 1971 online <https://www.abebooks.com> > ching-over

PART FOUR



Reminiscences and Tributes



Plate 8: Sam Ukala leaving the church through the aisle with Grace, his newly wedded wife, 1976.



Plate 9: Sam and Grace Ukala with their children and grandchildren, 2016.

Thirty-Eight



A Tribute to Prof. Samuel Ukala @ 70

Austin Ovigie Asagba

It gives me great pleasure and honour to write this short tribute in honour of Prof. Sam Chinedum Ukala, a close professional colleague and a dear family friend, on the occasion of his Seventieth Birthday.

About ten years ago, I had the privilege to edit a *festchrift* on him entitled, *Sam Ukala: His Work at 60*, which was published by Kraft Books 2006. How time flies! That professional effort, opened up a lot of insights at least from my own perspective, to the man's professional, artistic and human attributes. The process of putting the work together also revealed the disciplined and cultural attributes of the man, especially his ingenuity, knack for details, fitness and consideration for other people's needs. Without trying to re-invent the wheel, it is worth noting that the creative endeavours and intellectual exploits of Prof. Sam Ukala, have been well captured, discussed and articulated in books and journals, etc, by students, scholars and critics in his chosen discipline. Apart from the global appreciation and positive reviews, the creative efforts, especially, his dramas, are accepted as being rooted and derived from the traditional world of the Ika people, where he comes from. His commitment to Folklore studies and usage of Folklorish symbols, cultural materials and icons in an attempt to mirror the present socio-political realities readily defines his social vision and scholastic writings. My attraction to the man was basically anchored on our similar interest in Folklorish materials and studies. Incidentally, we had a common mentor in the person of Late Prof. Isidore Okpewho, who without equivocation, can be described as the father of Modern Nigerian Folklore. Another meeting space and bond between Professor Ukala and I, is the

University of Leeds, England. Although, he was not a student of Leeds University, but because of his quest to always associate with the best intellectual minds, he was a guest at the University of Leeds, where he gave landmark lectures and produced plays of remarkable standing.

Prof. Sam Ukala is a gentleman to the core, a man who knows and understands his rights. As a family man, he often reveals that subtle emotion, love, care and possessiveness associated with father and child. As he prepares for retirement, I am convinced he will now have enough time to dote on those wonderful children that have exhibited qualities of discipline, focus, humility and commitment – attributes and values that are not short in the main masquerade – Prof. Ukala.

In all, Prof. Ukala is a bundle of intellectual property who has not been fully acknowledged and celebrated, both at home and abroad. I know his time will come. As he celebrates his Seventieth Birthday, I wholeheartedly, rejoice with him. Physically our dear friend, Prof. Sam radiates and exhibits fitness of good health and mental ability. It is all due to the man's simplicity, naturalness and good spirit. I pray and hope that the good Lord continue to guide him and sustain his good health and mental agility, so that we can continue to enjoy his creative spirit and commitment to using his art to tell us stories, celebrate life and transform society, culturally, politically and morally. It is in this breath, I end this tribute in the words of Jahman, a character in my unpublished play, "Odidigboigbo". Prof. Sam Ukala's journey so far has been eventful, impactful and sonorous in all its ramifications.

Yeah man! The song of the soul,
 I remember the song of the soul
 In my mood, I feel kool,
 In my mood, I feel at one with the past
 The past hunts us all like a plague
 The journey across the sea
 The deep seas that have no ending
 Death stares at the victims with glamour
 The torment of yesterday is like today
 From plantation to plantation with no names

A Tribute to Prof. Samuel Ukala @ 70 557

They toiled away in empty stomach
As the master applied the whip at perceived transgressions
From the inner soul, they wept
And celebrated when a new born baby is announced
Their hopes die in dreams, aborted dreams!
The pain of yesterday echoes in my soul
As my ribs crack from the chain of the master
The chain that binds us all together
I feel kool as I remember that my forebears are dead and at peace
Yes, I am at peace with myself
But we must all account for our deeds one day.
(“Odidigboigbo”, Page 7)

Prof. Sam Ukala, have a great day and many happy returns as you
move and celebrate life.

Thirty-Nine



A Golden Harvest *(for Prof. S. Ukala)*

Ruvia Idiase

When we remember the long hours
You ploughed in all seasons
What reward is there for a man
Whose knowledge is dew nurturing younger tendrils?

It is the blossoming of dreams
Into indelible milestones of this pilgrimage-
Bold monuments standing
As the enduring inspiration to all seekers

The race is won
You can see your own seeds and mentored seeds
Now standing with you smiling as you rest your plough
With the gentle breeze caressing memories

Yes, memories of the long hours
In the field of knowledge
The patient grooming of simple souls
Into silent sages following your foot steps

This celebration is a clear proof
You have won this race
It is a golden harvest of a happy pilgrimage

When we remember the long hours you ploughed
The present harvest is heaven's return
Of seeds sown with open heart

Forty



Prof. Sam Ukala: A Man With a Heart of Gold

Alaska Ekele

I remember as if it was yesterday at Class three in the secondary School when we were asked to write all that we know about Jesus Christ. One of us simply wrote “who am I to write about my Master?”

Today, I am going to write a few lines about my master. Since it is not about Master Jesus Christ I will do just that with all humility and lay the truth bare about the man whose pen is mightier than other pens.

Prof. Sam Ukala is a man of many parts. He represents an armour against injustice, a shield against complacency, a legacy of honour and hope.

Very few men have it all-class, intelligence, a genuine sense of honour, impeccable human relations and more. Prof. Ukala is all, rolled into one. His simple, easy-going and frank demeanour strikes a rather interesting balance with his cultured life style. His pleasant, easy-going personality barely conceals his intelligence and power of perception. He relates with all manners of people, shares his experiences with everyone and socializes with both old and young.

I doff my hat and salute someone who made me become a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors, ANA Delta in 2009. While registering me, he said, “I love your love for ANA and you will go far”. True to it, four years after (2013) I became a national officer as Assistant General Secretary of ANA National for two consecutive terms. All I have to say is thank you, sir. Your thoughts and vision will be carved in stones.

Sir, writing has made it that we must address anybody by their names. I am taking advantage of this to address you as Prof. Sam Ukala instead of “My Oga at the top, my mentor, my Prof, Pen Pusher, etc. I have always loved you for your love and service to the poor, your genuine compassion, intelligence, transparency, thoughtfulness, thoroughness, for your extraordinary strength, versatility and character, a man with a heart of gold.

To this great, rare and true Delta hero, while wishing you happy 70th Birthday celebration, I pray God Almighty to give you more fruitful years to enjoy the fruit of your labour. Happy Birthday, Sir!

Forty-One



Who Will Educate Us? and You Are Immortal

Taiye Amatesiro

A

Who Will Educate Us?

Taiye Amatesiro

Who will educate us?
Prof...
Tell us, we want to know.

Some Professors lecture
Some others even teach
But you educate us.
Now that retirement calls on you
Who will educate us?
Ukala...
Tell us, we want to know.

Is lecturing better than educating?
Is teaching better than educating?
If no,
Celeb...
Tell us, we want to know.

Who will educate us?
There is time for everything
This we know
Time to work, time to relax
All work no play
Makes Jack a mere boy

These we also know
But Ukala,
Tell us, we want to know
Who will educate us?
Wonderful Prof., uncommon Prof.
NANS salutes you, ANA welcomes you
But, tell us
Who will educate us?

B
You Are Immortal
Taiye Amatesiro

You are immortal
That's who you're
Prof . . .
You know I know.
You are born
Of a being not woman

Ukala . . .
You know I know.
Rare is your kind
Oh! Wonderful cline
Not find in our clime

Celeb . . .
You know I know.
Your lecture lines
Induce interest and motivation
In the hall
Hall of lecture
Your utterances demonstrate
affection, compassion, kindness.
You know! Yes! You know I know.

Son of a being

Born not of a woman
You know I know.
Relax, get the fun fair
Fun fair of retirement
Enjoy the fruit of your labour
Oh! Immortal
Having the look of a mortal
U...k...a...l...a!
You are immortal

Forty-Two



Research and Experimentation in the African Alternative Theatre Tradition: The Growth and Contributions of Sam Ukala to Global Cultural Studies

C. Ailende Ativie

Introduction

Sam Ukala was a young academic of thirty-seven years, little and far younger to him myself, when I first met him in 1985. For three short but indelible years, I had a great stint with this African intellectual who, in his cerebral endeavours, did succeed in placing a measure of African cultural value in the front burner and on a par with the rest of the world. So, reminiscing on him and his formative years as a university scholar in Ekpoma, Nigeria, has always produced in me a burning desire to speak. With the opportunity for me to do so which narrowly slipped by on 21st March, 2007, my yearning heightened further, to corroborate and put in proper perspective for posterity the missing link.

My aim in this essay is, in part, to fête the narration in the citation given on the said date by the orator of the Faculty of Arts, Delta State University, Abraka, on the new entrant, according to Ukala (2007), so admitted “to dance the elders” dance in public”(1). Undeniably, I aim as well to celebrate our subject on his enormous contributions to African global cultural studies.

Samuel Chinedum UKALA, born on 18th, April 1948, honed through his hard-core Afrocentric literary works, top-echelon professing philosopher-king, walked tall on 21st, March instance, again in the annals of academic Olympiad in Nigeria and as far afield.

Ukala worked as a personnel officer with Lever Brothers, Nigeria (Plc.), for a considerable number of years before he yielded to the thoughts of going into academics, the orator told his attentive audience. And like an *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala* (1999), he soared through authoring literary works of conceptions that anchor on the cultural values which enhance globalisation as a part of the systems of mutation of African consciousness, and he won for himself the British Council 1989 Prize for Drama. This assured for him a place to research and to teach at the University of Leeds in England between 1993 and 1994. He had gone and returned to Africa, and had gone again to work with a professional theatre group, the Horse and Bamboo Theatre of Lancashire in Manchester, between 1998 and 1999, from where he worked in no less than twelve universities, including the Manchester University in England. He returned with laurels and added feathers to his academic brass hat –the audience learned. And, in-between telling the tale of the man for whom all congregated for an inaugural talk, I reminisced on the untold story of the making of Sam Ukala, at least, between the years 1985 and 1988, during which time I transited the academic terrain of the Ivory Tower in Ekpoma.

Background

I was in my second-year in 1985 when the man came with a bang! A green horn of a university teacher, his first port of call in relation to his primary assignment was to my class. Slim, average height, somewhat full bearded and, it was only a matter of a few months before he became bespectacled. Mr. Sam Ukala, B.A. (Hons.), English (University of Nigeria, Nsukka), M. A. Drama (University of Ibadan); he spoke short, simple, striking and straightforward everyday conversational English. His voice or cadence of speech, not in any way affected, strove towards the Standard English Received Pronunciation by reason of English Phonology mastery and good speech habits – a prerequisite for a good actor or stage director worth his salt. His words were aptly selected to suit any occasion of his speech, with absolutely no redundancy of expression, to capture the detailed mood of any moment, as would

a camera snapshot. We, his pupils, after his first few meetings with us in the classroom, began to shed the initial cold feet which we developed by the thought of not knowing how to rank him for awe.

My teacher was a *big man* by the standards of yore. He rode in a skewed Ford Cortina car of what model was extinct, while the contraption still plied the roads – a relic of its agile past performance. But then, it was still what it was – a car! After all, the vehicle was not borne by portorage on a human head from the distant Lagos where its owner had just relocated from, to change jobs for the classroom. Only three of Ukala’s senior colleagues among his contemporaries owned motorcars in the Department of English and Literary Studies. So, he was not *trekking* like the majority of his colleagues; although he drew upon the better part of his meagre monthly income to keep the car on the road. As a manifestation of a push-around-town, Ukala, at the commencement of rehearsals for drama weeks later, would sometime, before the close of the day, appoint few boys, who stayed back, then and again, to give a push, to jump-start his prized automobile when the kick-starter had developed a fault, or whenever its battery energy had depleted, as almost always was the case.

For Ukala, working outside the university was tantamount to “mere selling of oranges and bananas”, to borrow his own expression. The main issue in his advancement which will but give satisfaction laid in researching and teaching core African oral narratives and folktale performances in a university which would transmute into stage plays; and as such, directing dramatics of African moral philosophy all of which, at the moment, add to the concept of the values of globalisation in contemporary communication systems.

He had failed to *impress* a prospective employer at an earlier attempt to secure a teaching appointment in a nascent university. So, when he applied a second time to the same Bendel State [now Ambrose Alli] University for a research and teaching position, he was only too confident that the erstwhile Head of the Department of English cum Provost, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Professor Samuel Asein (now deceased), had returned to his bearings –the University of Ibadan. Previously, Asein had looked

at Ukala's size and wondered if such a neophyte could deliver in academics. But Asein was only looking at the outside.

No sooner did Ukala begin to teach his students than he called for the first audition of his published work, *The Slave Wife* (1982) – a play which employs the oral tradition of colonial African history; one whose theme has long been the subject of debate among Africanist scholars (Ibhawo 64). Ukala had written and published this work as an undergraduate. Virtually everyone was selected for a role to play on stage in *The Slave Wife* or for back stage management. So many man-hours of rehearsal, 4 to 6 pm, Mondays to Fridays initially, for a total period longer than ten weeks, culminated into a grand production which was premiered in the Senate Chambers to complement the first-ever convocation ceremony that took place in January 1986 for the University. Fair enough, the young Sam Ukala achieved that feat. One that holds true in the university's history for the next millennium years to come and way in front.

Ukala had won the bid for the convocation drama presentation ostensibly for the traditional African folktale elements inherent in the play. He was the only contestant from within the university to stage a play written and directed by him. The selection process was rigorous and not without many intrigues. There was high-level politicking over who should present what, for the expected high-calibre visitors to the first convocation ceremony of a first-ever second-tier level of government-run university in Nigeria! To be certain, the continued existence of the new university, as a creation of some recently deposed "corrupt" civilian administration, was still controverted in some quarters even in the fifth year of the institution's existence! So, a proscription fate on the infant Bendel State University still hung in the balance with a government by the army in the country returned to power only previously in the harmattan of 1983. And, in the minds of the ruling junta, the newly established higher institution of learning at the second-tier level of government could just be another conduit through which public funds were funnelled into private accounts. The assumption was that this could lead yet to one of the many white elephant projects initiated by the sacked politicians of the previous administration.

So, with the military in power, Bendel State University, at that time, could not be said to stand sure footed. Leaders of thought of Bendel origin did everything they could to ensure that the university was given the opportunity to survive. In private, eminent Bendel citizens made representations to people in positions of authority, to ensure that *their* nascent university did not suffer the weird decision of an eccentric military at the centre which could, at any moment, decree an indefinite closure of its treasured institution. In line with this, the young university did demonstrate, at given opportunity, that it had all-round academia ability, including the capacity to entertain, just so to project itself.

Nevertheless, the time fell to a period of staging a first convocation. The university planned and mapped out a week-long grand occasion stuffed with daily ceremonial events while lecture activities were placed on total hold for the week. As part of the convocation events, the convocation committee was given the mandate to get a mature and known figure from outside the university to do the job of entertaining guests with an option of no stage play for the occasion. Contrary to Ukala's expectation when he sent an emissary to Vice Chancellor Philip Kuale, to use his first play under rehearsal, to grace the occasion of the convocation ceremony, the vice chancellor showed no enthusiasm about using any local theatre performances to host his august visitors. Besides, he hated, in any way, to gamble with the first and only opportunity he had, as the university Chief Executive, to demonstrate the institution's honourableness to Jeremiah Oseni (Brigadier-General, later General, [now Retired]) Military Administrator of Bendel State, who would certainly be in attendance. As *visitor* to the university, the military administrator of the state will attend the occasion with some of his expected *guests*— be they spies! —from Dodan Barracks, the Federal seat of power located in Lagos at that time. The Vice Chancellor would not tolerate to see a young and unknown literary or theatre upstart ruin his game plan and those of eminent Bendel State citizens who needed to impress the visitors to get a *stay* for the promising university. Truly, the young institution already competed squarely in all manner of academia and did show *wits* surrounded by the lot of the old existing federal government

funded universities. So, Professor Kuale had, with a wave of the backhand, pushed aside the idea of Ukala using any “substandard” drama of his as a means to entertain the Vice Chancellor’s eminent visitors to the ceremony. Pressure mounted on him to use a local theatre practitioner in order to cut cost. In defiance to this advice, Kuale pilloried the Arts, as an aspect of humanistic studies. He stated his belief in the advancement of Science and Technology for the development of Bendel State and Nigeria. In point of fact, Kuale lent his voice to the superiority of, and overtly stated his preferences for, the Sciences over the Arts! As an engineer, Professor Kuale, peradventure, saw no reason in promoting the Arts over and above the Sciences. Ukala, on his own part, believed no less in his big boss’s argument for technological advancement though, yet he clung tenaciously to his own belief in the Arts. He insisted that it is but only a truly refined mind, through the study of the Arts, that can be receptive to the advancement of Science and Technology. His play(s), if given the opportunity to be staged, would serve as primer of refinement for the human mind, he assured in private. In the final analysis, all that Kuale needed to do, as pressure mounted on him, was to give Ukala “but this one and only chance to prove himself”, he said. And the Vice Chancellor was in for a pleasant surprise on the night of the convocation play after a few weeks of doubts and threats to Ukala’s immediate boss and head of department, Dr. Osamwense Osa, should the former fail to live up to expectation.

To say the least, Professor Philip Kuale got more than his fair share of the bargain. A visibly overjoyed vice chancellor at the successful week-long convocation events became much more overwhelmed at the production of *The Slave Wife* which brought the convocation ceremony to a grand apogee. For several weeks afterwards, *The Slave Wife* and its production turned out to be the talk of the town and the gown! Kuale ordered Vice Chancellor’s command performances of the same play again and again and again, way after the convocation ceremony was over. And, Ukala, somewhat, was fulfilled, I think, on the Arts/Science score on that plane. On another plane, howbeit, Sam Ukala, unknown to many, was the unseen hand whose efforts at the production of *The Slave*

Wife, indirectly, affected a plausible decision for the university to have a *stay*, so tacitly approved and sealed by Dodan Barracks! The *spies* and “eyes of the junta” to the convocation ceremony and their local host in *khaki* were noticeably completely *lost* to passion at the convocation events especially the drama presentation. They became so enthused in the performance, and were so engrossed in the play that they had momentarily cast off the masks of spy to reveal their individual human personas in uncontrollable fits of laughter and sundry emotions all through the production. So, through the hands of Ukala, the university passed the final test! Thenceforth, Ukala became, to the university authorities, the new kid on the block; he became a part of the rarefied university atmosphere.

The same feat of staging a convocation play was achieved by Ukala again in the following year of 1987 with the production of an unpublished script, *The Placenta of Death* (eventually published in 1997). This exploit was repeated yet in 1988 when the playwright produced all over again a third convocation play with another unpublished script titled *There's Darkness There*. Though *Darkness* was never sent to press, but it had won the then Gongola State National Youth Service Corps drama award in 1977. Subsequently, the long chain of convocation plays staged by Ukala year after year became unbroken, ostensibly for the recognition, by the university authorities, of the recurring themes in his works which are uniquely African in concept. Also worthy of recognition was the innovative style of his dramaturgy and stagecraft which are culturally universally serving black African identity and consciousness, billed for the global arena.

In those years, I wondered if Ukala ever laid his head down to sleep at night, and for that matter, if he ever rested at all. He would arrive for the day's lectures about 8 am, round-off on lectures and sundry office engagements about 2 pm, go home and return to campus about 3.45 pm for a 4 to 6 pm rehearsal. He would bring the rehearsal to a close and, finally, return home for the day. But before we had time to do a post-mortem review of one production, Ukala came with the manuscript of another play, sometimes handwritten, and copied out in beautiful calligraphy. In some other cases, such scripts came in rough drafts, written out after several

cancellations and re-writing to accommodate for emendation and the juxtaposition of words and sentences. It is axiomatic that the original manuscript of works of art attracts so much interest to scholars in their different fields. Undeniably, art works of great significance attract so much interest to scholars and critics in the field of Arts. This is especially true of paintings, as well as manuscripts on classical literature or musical compositions of classical value, like the manuscripts of all great writers and composers – Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, etc., which lie in museums and galleries worldwide. Like the manuscripts on the works of these great artists and many others which certainly promote some form of textual criticism, much as they give a sense of fulfilment for the latter-day critic to behold, I saw the original manuscripts of some of Sam Ukala's early published works. Sometimes, he came with the scripts cut on stencil, ready to be cyclostyled and circulated among the cast and crew. Up to this moment of my writing, I can boast of having in my possession, three of such cyclostyled and unpublished scripts of the 1987 and 1988 university convocation plays aforementioned, including the unpublished manuscript of *One Night's Moonlight Play*.

He rehearsed us on *Moonlight* for classroom practical lessons during the school hours, and produced it for Theatre Workshop II, a two-unit third year optional course in the department. Like *Moonlight*, the already published *The Log in Your Eye* (1986a) was also produced in Theatre Workshop I for a course of study in play production. The title *Moonlight* was to re-occur and be produced in a thirteen-week television episode run by the then Bendel Broadcasting Service in Benin City. Incidentally, the unpublished but fine dramaturgical script of *Moonlight* was dismantled by the author only to be re-assembled into a short story, re-christened *Money, Guns and Justice* among other collection of short stories in a book titled *Skeletons* (2000) –a winner of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Prose prize for the same year! So, we were the guinea pigs which our dear teacher used for the experimentation of his budding creative writing and stage craft. Ukala (1999a) admits: "This normally goes a long way to ...

reflavour the work before sending it out to the publisher” (212-213); and, indeed, we benefited immeasurably from his experimentation and scholarship.

Before Ukala joined the university as a researcher and teacher, we signed up for students’ associations and clubs, and we had our own creative machinery for the entertainment of our otherwise sleepy miniature campus. On his arrival, Ukala changed the rule of the game and indicated the way which literary creativity was to follow. A literary critic by training, a researcher and teacher by occupation, a creative writer by inclination and a stage actor and theatre director by profession, Ukala’s plays became, for top-rate members of the academia and sundry, the most authoritative and popular folk show on campus. It was perhaps, the stimulus from the successes of his initial convocation plays, as well as the reception he gained as a theatre director and playwright that may have propelled his further writing and directing of new drama libretti most of which published works can be found in the Internet and on bookshelves in stores and libraries in West Africa, Britain and below the horizon.

A personal encounter with Ukala leaves one with a lasting memory of an amiable and personable character. Little wonder that his colleague of the Ekpoma school, the Venerable Benji Egede, Professor of African Poetry, in a 1986 review of *The Slave Wife*, says Ukala “can be better described as one who has the penchant for comic accoutrements; he eases tension through his frequent, animated grin accompanied by light jokes” (150). Ukala is at once mentally stimulating and can be quite exciting to be with. Even when he regales you with non-fictional stories, he is sure to weave such narratives with certain ambivalence and adroitness to deliver on its moral lesson much like the great story-teller that he is. For this latter attribute we, his students, remained very close to him.

He met and interacted with us more often than any other lecturer in the department did, and he affected us the most. Among few other academic courses, he taught African Oral Literature I & II, Dramatic Aesthetics I & II and Theatre Workshop I & II, spanning the period of 1985 and 1988, i.e. between the second and the fourth year of my study in the university. He met us in theatre

both during office hours and in the evenings for different rehearsals. Though serious minded, he treated us as his equal most often. He was never a man whose temper was on a short fuse. And, a few absences to the University of Ibadan, and fro, soon let the cat out of the bag –he was a doctoral student of oral narratives and popular folktale performances. Little wonder that he interacted freely with us, we thought. We were all students after all –PhD or BA, a degree in view was a degree in view. No more, no less! As we savoured the convocation performance of 1986, Ukala left again for Ibadan and returned, this time, with a large meal ticket – he had become DOCTOR Samuel Ukala. To be candid, we, ourselves, already sifted the boys from the men.

Ukala's responsibility as a teacher, researcher, creative writer and theatre director, all at once, threw more daunting challenges at him as he rose on his job. He had the verve and stamina of a workaholic; assiduously toiling during the day and burning the midnight's oil with positive results to show for his efforts as though he had more than the twenty-four hours of a single day to time bargain. As a participant-observer in the Sam Ukala early stage of professional development, I write of issues at this time, of specific knowledge in time and space, of many decades gone past. I hold Ukala in high esteem; my schoolmates of yesteryears also do because he stands shoulder high among his contemporary playwrights, directors and essayists to be the great theorist of African alternative theatre tradition (see Akpuda 2008). This holds true for all those who have been close enough at first hand to observe him at work.

Ukala as a Teacher and Researcher

As a teacher, Ukala left a most exhilarating and fulfilling experience on his students. His teachings had more than enough stimulating effects which reconciled what he taught in class with that which he directed on stage. This is hardly surprising because many, including his colleagues far and wide, see him as “a rich bundle of artistic talents, a young man of such vibrant and versatile genius ...” (Ogude 1). Furthermore, he is considered to be “one of Nigeria's [nay, Africa's] leading lights in theatre arts scholarship

and practice, to evolve a dramatic art concept which is known as *folkism* –an innovative style of dramaturgy and stage craft (see Enita 48). To be definite, folkism is the tendency to base literary plays on indigenous history and culture of a people and to compose and perform same in accordance with the aesthetics of African folktale composition and performance (Ukala 1996). A practical teacher who believed in what he imparted on his pupils, Ukala often read to us aspects of his doctoral thesis on folkism; reminiscent of Soyinka's character, Sagoe, who would always fetch and read randomly to others from his "Book of Enlightenment" in *The Interpreters* (1966). Ukala did this that he might get the nitty-gritty of his research on his propounded *Laws of Aesthetic Response* on to his students (see SamUkala 1986b; 1996).

As a researcher and scholar of the autochthonous theatre in Africa, Ukala had developed an oral literary framework on which he based the principles governing his *Aesthetic Responses* to the folkist theatre. Besides, he had mastered a wide range of techniques upon which he experimented with the aesthetic laws of his drama pieces. His plays, which are "relevant as a metaphor for the evolving political cultures in many African countries" (Ogude 3), span the realistic, the expressionist, the existentialist cum absurdist, and most popular of all, the *folkist* tradition, upon which he theorised on the principles aforementioned. In his concept and practice of folkism, therefore, Ukala postulated the eight laws or principles which a dramatised folkscript must follow. Ukala (1999b) hints that the aesthetic responses, as a result, work in tandem with the conventional responses of the narrator and the audience to folktale performance as found by researchers such as J. P. Clark, Efua T. Sutherland and Dan Ben-Amos in different parts of black Africa (173). The aesthetic principles are crystallized into the laws of Opening; of Joint Performance; of Creativity, of Free Enactment and Responsibility; of the Urge to Judge; of Protest against Suspense; of the Expression of Emotions; of Ego Projection and of Closing (see Ukala 1986a). Undeniably, these laws serve aspects of, and are contextual to, African dramatic values which locate as cultural universals to western conventional canons of the Aristotelian concept of drama presentation. Indeed,

Ukala developed his own way of treating the African oral idiom in theatre performances following the mutation of his aesthetic responses which should serve as classic canons for the writing and presentation of modern African dramaturgy in the twenty-first century. By this, he freed himself from the stranglehold of European tradition of dramaturgical writing and presentation through his propagation and use of these canons. Thus, Ukala's paradigm as a researcher and critic which stem from his fascination with oral literature form the core of African folktale praxis taken into his African dramaturgical texts instance. As a consequence, he recreates "in contemporary performance and written text, the idiom and the nuances of oral performance without losing the immediacy of contemporary frame of reference" (Ogude 5).

In doing the above, Ukala employs the structure of African oral traditional performance made up of story-telling, music, mime and dance, as he seems, according to Asagba (2008a), to have "perfected and concretized [t]his approach to drama and theatre through his mastery of the structure and form of the oral narrative" (9-10). Nonetheless, Ukala (1999b) teaches that a folktale dramatic experience is "the product of a lively collaboration between the performer and the audience, even though the audience may, when appropriate, also detach itself from the performance and function as its critic" (176). As a result, Asagba (2008b) contends that Ukala is "driven by a sense of artistic mission anchored on the need to radically change the landscape of Nigerian theatre practice in form, style and content" (82). And, of course, Ukala acknowledges these to be "bolder attempts ... which threaten to subvert the western dramatic textual form and performance structure on the African stage" (179), having "a complex of form, setting, theme and performance within a traditional environment" (Ogude 5). In the view of Asagba (2008b), therefore, "Ukala's consistent and painstaking pursuit of this artistic goal in an attempt to reach out to a large percentage of his *folky* Nigerians ... at once became a theoretical framework and a theatre method" (83). And, that established a link between what he taught in classroom, of folktale dramatic performances, and that which he practiced on stage. This is so as Akpuda (2008) writes:

Sam Ukala believes that the African folktale in performance is a good example of a total theatre construct unique to the African experience. Such explains why in deliberating on the impact of the indigenous African theatrical heritage on today's literary theatre of English expression, Ukala identifies the distinction [that] each of the two [Western and African] broad traditions evinces. (33)

Besides teaching and imparting knowledge, Ukala loathed to see his students remain in ignorance especially if it appertained to any subject on which he had mastery. Often times had he heard students in his department complain about the difficulty in unravelling the works of Wole Soyinka, or those of the Greek writers like Sophocles, or even the works of Aristophanes. Seizing the opportunity of the right occasion such as the Students' Association week or any such academic gathering which presented a large body of students in the department, Ukala would give a talk to unravel meaning in *Oedipus Rex* (496 BC), *Antigone* (442 BC), *The Frog* (405 BC), *A Dance of the Forest* (1967), *The Swamp Dwellers* (1967), *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) and *The Road* (1980), or any other author's works which he considered problematic to the general body of students in the department. Also, he would hand out to few students, the last copies available of his researched papers of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Lecture series, on first-come, first-served basis. Ukala would take his time to explain to any of his undergraduate students who cared to find out what points he raised in his researched papers which were rather high for our level and understanding. As a teacher, Ukala gave his students the freedom of expression to contribute to learning, even if the students thought there was some oversight based on human error on the part of our teacher; and he graciously commended such effort and thanked the student for pointing out the error or omission. He adopted with equanimity of mind his own students' critique, and for that matter, anyone's criticism once he was convinced of its right motif and objectivity. This he did in theatre, in classroom, in his office and everywhere.

Ukala is genial, and in our drama post-mortem examination get-togethers, he would allow his students to say virtually anything

and get away with them in the spirit of conviviality. But not so the next day once he was in the classroom; he was a different person altogether. By his matter-of-fact impartation of the subject discourse and sheer classroom etiquettes and discipline, you knew who was in charge. The brilliance that he exuded from the discourse and his comportment and carriage in the classroom created an awe-inspiring aura about him. He shattered the aura himself with a rancorous laughter seemingly from the blues, and would locate the fun in someone or something around, perhaps to make us momentarily at ease when he sensed in us some form of tension or stress. And, we would be eased up. As a consequence, Egede (1999b) described him as “a man of certified multifacetedness ... a wearer of multiple labels which, like a peacock’s beautiful plumage, are remarkable for their spread, and profundity of assemblage ... [being] many things localised in one entity: scholar, poet, novelist or prose stylist; stage director, actor and music critic, among other things” (122). No matter how you view it, Ukala’s techniques portray him as a researcher and teacher of repute.

Ukala as a Theatre Director and Administrator

Ukala is a fine literary artist and a fantastic theatre director. An incurable optimist, he is meticulous about getting things just right. With him, there are no half measures. He has the knack to spot a talent and to create a typecast of an actor or actress for a role on stage. Conversely, he could pull a shy greenhorn actor/actress out of their cocoon. Ukala is a theatre connoisseur who understands the workings of the various units of the stage and its back management. He co-ordinates and dovetails these units to achieve a wholesome and beautiful play on stage. His style of directing plays is not just one, but a combination of the styles of the legends of theatre directors who have made a mark in the history of play-directing. A disciplined drama director, he considers that time is always of the essence. He believes in using the theatre to instil the culture of keeping to time, and to exorcise the concept of *African time* from the daily activities of his students and audience. So, Ukala would begin a play just as the clock struck the hour of

appointment, whether or not there were two persons or one in the audience! A stickler for thoroughness, he loathes indolence and sheer intellectual laziness in any form. He could not tolerate any actor who failed to learn his lines on time. For this reason, Ukala used no back stage prompt when he rehearsed his students. “If you miss your line while acting”, he would declare, “you should sink there in the front of your audience and humiliate yourself, not me”.

The Department of English and Literary Studies with Ukala became the hub of creativity and artistry which provided the gamut of the university with activities in the lighter mood of entertainment, away from the rigours of academics. We felt particularly proud that he was our teacher. We, our little selves, became deft on stage – or so we were complimented – as Ukala created adroit diminutive theatre professionals in macro-stage production of his student cast and crew within a short period. It was incredible; his speed of achievement. I cannot tell by what technique he achieved this. It could be a combination of his diligence to work and the measured discipline which he instilled into his pupils. Nonetheless, all signed-up for him – including few students from other academic departments. It is no doubt that it was his successful and unprecedented active stage performances that engendered the establishing of a Department of Theatre Arts at the Bendel State University of which he was first to head a few years after my graduation.

The Ukala factor at school reminds me of an incident that took place at the University of Maiduguri in Northern Nigeria, in the year of my national youth service. Out of no-serious work to do one warm evening, I had gone to see students rehearse Femi Osofisan’s *Who’s Afraid of Solarin?* (1978), which took place in the El Kanemi Hall of the University. At once, I noticed assortments of wrong movement on stage over which I felt that Ukala, in his own rehearsal, would never stomach and such that he would raise so much dust, if he were present. After a brief period of observation, I could no more contain in my mind the many wrong blockings in highly unprofessional gestures and simulations which were so observable with the cast on stage. I knew not, on impulse, when I interjected from my state of conscious quiet, to

find that I had unofficially engaged myself with the job of a theatre director for the rest of the evening. And, continue to work on the cast till the end of the rehearsal, I tried; giving the actors and actresses what I considered to be, at best, a „kwashiorkored“ and lack-lustre performance of on-stage play-directing. Indeed, I was surprised at myself for interfering in a rehearsal of which I was not a part, in the first instance. Dr. Abubakar Othman of the Department of English; the supposed director of the play, unknown to me, was sitting quietly among the crew without speaking a word despite the many wrong movements of his actors and actresses on stage. He called out to me at the close of the rehearsal. “Young man...! Are you a lecturer in this university?” I was taken aback as I responded to his question in the negative. “But you are a graduate of theatre arts? I see you speak the language of theatre”. “I’m a serving National Youth Corps member, Sir, and I hold a degree in English, not in theatre arts”, I told him, trying to absorb myself of any criticism which may follow from *all* noticeable shoddy efforts of mine at directing the play. “From which university?” he inquired further, and when I had offered the information, he said I was very good. “Let’s see again tomorrow or soon again ... uhm”, he concluded, as he took his exit. “Me, ... good?!”, I stifled a giggle. Certainly not on my puny efforts, I mused. Then, I chortled to myself because his comment on my ability sounded rather amusing. “You hold your peace and relax, until you see Sam Ukala, my own *oga* at work –the director per excellence, the craft and stage boss himself?”, I said under my breath.

Ukala’s creativity, ebullience and rare ingenuity at play-directing did earn for us accolades and cheap stardom at school, and we became local celebrities on the university campus, rather than crediting him with all the attributes. Perhaps, it was for this reason that he recreated and recast himself in the character of Emeka who notes in *The Log in Your Eye* (1986a) as follows:

I was a director. That sounds big, right? But no one knew me. Yes, none of you. On the poster you saw the title of the play, the author’s name, the gate fee, and the venue, that’s all [...]. At the end of the play, you rushed back-stage to embrace the actors, to kiss the actresses. And me? You disregarded. Yet every step with

which they thrilled you [...] I mapped out. Every flirtatious look at which you whistled [...] I suggested [...] and yet you disregarded me at the end of it all. (2-3)

He is a mercurial actor who could take on any “role in the play [...] by] playing it well” (3). This way, he hoped to force the audience to recognise him as the director of the play.

Ukala has a great theatre mind and impressive analytical skills. He became the rallying point; the main issue in theatre production in the entire university. Having stoked the fire of literary art entertainment in Ekpoma, he carved a niche for himself. So disciplined and so formidable is his intelligence that these sometimes cast a shadow on his personality. In November 2005, I bumped into Dr. Basil C. Onochie, one of my veteran teachers and Ukala’s older colleague in Ekpoma of old. As Onochie sized-up the teachers and students of the Department of English and Literary Studies in the university formation years, he remarked that he knew how very brilliant Ukala was when he taught the latter in his sixth form at the Institute of Continuing Education in Benin City. Ukala’s intelligence became a manifestation which he brought to bear in his artistry and stage craft. Of his own rare savvy, Ukala notes yet through his character Emeka who argues that “not every director is a good actor. In fact some are really awkward on stage; others have never climbed it in the presence of an audience. There are a few very good ones like me – I mean the all-round talents. Because of us the name Actor-Director is getting popular” (3).

The fashionable society of the Bendel State University was agog with his plays and many others that had direct or indirect link to him through his interns. And owing to the Afrocentric approach to his works, Ukala won the hearts of many –teaching and non-teaching staff, students and the local theatre-going visitors to the university. So enchanted was everyone who saw his plays. As the years rolled by, our admiration for his talents greatly deepened. After the third convocation play in 1988, amid several other miniature plays and poetry recitation sessions all through the years, we imagined that Ukala had taken play acting and directing to the apogee. Sam Asowata, my course-mate, wrote an unpublished

poem in honour of our teacher and director. In the poem which he crafted on 6 April 1988, titled *Sam Ukala*, Asowata captured our individual moods which reflected our individual and collective feelings towards Ukala; his published and unpublished works, and our passion for the Ukala theatre overall. To wit, Sam Asowata wrote:

Sam Ukala
... stirs his ink pot with his feather
And makes a splash on white –
A weaver, spinning minds,
Clasping the dye pot –
He leans over the dye pit and
Fishes out his creation, feeding the multitude with his fish
Dramaturgy's oracle, he rules the rules of his
Craft, and crafts the news arule folkism
Mastering mankind's most mutable moods amidst
Thunderplause in the towerscape.
My eyeballs tell: a star here stars
On an eternal celluloid
nd off, off my hat flies.
"Stoke the fire".

Not only was Ukala our mentor; he was also our tormentor! One case here remains extant, and will suffice for exemplification. My teacher had given a mandatory mid-term class assessment test on African Oral Literature I in the December of 1986, and for no good reason, I had derailed in handling the Esan (Edo, Nigerian) *Igbabonelimin* masquerade dance. I scored three out of ten marks. And, I was sore. An opportunity presented itself for me to re-sit the test paper. Ukala had granted a make-up test to some of my course-mates who were officially absent from the first test paper taken. And I pleaded to join this group for a re-sit. He would not send me out of the hall, but warned sternly that though I may sit for the paper again, he was not compelled, by any reason, to record for me a mark above three even if I scored a whopping ten out of ten marks at the second attempt. At once, I *knew* that his warning was theatrical. After all, I was one of his, no doubt. Although it was a different question to be answered, when the result of the mid-term

examination came, as faithfully as he marked my script, I scored eight marks out of ten! True to his warning, he recorded for me on his continuous assessment sheet three marks out of ten. I could not fathom how he could be *so mean*, and I grieved in my heart. But I learned a lesson. With Ukala, you do not attempt to cut corners; with him, there could be no shortcut to officialise. This is because he is unapologetically a due process person. He felt it was injustice to others of my group who did not have the opportunity to re-sit the test paper as me. He felt it was injudicious and would amount to a *kick back* of a faulty academic deal if he was favourably disposed to one over the others simply because the student involved was a preferred of his on the stage of drama. I was forced to learn that Ukala has high standards of personal integrity which could scandalise the infracted mind and bootlicker. He practices what he preaches. He hates injustice. As an intellectual, he has the capacity to absorb facts because he knows the hypothetical ones also. Ukala is never one to be sold a conspiracy by the sheer melodiousness of a voice or by the force of one's assumed personality. He loathes backbiting.

Like Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, J.P. Clark-Bekeredemo, Bode Sowande, Zulu Sofola, Isidore Okpewho, Femi Osofisan, Dapo Adelugba, etc. before him, Ukala is one shining example of African achievement and potential in drama and in respect of the creative and artistic aspects of his career. There may be many who see him and, perhaps, harbour the wrong thoughts or no thoughts at all about his ability. But for his involvements, these times, in major university administration, if he had the time to put a play on stage with the rigours of directing and the man-hours involved, I guess his critics will be persuaded to change their perception of him especially if such perception was of any diseased notion. At once, they will come to admire his creative exuberance adjudged by the remnants of his Ekpoma contemporaries who see his stuff as keen and purposeful. He commands respect and great admiration among his Ekpoma folks and among those who know his worth where he works in his present university. Ukala wields enormous power and influence in theatre, and he has the ability to use his stage plays to expose societal ills and to bring about social change. Though the

creative and artistic spirit may seem to pause with him, the critical and reflective side of academics, as well as higher office responsibilities may be the reason for the lull in his stage activism. Ugala (2008) otherwise notes:

Ukala has crossed the portals of honour with the grace and luster of a ship under full sail. Early enough, he laid the solid foundation of a technical and creative perfection before proceeding to the crucial stage of his theoretical epiphany. And as the exponent of folkism and a spirited scholar of exuberant creativity, ... Ukala has given the world a new literary compass to guide it in critical and cultural studies. (68)

A missing link, this article highlights, in summary, aspects of the making of a man of intellect; a man who has won laurels, including one from the International Biographical Centre in England, in recognition of his outstanding achievement in the field of drama and theatre, among many other awards. Recently, his folkscript, *Iredi War* (2014) won the Nigerian Liquidified Natural Gas (NLNG) Prize for Literature in the same year. A great African of many parts and of reckon, I lost contact with him for so many years but re-established the same, and I was all too eager to visit and prostrate myself in deference as I did before him when he took up appointment at the Delta State University, Abraka, in the year 2001.

Samuel Chinedum Ukala, **PROFESSOR** of Drama and Theatre, took the professorial chair, twelve long years prior to his inaugural lecture. He stood tall in the podium on 21st, March 2007, to profess on his contribution to scholarship. In consequence, he was ushered into the Hall of Fame to “dance the elders” dance” with other colossi of learning. Amid intermittent applauses, Ukala explained that folkism is the tendency to base literary plays on a folktale or oral history and culture of the folk; composed and performed as much as possible with the compositional technique of the folk which structure allows for the collaboration of the performer with the audience in accordance with African conventions of telling the folktale (Ukala 2007). He proved to his audience, with the summation of his *Laws of Aesthetic Response*, why he failed to keep with the Joneses in his writing and

explication of African Drama. The African folk story is not a story *per se*, he said. It is a dramatised narrative of oral, traditional and cultural sources of a collaborative performance. According to Ukala (1999b), “the African folktale is not prose. It exists only in the performance before a live audience. It therefore entails dramatic phraseology, pleasant to speak and to hear; movement, gestures, impersonation, music making and dancing; and sometimes, costuming, make-up, masking and puppetry” (171). Indeed, the African folk story is a story in dialogue between the performer and his audience to reflect alternately impersonated different characters. It must, therefore, not be jettisoned by the African acceding to European negative name-calling. Furthermore, Ukala (2007) contends that the artistic resources of traditional African legacy were sabotaged by the European colonialists in collaboration with Christian missionaries and the Islamic Jihadists who regarded the African songs, dance and drama as sources of paganism (14-21). Therefore, the African folktale performance should not be worn the wrong tag of paganistic worship as wont the western world would undermine it; neither should traditional songs, accompanied sometimes by masquerade dance performances, be seen as demonic. Essentially, as a scholar, while Ukala was thinking internationally in his publications, he was acting locally by entrenching African dramatic aesthetics. By this, Amankulor (2001) avers, “Ukala demonstrates that he needs not seek the validation of his African theatrical practices from Europe and America, but must through scholarship and theatrical practice draw the attention of the outside world to his irresistible dramatic theories and aesthetics, borne out of African experiences” (129). By and large, Ukala’s scholarship establishes the point that the values of African theatre which he projects in his published and staged works turn out as cultural universals to compare with known western standards, all of which evolve a complex of global contemporary system of cultures in the macrocosm.

Conclusion

And so, Sam Ukala joined and professorially danced “the elders” dance in public”. He succeeded in showing through his Africanist

approach to theatre that a well-written piece of drama for the stage could not only reflect the playwright's and/or play director's sensibilities, it also reflects the quality of his mind or his thought pattern towards being able to entertain his audience and to change his society. Writing the introductory remarks on *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*, Asagba (2008a) notes:

[...] it is apt to say that Ukala's contributions to the growth and development of Nigerian Drama and Theatre are great and immense. His meteoric rise to artistic fame had confirmed the sincerity, uniqueness and seriousness of purpose with which he pursues his avowed commitment to use theatre as a veritable platform for social transformation and regeneration of society. His choice of artistic strategy and approach is found in the folktale form, style and content of oral narratives. His refreshing use of cultural materials drawn from Ika environment [in Nigeria] has led many scholars and critics to compare his works with writers like Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Efua T. Sutherland and Wale Ogunyemi, etc. His formulation of the theory of *folkism*, which became a method and form for his drama and theatre, has carved a *niche* for him among scholars and critics alike. (9)

Onyerionwu (2008) affirmed, therefore, that "in the last two decades, no mention of the leading lights of contemporary Nigerian literature can discountenance the contributions of Sam Ukala" (93).

In most of his published works, as Awosika (1999) projects, "Ukala writes from a moral perspective artistically very sympathetic to the masses, while royalty is characterised as irresponsible, unjust and given to easy manipulation by the whims of the female sex. The downtrodden are shown, in spite of their bruises, as possessing a tough resilient moral faculty, which represents at least the promise of a future moral revolution" (75). As a consequence, Ukala relates distant historical events, which he merges with African oral tradition, to find essential correlates in modern day governance and the administration of justice on the citizenry. In some of his other works which themes reflect the modern times of his writing, Ukala showcases these, according to

Adagbonyin (1999), “as paradigms of modern folktale” (201). This is so because Ukala imagines that in our new age, certain events as they unfold, appear sordid; and to us, they sound like what obtains in folk stories.

Without a doubt, Ukala has shown ability and proof of accomplishment in his staged and published works through his exceptional concepts which are mutations of African consciousness echoed in works of literary art and in the theatre. His voice, as a prolific writer, is dauntless and powerful. His style of writing is intriguing and he is very effective on stage. It was for this reason that Egede (1999a) articulates the fact that Ukala “is a dramatist to the core indeed!” (150). In our day, thus, Ukala is an institution and a lesson in artistic finesse and perfection. He has the wherewithal of faculty and has the facility of pen such that he has now transited to become a living folklore history of our time – a flesh and blood palpable ancestor. In his personal life, Ukala radiates good breeding, evident from a rare combination of his African mores and Christian moral life – a rare gem of sterling brilliance in every endeavour, he is!

Works Cited

- Adagbonyin, Asomwan S. (1999). “Creative Truth is Immutable”. Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uzunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight: (The Writings of Sam Ukala)*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Akpuda, Austine Amanze. (2008). “Sam Ukala as a Theorist of the African Alternative Theatre Tradition”. Austin O. Asagba (Ed.). *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Amankulor, J. N. (2001). “Perspectives on the Theatre in Africa: A Review Essay on Theatres in Africa”. O. Ogumba and A. Irele (Eds.). *Journal of the Literary Society of Nigeria I*, pp. 118-134.
- Aristophanes. (405 BC). *The Frogs*:
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristophanes/frogs.pl.txt>>. (Accessed 16 October 2017).
- Asagba, Austin Ovigie. (2008a). “Introduction”. Austin O. Asagba (Ed.). *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Asagba, Austin Ovigie. (2008b). “Sam Ukala and the New Nigerian Theatre”. Austin O. Asagba (Ed.). *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.

- Awosika, Wale. (1999). "Seeds of Revolution in Sam Ukala's Plays: *Break A Boil, The Slave Wife and Akpakaland*". Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight:(The Writings of Sam Ukala)*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Egede, Benji. (1999a). "The Slave Wife: A Critique". Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight:(The Writings of Sam Ukala)*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Egede, Benji. (1999b). "Narrative Style, Symbolism and Tropes in Sam Ukala's Short Stories". Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight:(The Writings of Sam Ukala)*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Enita, Godfrey. (2008). "Ukala, Folkism and The Laws of Aesthetic Response". Austin O. Asagba (Ed.). *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Ibhawo, Bonny. (1999). "Literature as History: Oral Historical Traditions in Sam Ukala's *The Slave Wife*". Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight:(The Writings of Sam Ukala)*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Ogude, Steve. (1999). "Introduction". Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uhunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight:(The Writings of Sam Ukala)*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Onyerionwu, Ezechi. (2008). "Samuel Chinedum Ukala: Dramatist as Scholar". Austin O. Asagba (Ed.). *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Osofisan, Femi. (1978). *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Sophocles. (442 BCE). *Antigone*:
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/antigone.pl.txt>>. (Accessed 16 October 2017).
- Sophocles. (496 BCE). *Oedipus Rex*:
<<http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.pl.txt>>. (Accessed 16 October 2017).
- Soyinka, Wole. (1966). *The Interpreters*. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Soyinka, Wole. (1967). *A Dance in the Forest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soyinka, Wole. (1967). *The Swamp Dwellers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Soyinka, Wole. (1971). *Madmen and Specialists*. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

- Soyinka, Wole. (1980). *The Road*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Ugala, Best. (2008). "Dancing the Dance of the Elders: A Review of Professor Ukala's Inaugural Lecture". Austin O. Asagba (Ed.). *Sam Ukala: His Work at Sixty*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.
- Ukala, Sam. (1982). *The Slave Wife*. Ibadan: University Press Limited.
- Ukala, Sam. (1986a). *The Log in Your Eye*. Ibadan: University Press Limited.
- Ukala, Sam. (1986b). "From Folktale to Popular Literary Theatre". Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Ukala, Sam. (1996). "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy". *New Theatre Quarterly*, XII/47, pp. 279-287.
- Ukala, Sam. (1997). *The Placenta of Death: Two Plays*. Agbor, Nigeria: Oris Press.
- Ukala, Sam. (1999a). "Creative Truth is Immutable". Excerpts of an interview with Asomwan S. Adagbonyin, Steve Ogude, Benji Egede and Amen Uahunmwangho. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Ukala, Sam. (1999b). "Masquerade, Folktale and Literary Theatre of English Expression in Africa: A Lecture given at the Department of Drama, University of Hull, United Kingdom, January 24, 1994". Steve Ogude et al. (Eds.). *Eagle in Flight: The Writings of Sam Ukala*. Ibadan: Safmos Publishers.
- Ukala, Sam. (2000). *Skeletons*. Agbor, Nigeria: Oris Press.
- Ukala, Sam. (2001). "Politics of Aesthetics: The Plays of Osofisan". *Reconstructing the Canon: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Charles E. Nnolim*. Owerri, Nigeria: Skillmark Publishers.
- Ukala, Sam. (2007). *African Theatre: Beast of No Gender?* 13th in the series of Inaugural Lectures of the Delta State University. Abraka, Nigeria: University Printing Press.
- Ukala, Sam. (2014). *Iredi War*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Limited.

Forty-Three



A Masquerade with Beautiful Dance Steps

Chukuka Chuks Ebouku

Just like the glowing sun and moon in heaven, among the countless stars

Sam Ukala, a MASQUERADE with beautiful dance steps, left his marks

His marks are lights with differences in dark tunnels

He tried and is still trying to keep clean these tunnels

In one of the first few days we met, he gave me a slap because I was a parrot

His hand descended swiftly like an airplane controlled by a drunken pilot

That happened when I was standing beside him in front of the whole class

That day my face was cloudy. He apologized to me before the end of the class

His thunderous voice and big eyes continue to wet most people with fear

But he feeds people with courage and knowledge, giving them joy to wear

He is like the tilapia fish that protects his young ones in his mouth

You will feel his teeth if you dare him, even if he is an academic tout

He is the mother hen that protects her young ones under her wings

And to keep them happy, he writes them good songs as well as sings

He is a father to the fatherless
And an helper to the helpless

He is a man that loves good species of women
They bore him beautiful and handsome children
He shared people's wives and shared some of his wives with other
men
This made some of his children to have his blood and that of other
men

One of his beautiful daughters sparkled more than a thousand suns
I fell in love, desired her as I looked to her for daughters and sons
I knew her name was „Folkism“, in my first year at the university
I have known her by different names before entering the university

We fell in love and she bore me a child that same year
My first stage child which I named *Wipe Your Tears*
Sam Ukala, my good in-law, helped to nurture the baby
Please, he is not a nanny but just a caring granddaddy

His adopted daughter, „Folkism“, has been to bed with different
ladies and men
As a result of her relationship with them, she has given birth to
many children
Even if she is available to all those with real pay
She is not a prostitute at all, neither is she a gay

When Ukala smiles, you can count his thirty-two teeth
He's advertising toothpaste the first day he came to teach
He is a real MASQUERADE among masquerades
A MASQUERADE that doesn't go on empty parades

Ukala's determination and love for his children during ups and
downs
Saw his children wear him beautiful gold, diamonds and crowns
Taking him to places, known and unknown, even announcing him
before he appears

Making men and women to study and document his entire family
and their wears

Note, real artists are watch dogs – the eagles’ eyes of their
societies

Entertaining with beautiful dance steps and exercising their bodies
With clear and sweet dance steps, they carry their audience, their
societies, on their carts

And they all deep their hands in the pots of sound health – herbs
from the artists’ farms

Ukala, a MASQUERADE with beautiful dance steps in African
attire

To his generation, with his writings, he is and will remain a
messiah

His dance steps have drawn people from far and near

Ukala is an Iroko tree, strong and tall among his peers

Forty-Four



Thirty-Six and a Half Souls in Search of a Mentor

Sammy Omotese (Class of 2001)

All through my undergraduate years at the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Professor Ukala would come into our class with his car keys and a piece of chalk. Sometimes, two pieces of chalk. Whenever he entered the class, the first question he would ask was: „where did I stop at the last lesson?“ Someone would tell him the last word he said (from the previous lesson) and then Professor Ukala would continue from where he stopped and dictate two or more pages of A4 size lecture notes straight from his head without looking at any piece of paper! By the way, we are the pioneering set of the then newly created Department of Theatre Arts. Looking through all his lecture notes, one could easily see the connection and continuity embedded in his lessons.

At the end of all our semesters, Professor Ukala ensured that we got the course outline for all the courses we were going to study in the next semester or academic session, as may be the case. This singular act gave us the ample opportunity to get prepared for the on-coming semester. Students can get all the study materials they require for the next semester; as they go away on holiday. Books that are not available locally can be sourced from bigger bookshops in the city. Some students took advantage of this „peculiar opportunity“ to study the materials recommended before resumption.

We were made to take some key courses with the students of English and Literary Studies back then. We took courses with Third and Final Year Students; even though we were in our First Year. We were not treated as if we had only just started the beginning of the rest of our lives! We were taught courses that

would define our progress in the areas of literary appreciation and human management. This would provide the launch pad for our future collaborative ventures in school and even upon graduation. Professor Ukala equipped us with the mental strength required to navigate the challenges that lay ahead of us.

It is a well-known fact amongst my peers that you don't come late to his lessons or rehearsals. Your chances of entering his class/rehearsal when you are late are almost non-existent. To this end, there was no favouritism. He led his brigade from the front. Professor Ukala was always present for his classes and took delight in attending all rehearsals. Being prompt for lessons and rehearsals are two of my earliest lessons from Professor Ukala. He is very strict with punctuality. He has been known to leave out leading role players a few days to the production because of what he perceived as nonchalance or complacency. I remember him asking a lady to leave his rehearsal ground and never to return. This was a few days to our Convocation performance!

Our department is one of the very few departments in the entire school where „blocking“ is non-existent. By the way, „blocking“ means bribing lecturers to obtain undeserved grades. It has been said times without number that: „when the head is right, the body will be right.“ You get exactly what you deserve/merit with Professor Ukala and same can be said of the rest of the academic staff of our department. Special thanks must go to the Head-of-Department for standing out of the crowd to show that honesty and integrity are not mere words to be read only in books. Students of other departments will tell you how „unfortunate“ it is for them to have to give their pocket money away to some lecturer(s) or they risk carrying over courses that could potentially stop them from graduating when they ought to.

At the end of my Final Year Production in Ekpoma (I directed Femi Osofisan's *Morountodun*), Professor Ukala asked my fans to stop clapping their hands for me. He addressed me after the production right in the presence of everyone (actors/actresses/production crew and audience) thus: „congratulations on your production. However, if I hear at any point that you fail to harness your talent but instead choose to follow those 419ers and cement

sellers, I will curse you and you will come back here to meet me!" Sincerely, that voice has been with me over the years. That voice has guided and guarded me in my everyday choices years after he spoke them on that fateful evening in the Ceremonial Pavilion, Ekpoma.

Professor Ukala and I had a one-on-one discussion in his office during my First Year at the university. I told him of my desire to study for a Post-Graduate Degree in England. He told me it is possible only on one condition: that I graduate with at least, an Upper Second-Class Division. I asked him if that would be all I required for that dream to materialise, he said: „just cross that bridge first.“ I crossed the bridge under his eagle eyes and travelled after my Youth Service Programme to Leeds, UK for a Post-Graduate Programme!

Professor Ukala was more of an astute teacher than he was a university lecturer. One could see his love for what he did through his body language and the intensity with which he carried the burden of nurturing future industry leaders. He instructed and paid rapt attention to how we received what he taught us. His class was popular with most of us because he would use vivid mental pictures to illustrate his point and led the life he taught us. Professor Ukala is a father, mentor, teacher, theatre director and disciplinarian rolled into one bundle of unrelenting enigma of rare quality.

Nigeria is at a point where we require an immediate infusion of „Ukala-like“ character in all spheres of our national life. We require leaders that would lead us from the front and show such excellent traits as exemplified in my narrative of Professor Ukala. We are in dire need of mentors and custodians that would start by fulfilling the desires of the vast majority of our people through their exemplary character traits. Leadership through mentorship and practical demonstration of quality attribute(s) on a day to day basis. We urgently need mentors that would exemplify the New Nigeria of our collective aspirations particularly in their actions and words.

Nigeria will be on the road to socio-economic recovery the moment we welcome the likes of Professor Ukala across all sectors

of our national life in the position of mentors, teachers and administrators. We desperately need men and women of robust character trait for our national growth and development. Professor Ukala for me exemplifies the spirit of the New Nigeria we crave and urgently require to avoid the looming disintegration staring us in the eyes. Nigeria is at a precipice and a cross road of sorts. We need a character such as Ukala's to lead the thirty-six and a half souls trudging towards oblivion back on track.

Forty-Five



Ukala and the Muse at a Glance

Chukwuma Anyanwu

Ukala echoes the Biblical injunction:
Remove *The log in your eye*,
If you want peace in *Akpakaland!*
Where *The slave wife*
Has set the stage for *Placenta of death*

Ah! Where are *The last heroes*
Who fought in *Iredi war?*
And brought home a *Harvest of ghosts?*

I perceive the *Ordour of Justice*
In the *Trials of Obiamaka Elema*,
Who tried to *Break a boil*
While staying *In my hermitage*

In the movie set in *Akpakaland*,
I see *Skeletons* everywhere
I see the *Eagle in flight*
With *Ukala's work at 60*

Ah! Ah! My vision is blurred, shrouded in *Fumes of fuel*
From the vehicle *Rumbling* down the *creeks of Niger Delta!*

Forty-Six



Sam Ukala in the House of Writers

Denja Abdullahi

President, Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA)

Prof Sam Ukala is a constant and graceful presence in the convivial and eclectic gatherings of Nigerian writers under the banner of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA). I cannot tell when he started showing his presence as he was into the Association before my generations came in. It is possible he was there at the beginning with Achebe and others or joined shortly after. All I can remember was always seeing a man with a steely resolve but all the same quick to exchange jokes and laughs with younger members at the Association's conventions. The ANA convention in Asaba in the year 2002 was remarkable for it being held under a very tight economic atmosphere at the bank of the River Niger at the Grand Hotel, owned by Chief Sonny Odogwu. Prof Sam Ukala was the then chairman of the ANA Delta State chapter and he ensured that things were done in an orderly manner in spite of financial constraints. That Convention held amidst some power moves by some gadflies in the ANA Executive and some writer-friendly intellectuals surrounding James Ibori, the then Governor of Delta a State. I sensed then that Sam Ukala was not disposed into going into the wheeler dealer mode activated then; so he kept his distance and was to continue to point out the failings of that convention well after it ended.

Prof Sam Ukala came to be known to be a stickler for discipline and propriety in the annals of the Association. At ANA congresses, whenever he stood to contribute to niggling debates in his trademark stentorian voice, you were bound to listen to him and agree to the logic of his presentations. He comes to you in the image of a no-nonsense school teacher who will not play to the

gallery to satisfy anyone when it comes out to voicing his opinions on issues. Sam Ukala does not quickly jump into speaking on Issues but after he has spoken, the next thing everybody thinks of doing is to close the matter along the path he may have laid. He is that authoritative. It was therefore not unusual when the ANA congress chose him to be the umpire at two keenly contested national elections of the Association in 2009 and 2011. He delivered on both jobs with magisterial efficiency and navigated all the contours generated by the heated contests with forthrightness. He was again to be railroaded into such an assignment afterwards in another year of elections and he declined saying to me :“Denja, let them know that I am not the only one who can conduct elections.”

Prof Ukala in ANA has another side to him that balances his hard edges. Amidst writers, he hobnobs well with the younger writers, seek out jokes and laughs from them and catches his fun as much as possible with the young in tow. He can be that easygoing Uncle who bemusedly tolerates the failings of youth but draw in the rein when necessary. Sam Ukala is always there for the Association at critical moments like stepping in to deliver the Keynote Speech on Prof Femi Osofisan’s behalf at the Bayelsa 2006 Convention; being one of the drama adaptation judges at the ANA’s 2008 Things Fall Apart @ 50 celebrations; helping to revive ANA chapters in the South East between 2008-2010; resolving conflicts between persons or chapters and generally taking up any assignments given to him by the Association and doing it diligently. He did it again true to his nature in 2016 when my team of ANA Executives called him up to deliver the Keynote Speech at the 1st ANA Teen Authors Conference which held in Owerri, Imo State. Ukala again did the job so well that we all felt proud.

Prof Sam Ukala can also be very hospitable. I will not forget my experience when I came to Asaba in 2009 for a function and I put a call to him as I knew he was then the Provost of Delta State University, Asaba Campus. He sent a driver to pick me from my hotel to his idyllic official residence atop a hill on that campus where we shared a lot of laughs and deliberated on some then on-

going matters in the Association before I was driven back to continue my business in town.

Prof Sam Ukala's good disposition towards the Association has made some top echelons of the Association in the past to moot the idea of priming him to come forward to lead it. Such nudging had not seen any action towards actualisation due to the fluidity of ANA politics and Ukala's apparent interest in allowing younger persons to lead while he maintains his position as a respected elder.

Of course, part of Sam Ukala's appeal to the younger writers in ANA has to do with his being a very delightful playwright steeped in the projection of his own unique theory of folkism in his drama. Many of ANA dramatists and playwrights who are in the academia and outside it always strive to be like Ukala in the way he has been able to marry theory with practice. We were all enamoured by the mileage gained by his play *Akpakaland* in text and in performance on the stage and the screen. It was therefore not a surprise but indeed a much welcomed development when Prof Sam Ukala's play *Iredi War* won the coveted 2015 NLNG Prize for Drama. It was an adulatory culmination of a life-long devotion to theatre practice with a focused usage of a uniquely African paradigm.

Sam Ukala's work in the vineyard of scholarship and theatre practice has surely not ended with the winning of the NLNG prize or attaining the height of scholarship or hitting the three score and ten years. Under a year ago, in October 2017 at the Makurdi Convention, for his sterling dedication to the affairs of the Association and for the selfless service he has rendered all these years, we in ANA inducted him as a fellow to join the league of other distinguished elders of the Association. He could not make it to the investiture due to another pressing research engagement; but typical of Ukala, he was in touch with me all through, to ensure things went well, like he normally does in the few times he has not been present at ANA Conventions.

We in ANA wish him many more years at the summit of "distinguished elders of the clan" and we look forward to his return to the fold with his elan and theatrical laughters.

Forty-Seven



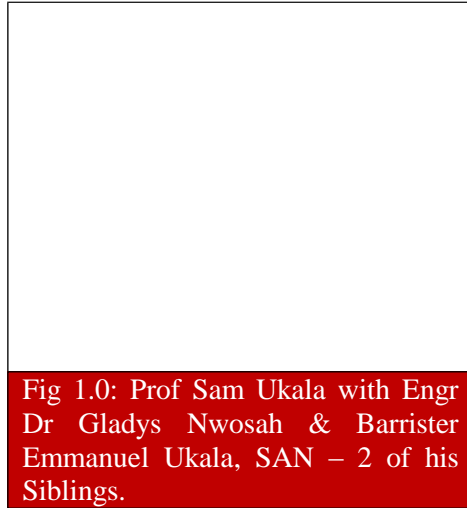
The Life and Times of Prof. Samuel Ukala at 70 as a Theatre Arts Legend

Engr (Rev Dr) Gladys Chukwudumebi Nwosah

Introduction

The study of the life and times of people and events dates back to the beginning of the World. The study of the lives and times of Legends is aimed at immortalizing them by reliving what made them succeed and avoiding whatever would have made them fail.

A Legend is defined by the *Oxford dictionary* as “An extremely famous and life impacting person, especially in a particular field.” Legends are classified according to how they lived their lives before their death and the area they impacted or changed other people’s lives. A Legend is a person that has something special that sets him/her apart from the crowd. Legends are among the few persons that God has set apart for special assignments.



The purpose of this study is to examine the life and times of Prof Samuel Ukala as a Theatre Arts Legend, as much as I know it as his younger sister for other practitioners in the profession to learn lessons which should assist them in aiming for the top.

The objectives of this study include the following:

- (i) To examine the life and times of Prof Samuel Ukala as a

600

fulfillment doors leading to his successes

- (iii) For other Theatre Arts Professionals To learn lessons from his life
- (iv) To emulate his good attributes
- (v) To demonstrate that it is possible to excel in theatre arts or in any other profession with these 7-keys.

The problem is that many educated people hardly reach the apex of their profession and if they do, they fail to maintain that status to be able to be immortalized as a legend. The exposition of the 7-keys to destiny fulfillment doors in this study is a solution to this problem. Destiny fulfillment is a two-faced coin. It is either that one fulfills his/her destiny or does not.

Some of the research questions that commonly come to mind include the following:

- (i) What was Prof Sam Ukala's early family background and how did he discover his talent in theatre arts?
- (ii) How did his academic background help him develop his talent?
- (iii) What are his successes and failures if any?
- (iv) Who are some other important Legends in the history of Nigerian Theatre Arts and what do they have in common with Prof Sam Ukala?
- (v) What are the lessons learnt from the life and times of other non-theatre arts legends?

Literature Review

Prof Samuel Ukala's Early Background History and How He Discovered His Talent in Theatre Arts

Prof Sam Ukala was born to a humble family background in Mbiri, Delta State on April 18, 1948. He was the second out of the seven children born to Mr. Godwin Njoagwuali & Mrs. Beatrice Nwoji Ukala. Right from his toddling age, Prof Samuel Ukala demonstrated his love for drama, poetry, art and singing. All these flowed in his blood. As his younger



Fig 2.0: Prof Samuel Ukala

sister, I can clearly recall some of those moments when he utilized his God given talents to put together some of his early trilling works. It is obvious that when a person is created by God, God endows that person with the necessary talents to enable him/her fulfill that purpose. That purpose is what is referred to as destiny. Hence destiny fulfillment and destiny derailment are two sides of a coin. The choice is left for everyone to decide to either fulfill his destiny or not.

Prof Sam Ukala was always full of ideas on how to produce a drama or a song or poetry right from childhood. For instance at most of the Anglican Church Annual Thanksgiving Services, he will organize his Siblings (between the ages of 3 to 10yrs) to present a drama or a song or a poem before the audience. Example of one of such his early jobs include a Song Drama titled "**AKWA JOB**" meaning "**THE CRY OF JOB**"– the agony of the man in the Bible who was tested and plagued with boils and the death of all his children by Satan with the permission of God. We sang and demonstrated it with so much emotion to the extent that many people in the Church were shedding tears.

It was titled: —**AKWA JOB**" (Meaning the cry of Job)

Iyeh-ewo, Iyeh –ewo Afufu Uwa-o...Akwa Yili Egbuem-o...etc...

Another Song he composed and thought us was titled: **“One Father, One Mother.”** The song goes like this:

One Father, One Mother, One Nation and One God (Repeat)
One fantastic Prayer Prof Sam Ukala also Composed was:
“Goodness shall follow you;
Greatness will find you;
Favour will distinguish you among your equals;
Grace will empower you;
Peace will keep you;
Joy will surround you;
The anointing on you will immunize you against satanic afflictions
In Jesus Mighty Name I Pray, Amen.”

Definitely, Prof Sam Ukala has left me with pleasant childhood memories.

One day, most of us now alive shall just be mere memories for others to learn from. Hence we should strive to leave pleasant memories.

- Aristotle once said: “We are what we repeatedly do
- Thomas Jefferson said: “Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude
- Ralph Marston said: “Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference
- Winston Churchill said: “Excellence is not a skill, it's an attitude”
- Zig Ziglar said: “Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude”

Sam Ukala’s academic background and how he developed his talent

Just like God said of Bezaleel in **Exodus 31:3⁽¹⁾** that: **“And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship”**, Prof Sam Ukala was also divinely endowed to accomplish whatever he has accomplished today. **Prof Sam**

Ukala's birth was never by chance because God had divinely packaged him for greatness.

Having discovered that he had such an excellent talent in him, Prof Sam Ukala decided to further his education after obtaining his West African School Certificate from Ika Grammar School, Boji-Boji Agbor, he proceeded to obtain BA (Hons., English) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1977. Thereafter, he obtained MA & PhD (Theatre Arts) from University of Ibadan from 1983 to 1986.

As the Bible said in **James 1:17**⁽²⁾—*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no*

variableness, neither shadow of turning, so the good gift or talent given to Prof Sam Ukala has lifted him up and sustained him.

**PROF SAM UKALA'S
BIRTH WAS NEVER BY
CHANCE BECAUSE GOD
HAD DIVINELY
PACKAGED HIM FOR
GREATNESS**

Also **Proverbs 10:22** ⁽³⁾ said: *"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.* In line with God's Word, Prof Sam Ukala is an accomplished Drama, Song and Poet Writer/Director with lots of riches attached to it.

Prof Sam Ukala's Writings, Outstanding Awards and Honours His Writings

Ukala's published plays as recorded By **City Voice, Lagos, Nigeria**⁽⁴⁾ include *The Slave Wife, The Log in Your Eye, Akpakaland* (winner of the 1989 ANA/British Council Prize for Drama), and *Break a Boil*. His "Iredi War", a 'folk-script', won the 2014 Nigeria prize for Literature. It is based on the 1906 uprising of the Owa Kingdom (now part of Delta State) against oppressive British rule. As in previous pieces, he utilizes and brings new life to oral literature and folk-based theatre forms. "A convincing blend of history and fiction..." Kester Echenim. Ukala has also worked with the British Theatre Horse and Bamboo Theatre in 1999 and with Bob Frith wrote the visual theatre piece *Harvest of Ghosts*,

which toured the UK and the Netherlands. This was an experimental piece for Ukala, which relied on dance, music, and powerful visuals rather than the spoken word. Ukala is also a poet, prose fiction writer, and a screenwriter.

His Outstanding Awards and Honours

- (i) 2014 \$100,000 NLNG Nigeria Prize for Science and Literature Award (Literature) for *Iredi War* The largest African literary prize.
- (ii) 2000 Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA) Pillar of Arts Award for Prose for “Skeletons: A Collection of Short Stories”.
- (iii) 1989 ANA/British Council Prize for Drama for “Akpakaland”.

Qualities of Prof Sam Ukala That Sustained Him as a Legend

Just like Prof Sam Ukala, every one of us carries the capacity to become successful in life. We are all equipped with our own special gifts and talents right from our mother’s womb. But some of us lose our path along the way. Life can be a cruel teacher. Most times we stop following our dreams and start being realistic. People who become great break loose from the thinking society who tries to checkmate them. They follow their dreams, accomplish something great, and leave their observers in a state of envy and awe. What makes them different? Are there common traits of people destined to make a difference in the universe? Absolutely. Even if we do not possess these gifts right now they can be learned or received from God our Creator. The Bible in **Matthew 7:7⁽⁵⁾** said “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”.

Detailed below are some of the qualities people destined for greatness have. These are what I call 7-keys that Prof Sam Ukala used to unlock his Destiny Fulfillment Doors:

(i) Vision

Eagle is a bird with a very clear and far vision. Most people don't have a clear vision for their career. The importance of a vision is that it can guide one in moments of change or in moments of confusion. Those who become great follow their destiny revelation, dreams and actualize it to the end. Their dreams or visions are God's Master-Plan or Blue Print of their destiny. For example, Egede describes Sam Ukala as "Eagle in Flight" in **City Voice, Lagos, Nigeria**⁽⁴⁾ He is truly an eagle in flight with clear vision of what he wants out of life and where he wants to be. Clear demonstration of the fact that he has a clear vision of what he wanted out of life is when he decided to go back to school for postgraduate studies (MA and PhD Theatre Arts) with the goal of becoming an academic, at the point he was already a Personnel Manager in NNPC. Many other people of less vision and character will settle for wealth which such a job was sure to bring, but will not lead to a fulfilled destiny.

(ii) Faith

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen— Hebrews 11:1⁽⁶⁾. You must have faith in God that called you into that career that He will see you through it. Prof Sam Ukala demonstrated a great measure of faith in God believing that God will provide all his needs especially his school fees up to any level even though his parents were not rich.

(iii) Wisdom

Proverbs 4:7⁽⁷⁾ said —*Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom and in all your getting, get understanding*!. People destined to become great are wise and have understanding. Prof Sam was endowed with great wisdom and understanding – No wonder he can turn folk tale into fiction and fiction into folk tale.

(iv) Anointing

Acts 10:38⁽⁸⁾ said: —*How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and; for God was with him*". God must anoint you or ordain you to succeed. The anointing will make way to a lot of things to

happen in your life eg: Favour, Mercy, Grace, Miracle, etc. It was obvious that Prof Sam was anointed to succeed in whatever he did. His winning the first prizes each time he competed with so many others testifies to this anointing.

(v) Knowledge

People destined to be great, acquire the knowledge and necessary skills required for every stage of their dream actualization. They gain experience in their profession/field of endeavor. They learn new things every day. Prof Sam as a lecturer acquires new skills and knowledge to make him afloat of the new developments in academics.

(vi) Attitude

Attitude of a person summarizes what that person can become. People who become great are humble. They work hard. They practice. They learn everything that needs to be learned about their career. They do not exhibit pride. Prof Sam is a typical example of someone who works hard and is very much unassuming.

(vii) Perseverance

Successful people must persist in their quest to be great. They are not daunted by obstacles. Obstacles are food for champions. Stumbling blocks often become the building blocks for legends. Prof Sam is not daunted by obstacles.

Some Other Legends in Nigerian Theatre Arts



Akinwande Oluwole Babatundé Soyinka
Born 13 July 1934 (age 83)
 Abeokuta, Nigeria Protectorate (Ogun State, Nigeria)
Occupation Author, poet, playwright
Nationality Nigerian
Period 1957–Present
Genre Drama, novel, poetry
Subjects [Comparative literature](#)
[Nobel Prize in Literature](#)
 1986
Notable awards [Academy of Achievement Gold Plate Award](#)
 2009

Chinua Achebe



Achebe in 2008

Born Albert Chinualumogu Achebe
 16 November 1930
 Ogidi, Nigeria Protectorate
Died 21 March 2013 (aged 82)
 Boston, Massachusetts, United States
Occupation David and Marianna Fisher University Professor and Professor of Africana Studies Brown University (2009–2013)
 Charles P. Stevenson Professor of Languages and Literature Bard College (1990–2008)
Nationality Nigerian
Period 1958–2013
Notable works The African Trilogy:
 –*Things Fall Apart*,
 –*No Longer at Ease*,
 –*Arrow of God*;
 Also, *A Man of the People*, and
Anthills of the Savannah.

WHAT THEY HAD IN COMMON WITH PROF SAM UKALA WERE:

**VISION + FAITH + WISDOM + ANOINTING +
 KNOWLEDGE + ATTITUDE + PERSEVERANCE =
 SUCCESS**

Lessons Learnt From 6 Non-Theatre Arts Legends

Prannav Srinivassan⁽⁹⁾ summarized some lessons learnt from 6 Non-Theatre Arts Legends in their journey in becoming legends, great, successful and destiny fulfilled as follows:

(i) Aim High

Nineteen year old **Satnam Singh** created history by becoming the first Indian to make it to the NBA after being awarded a 2 year contract by the Dallas Mavericks to play in the development league. While aiming high he said: *—I'll make it to the biggest basketball league in the world! His friends laughed at him then, but those who knew him better, did not.*

(ii) Benchmark with the best but compete with yourself.

Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian on the planet earth, sums it up perfectly *„If you want to be the best, you have to do things other people aren't willing to do.“*

(iii) Vision + Faith + Wisdom + Anointing + Knowledge + Attitude + Perseverance = Success

Nothing exemplifies this credo more than the endearing life story of **Li Ka Shing**, the 2nd richest man in Asia. He rose from grass to grace, hear him in his own words: **“It doesn't matter how strong or capable you are; if you don't have a big heart, you will not succeed.”**

(iv) It is never too late to change

Usain Bolt, the fastest man on the planet, was interestingly not even a 100 m specialist till his early 20's. Track and field events for him meant the 200 m dash and 4x100 m relay. Against the advice of his coach, he decided to compete in the 100 m sprint just a few months before the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The rest is history. *“Logic does not determine what is possible, you do.”*

(v) Setbacks are food for Champions and Legends

Thomas Alva Edison, inventor of the light-bulb and a pioneer of motion pictures, faced many obstacles while

designing his experiments. He didn't throw in the towel however, and each setback fueled him for the journey ahead. The thousands of failed experiments sharpened his insights and gave him clarity of thought, introduced him to hidden flaws in his approach and helped him refine his design to „turn the corner“, while his positive attitude helped him ward off the frustration of defeat. Truly, for this man, impossible meant I'm possible.

(vi) Define Your Goals in a Concise Manner:

Martial artist Bruce Lee made a roadmap for his life in the next ten years at the age of 26. It contained just 6 lines. Here's what he wrote:

“I, Bruce Lee, will be the first highest paid Oriental super star in the United States. In return I will give the most exciting performances and render the best of quality in the capacity of an actor. Starting 1970 I will achieve world fame and from then onward till the end of 1980 I will have in my possession \$10,000,000. I will live the way I please and achieve inner harmony and happiness”. By distilling his wisdom in those six lines, Bruce Lee immortalized himself as a warrior philosopher.

Who is Prof Sam Ukala at 70?

Prof Sam Ukala as Children Leader

Prof Sam Ukala as a child was a leader among children of his age. Even as young as 7 years old he was already organizing his age-group to act plays and drama. Most times, his Mother got astonished on several occasions when his son whom he fondly referred to as Sammy Nwam (Meaning Sammy my Son) brought home prizes he won at School Anniversaries from leading children to act plays and drama.

Prof Sam Ukala as a Youth Leader

At secondary school level, Prof Sam Ukala was a Youth Leader, organizing people to act plays and drama at every slightest possible opportunity. He was also a school prefect. At his Youth Service in

1977, he won two awards: National Youth Service Corps State Award, Gongola State, and National Youth Service Corps Drama Award (First Prize), Gongola State, for writing and directing the winning entry, “Darkness in the Distance”.

Prof Sam Ukala as a Community Leader

Between 2000 and 2004, Prof Sam Ukala was the National President, Mbiri Patriotic Union. In such positions, he helped the community to develop both socially and structurally.

Prof Sam Ukala as a Married Man

Prof Sam Ukala is good example of a married man because since he became married to his beautiful damsel Grace Ukala he has never introduced another lady to say: —*I have found a better Lady than my Wife.* Just as **Ephesians 5:25-27**⁽¹⁰⁾ says: —*Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.* He and the wife were blessed with six children – 2 Boys and 4 Girls. Some of his children are married and have given him some grandchildren.

Prof Sam Ukala as a Minister of God

Even though Prof Sam Ukala is not yet an ordained Pastor, there is no part of Pastoral Assignment that he cannot carry out. Is it preaching the sermon that he does so well with some spices of drama? Or is it in the issue of Church Planting? He is also dramatically good in the task. He also prays and miracles happen.

What Advice Does Prof Sam Ukala At 70 Have For the Younger Ones?

Just like Moses advised the Children of Israel, Prof Sam Ukala is advising all to be **Strong and Courageous** as in **Joshua 1:7-9**⁽¹¹⁾ —*Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, ... for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.*

Recommendations

Prof Sam Ukala has exhibited many life teaching ideas. In line with this, I am going to base my recommendations on the advice for destiny fulfillment by **Pastor Salt Maarten**⁽¹²⁾ as follows:

- i) The less you associate with some people, the more your life will improve. Any time you tolerate mediocrity in others, it increases your mediocrity. An important attribute in successful people is their impatience with negative thinking and negative acting people. As you grow, your associates will change.
- ii) Some of your friends will not want you to go on. They will want you to stay where they are. Friends that don't help you climb will want you to crawl. Your friends will stretch your vision or choke your dream. Those that don't increase you will eventually decrease you.
- iii) Never receive counsel from unproductive people. Never discuss your problems with someone incapable of contributing to the solution because those who never succeed themselves are always first to tell you how. Not everyone has a right to speak into your life. You are certain to get the worst of the bargain when you exchange ideas with the wrong person. Don't follow anyone who's not going anywhere.
- iv) With some people you spend an evening: with others you invest it. Be careful where you stop to inquire for directions along the road of life. Wise is the person who fortifies his life with the right friendships. If you run with wolves, you will learn how to howl, but, if you associate with eagles, you will learn how to soar to great heights. "A mirror reflects a man's face, but what he is really like is shown by the kind of friends he chooses"
- v) The simple but true fact of life is that you become like those with whom you closely associate – for the good and the bad. Note: Be not mistaken. This is applicable to family as well as friends. Yes,do love, appreciate and be thankful for your family, for they will always be your family, no matter what
- vi) In prosperity our friends know us. In adversity we know our friends." Never make someone a priority when you are only an option for them. If you are going to achieve excellence in

big things, you must develop the habit in little matters.
Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude.

Conclusion

Prof Sam Ukala's life and times have been studied and have revealed a measure of greatness and uncommon achievements enough to immortalize him as a legend of Theatre Arts. It is obvious that whoever is able to achieve great things in life to the extent of being immortalized as a legend must have towed the part of destiny. Everyone created by God has a purpose, but it is a personal effort that can lead to the fulfillment of that purpose.

Some of the qualities that made Prof Sam Ukala to succeed include: Vision, Faith, Wisdom, Anointing, Knowledge, Attitude and Perseverance – which I term the 7-Keys to unlocking the Doors of his Destiny Fulfillment. Among the lessons learnt from the lives of other legends include that: they are not easily disturbed by circumstances, they set targets for themselves and work towards achieving them. They are not disturbed by failures or obstacles. For anyone to succeed in achieving life purpose one must continually ask God for clear vision, skills and right attitude to life.

References

- 13:3 “And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship”, In King James Holy Bible
- James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” In King James Holy Bible
- Proverbs 10:22 “The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it” In King James Holy Bible
- City Voice, Lagos, Nigeria.- "Sam Ukala wins 2014 Nigeria Prize for Literature". City Voice, Lagos October 9, 2014.
- Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you”. In King James Holy Bible
- Hebrews 11:1 “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” In King James Holy Bible
- Proverbs 4:7 “Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding” In King James Holy Bible.

Acts 10:38 “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and ... for God was with him” In King James Holy Bible..

Prannav Srinivassan “6 Life Lessons I learnt from these Legends” In internet Google search 2015.

Ephesians 5:25-27 “Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and himself for it; That ... holy and without blemish” In King James Holy Bible.

Joshua 1:7-9 “Only be thou strong and very courageous, ... afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” In King James Holy Bible.

Edited by Pastor Salt Maartens “Reality on life's decision Friends and Family Uplifting people and those who drag you down with them” Oct 3, 2016 - Uploaded by Yannick Olivier
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHJkQu2okqk>

Index

- A Study on Trauma Aesthetics in Mahmood Ali-Balogun's *Tango with me*, 458-474
- Adeoye: the Nigerian Postmodern Dramaturge, 498-502
- Aesthetics, 463, 499
- Aesthetics, Concept of, 240
- History of, 240
 - In the African World View, 241
 - Multi Drama in *Iredi War*, 246
- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU), 55
- Akpakaland*, Synopsis of, 117
- All Hands as Stage Hands: Revisiting Stage Business, 3-13
- All Saints Primary School, Mbiri, 52
- Aristotle, 265
- Art and the Exemplification of People's Power in Sam Ukala's Theatre: *Akpakaland* and *The Placenta of Death* 218-238
- Art of Rhetoric, 265, 271
- Aspects of Folktale in *Akpakaland*, 106-110
- Attainment of the Goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD): A Historical Appraisal, 519-534
- Attitude of Students to the Study of Urhobo in Delta State Tertiary Institutions, 381-400.
- Audience, 13, 46
- Awolowo, O. (Chief), 509
- Beliefs, 100
- Benefits of Using Social Media for Publicity, 440, 441
- Bentley, E, 25
- “Black gold”, 308
- Blocking, 33
- “Bob Million” 52
- Characters, 257
- Characterization, 185, 292
- Charting a New Direction in Nigeria Playwriting through Folkism: A Study of Sam Ukala's *Akpakaland* and *Placenta of Death*, 113-130
- Cinema, 402
- Clark, J.P, 172
- Colonial Film Unit (CFU), 403
- Colonialism, 171, 505
- Commendations, 13
- Communication Art and the Directorial Praxis of Sam Ukala, 39-51
- Communication, 41, 44
- Competition, 132
- Conflicts, 193, 200, 225, 227
- Confucianism, 542
- Contempt, 140
- Contexts, Occasional 449
- Incidental, 451
 - Recreational, 450
- Cosmology, 538
- Craig, G, 43

- Criticism, 114, 145, 485
 Critics, 21, 131, 145, 582
 Culture, 100, 191, 363, 401, 409, 540
 Customs, 100
- Data, 389
 Design, 342
Deux-ex-machina, 135
 Development, 171, 289, 506
 Dialogue, 76
 Directing, 39, 40, 43, 44
 Directing: A Conceptual Overview, 26-28
 Director, 25, 26, 27, 33, 45, 47, 59, 63, 65
 Discrimination, 139
 Divisiveness, 132
 Donors, 525
 Drama and Theatre in Nigeria, 77-79
 Dramatic Aesthetics in Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*, 239-249
 Drumming, 168
- Eco-Centred Performance Poetry
 Among the Gbagyi of Abuja:
 Issues at Stake, 361-380
 Ecology, 370
 Educational Theatre, 414
 – Differences between
 commercial and subsidized
 theatre, 425
 – Professional theatre, 423-425
 – Publicity in, 433
Egwu Situation as Total Theatre, 448
 Entertainment, 361
 Europeans, 194
 Experimental Theatre in Nigeria,
 490-494
- Feminists, 294
- Festivals, 364
 Film, 401
 Film in Nigeria: A Historical
 Discourse, 402-406
 Film Policy, 403
 Folkism, 28, 87, 114, 115, 116, 161,
 174, 175, 188, 218, 574, 583
 Folkism: A Theoretical Review, 28-
 30
 Folkist Plays, Features of, 183-189
 Folkist Theatre, 102
 Folklore, What is, 71, 73
 Folktale and its Storytelling
 technique, 101-103
 Folktale as Panacea of the Oral
 Tradition: An Example of Sam
 Ukala's *Akpakaland*, 100-112
 Folktales, functions of, 82
 Foreign Exchange, 322
 From Marxist Ukala to Postmodern
 Adeoye and the Politics of
 Experimental Theatre in Nigeria,
 489-503
- Globalization, 364
 Glover (Captain) Memorial Hall, 16,
 402
 Gowon, Y. (Head of State), 509
 Grievance, 317
- Historical Realities: A Study of Sam
 Ukala's *Iredi War*, 250-263
 History, 143, 251, 254
 Humanity, 376
- Idioms, 161
 Ika Grammar School, Agbor, 52
 Illumination, 14
 Imagery, what is?, 161-163
 Imagination, 265
 Improvisation, 184

- Independence, 171
 Indigenous Patterns of Women
 Oppression and Liminality in Sam
 Ukala's *Akpakaland* and *The
 Slave Wife*, 291-306
 Influences, 239
 Insecurity, 134
 Intimidation, 134
 Intra-gender conflict, 139
Iredi War as Folkist Drama, 90-94
Iredi War as History, 94-97
Iredi War, 30
 – Sam Ukala's Directorial
 Aesthetics in, 31-37, 43
 Issues, 87

 Jealousy, 134

 Knowledge, 14
Knunu, 363

 Lagos Plan of Action for Economic
 Development of Africa, 519
 Language, 26, 115, 161, 186, 264,
 364, 382, 386, 410
 Language as Stimulus: Rhetorical
 Rendering in Sam Ukala's
 Skeletons, 264-275
 Language Attitudes, Theories of,
 387-394
 Laws of Aesthetic Response, 29, 30,
 35, 80, 89, 175, 177, 178, 180,
 181, 182, 574
 Light as Scenery: Historical
 Development of Technology in
 Contemporary Nigerian Theatre
 Design, 14-24
 Lighting, 14
 – Artificial, 16
 Limitations, 198
 Literalising Indigenous Story-telling
 Narrative: Textual Readings of
 Sam Ukala's Folkism as an
 Aesthetic Theory, 171-190
 Literature, 204, 346
 Lyndersay, D.K.W, 18

 Manager, 45
 Marinho, S, 18
 Marriage, 132
 Masks, 148
 Member of Audience (MOA), 31
 Mentor, 581
 Metaphor, 478
 Misogyny, 132
 Modern African Writers and
 Tradition, 104, 105
 Multinational Oil Corporations, 307,
 315
 Music, 342, 448

 Narratology, 368
 National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, 19,
 20
 "Nazizi", 52
 Neurologists, 346
 NEPAD, Objectives of, 521, 522
 – A scorecard of, 522
 Niger Delta, 316, 318, 505, 506
 Nigerian Language Policy, 387
 Nigerian Liquified Natural Gas
 (NLNG) Prize for Literature,
 131, 144, 218, 583
 Nigerian State, 314
 Nwamo, C, 39

 Observances, 363
 Oil, 307, 309, 310
 Oil Bunkering, 308, 311, 312, 317
 Oil theft, 312, 315, 318
 Oni, D, 18, 21
Opele, 543, 544

- Opportunism, 314
- Oppression, 132
- Oppression, Gender and Resistance in Selected Plays of Sam Ukala, 276-290
- Oral narratives, what are the characteristics of?, 75
- Orature, 368
- Owa, 96, 193
- Pains, 506
- Personality Fragmentation, 355
- Petroleum Act, 51
- Petroleum Decree 51, 509
- Philosophies, 401
- Placenta of Death*, Synopsis of, 118
- Playwrights, 26, 33
- Plot, 186, 255
- Politics, 143
- Polygamy, 132
- Polygyny, 133
- Power, 225
- Presenting History Through Folkist Drama: An Analysis of Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*, 86-99
- Prof. Sam Ukala as a Director: An Interview, 52-67
- Professional and Educational Theatre: Where is the Meeting Point? 419-429
- Proverbs, 161
- Psychologists, 346
- Publicity in Educational Theatre: Social Media Use as a Novel Approach, 430-445
- Questions, 116
- Racism, 403
- Reading the Mind of the Playwright: Personality Fragmentation in Sam Ukala's *Iredi War*, 346-358
- Rebellion, 315
- Recommendations, 128
- Repression, 477
- Respondents' Views on Social Media Use for Publicity, 441-443
- Rhetorical Figures, 266
- Anaphora, 266
 - Metaphors, 269
 - Metonymy, 272
 - Similes, 269
- Ritual Literary Drama, 447
- Role, 335, 338, 342
- Sadism, 298
- Sam Ukala's Directorial Style, 42-51
- Sam Ukala's Drama and the Trends of Conformity: A Study of *The Slave Wife* and *Akpakaland*, 204-217
- Sam Ukala's Folkist Directorial Aesthetics: The Example of *Iredi War*, 25-38
- Sam Ukala's Perspective of Cultural Collision and Tragic Vision in *Iredi War*, 191-203
- Sam Ukala's *The Last Heroes*: A Sad Commentary on University Education in Nigeria, 331-334
- Scott, S.W., 145
- Scripture, 204
- Senghor, L., 172
- Sex, 163
- Sexual Imageries in Select Works of Sam Ukala, 160-170
- Sisters at Arms*: Female Misogyny and Competition in Sam Ukala's Selected Plays, 131-142
- Social Decadence and Moral Imperative in Sam Ukala's *In My Hermitage*, 143-159

- Social Media Publicity, 435-438
 Society, 132
 Sofola, Z, 239
 Song, 187, 372
 Sorrow, 506
 Soyinka, W, 172
 Space, 184
 Stage Hands, Functions of, 10-12
 Stage lighting in Nigeria, 15-23
 Story, 291
 Suffering, 198
- Techniques, 355
 The Dramaturgy of Marxism in
 Ukala's Theatre, 494-498
 The Dynamics of Folk Culture in the
 Aesthetics of Yoruba Ifá and
 Chinese I-Ching, 535, 511
 The Female in Society and Marriage,
 132-134
 The Niger Delta and Politics of
 Dispossession, 506-518
 The Poet as a Town Crier: G'Ebinyo
 Oyowei's Socialist Engagement
 with the Public in the *Town
 Crier's Song*, 475-488
 The Politics of Dispossession and
 the Redemptive Praxics in
 G'Ebinyo Ogbowei's *March Boy
 and Other Poems*, 504-518
 Theories, 387
 Time, 184
 Totems, 411
 Traditional Music Theatre in
 Contemporary Contexts:
 Perspectives from Aniocha Igbo
 of Nigeria, 446-457
 Transmuting Folklore for
 Dramaturgic Relevance in
 Contemporary Nigeria: An
 Assessment of Sam Ukala's
 Dramaturgic Foray, 71-85
 Trauma, 458, 462, 464, 469
- Uka, K, (Prof) 52
 Ukala as an Oral Tradition
 Dramatist, 105, 106
 Ukala, 573,
 – Teacher and Researcher, 573
 – Theatre Director, Admini-
 strator, 577
 United Kingdom, 174
 University of Hall, UK, 31
 Untruthfulness, 314
 Urhobo Studies Association, 395
 Urhoboland, "A Historical Survey
 of", 406-409
 Urhobowood Home Videos and the
 Poetics of Cultural
 Documentation, 401-418
- Values, 82, 401, 584
 Viable Business or Death trap? Sam
 Ukala's *Fumes of Fuel*, 307-330
 Victimization, 292
 Voice, 477
- What is I-Ching (The Book of
 Changes), 537
 Wilkinson, N. (Dr), 55
 Wives (Women), 132
 Women, Oppressors of Fellow
 Women, 294-306
 Yerimah, A, 239
 Young Race, 535
 – Religion, 535
 Zhou Dynasty, 541

New Aesthetic Dimensions in African Drama and Theatre is unique in at least two ways. In the first instance, it is a valedictory 'gift' to a man who has paid his academic dues over the years and in the second way, it is a justification of these dues that he has paid when one looks at the richness in quantity, quality and varied nature of the contributions. The contributions and tributes come from both seasoned egg heads and academic neophytes who are just cutting their academic teeth as lecturers even as Ukala himself did some 33 years ago in the then Bendel State University, Ekpoma. Apart from interrogating the oeuvre of Ukala's works, of which none seems to have been left out, this book updates the two previous works which Ukala's creativity has engendered and has as a bonanza, papers on the African/Nigerian Theatre and Drama from various perspectives. There are also papers which focus on other areas of study like Educational theatre, Oral poetry of the Gwari people of Abuja, Urhobo studies, Nollywood studies, among others. The tributes are as exciting as the papers as some of them bifurcate between critical appraisal of the man and his works as well as make commendations. Some are effusive while some are quite plain and direct. All together, this volume is rich and testifies to the productivity of the persona, It is a book that every theatre scholar, critic, practitioner and student would forever regret if it is not in his/her library.

Martins Uze E. TUGBOKOROWEI is a Senior Lecturer and Acting Head, Department of Theatre Arts, Delta State University, Abraka. Dr. Tugbokorowei is also the incumbent Chairman of the Association of Nigerian Authors, (ANA) Delta State.

Chukwuma ANYANWU was formerly of the Department of Mass Communication, Delta State University, Abraka before transferring to the Department of Theatre Arts of the same University. Dr. Anyanwu is a Senior Lecturer, an accomplished writer, novelist, poet and playwright. He has held various posts as a member of the Association of Nigerian Authors (ANA), Delta State Chapter.