

## Yoruba Oral Traditions and Communal Aesthetics in Olu Obafemi's Selected Drama

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### Abstract

The history of African oral literature is located in oral tradition which is tied to communal living. African oral literature is a conglomerate of communal traditions that reflect African culture, experiences, and societies. Studies affirmed that Olu Obafemi's ideological stance and investigation of the society is revolutionary and is geared towards seminal social change. This paper examines the aesthetics of oral literature, and explores the society through the prism of Olu Obafemi's *Naira Has No Gender* and *Scapegoats and Sacredcows* by highlighting the different explications of oral forms portrayed by the dramatist. The paper reveals the writer's ideological disposition and vision as informed by his discursive engagement of larger issues through various oratory means. The placement of Nigerian songs and dance, proverbs, role-play technique, and audience participation are identified as signposts of Nigerian oral literature. The paper adopts Cultural Studies theory as its theoretical paradigm for its capacity to analyse and provide an assessment of the contributions that cultural practices and artifacts make to the society. This study reveals how African oral literature combines traditional and modern theatrical techniques to sustain communal living and cultural practices such as veneration, education, and moral instruction.

**Keywords:** African oral literature, communal tradition, drama, cultural studies, extensive dramaturgy.

### Introduction

Oral literature which can be referred to as an umbrella for oral tradition and interaction in the society is the verbal expression (which includes songs and chants, epics, proverbs, myths, riddles, and lyrics) that is passed on from one generation to another. In time past, African oral literature was beset by several problems and difficulties, some of which were the dearth of appropriate dramatic texts (Ogunjimi & Na'allah, 2005) and the failure to incorporate African

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aesthetic features by foreign scholars and researchers whose knowledge of oral tradition seems inadequate. The narrative has changed since African writers have taken the bull by the horns to relentlessly create dramaturgy that tends towards oral tradition and are signaled through social interaction and relationships that exist in African society. These oral mediums are condensed and employed as aesthetics in Olu Obafemi's plays to reflect on the social, political and economic issues in the society.

African oral literature experienced colonial biases that result into condemning the culture of the people and termed it barbaric. African cultural festivals, songs, dance and other traditional practices that form African orature were condemned as fetish, while their own practices were celebrated. As a result of these biases, Nigerian literature moved from oral form to written art. Colonial influences also privilege Nigerian writers to read what foreign writers wrote about Africans and wrote their own reactions against such pieces of writing. Iwuchukwu (2009) submits that "Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is said to be a reaction against Joyce's *Mister Johnson*" (p.72). Achebe was able to react, and present his own view because he could read and write. Thus, the thematic concern of each piece of African writings is explained and interpreted through oral mediums.

### **Yoruba Oral Traditions in Nigerian Writings**

Nigerian literature as an integral matrix of African literature simply refers to the literature that thematically and aesthetically highlights Nigerian experiences in both the oral and written mediums. Nigerian writers have made indelible blueprints in the production of numerous literary works which are deeply rooted and profound with the presumable theatrical elements that are pervasive in traditional Africa and the Nigerian cultural heritage. A good example is Achebe's (1958) classical novel *Things Fall Apart* where proverbs form the preparatory grounds and resources for oratorical arts. In the work, proverbs present images and ideas channeled through traditional evasive means of communication. Relatively, Fugard's (1973) *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* presents the experience of *Sizwe Bansi* in Port Elizabeth, where, he had to die in order to live. To this effect, role-play technique is employed to describe how Bansi is transfigured into Robert Zwelinzima to have an identity. Other works that present African experience through traditional oratory means are Bitek's (1966) *Song of Lawino*, Soyinka's (1975) *Death and the King's Horseman*, Laye's (1953) *The African Child*, Ngugi's (1964) *Weep Not Child* and host of others.

These works reflect in entirety the pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial experiences of Nigerian writers, and these experiences are portrayed and reflected in their literary output. The discursive channels are represented in aesthetics and are presented in the indigenous languages of the writers; which best capture the social interaction in their society. These aesthetics are amplified in the English language for extensive dramaturgy.

Nigerian writers have from time adopted oral mediums of (songs, dances, orchestral, proverbs, drums, and others) as seasoning ingredients for theatrical aesthetics. It is in line with

the foregoing that Elegba (2021) claimed that "... a careful study of the development of Nigeria drama over time shows its metamorphosis from oral literature to the current post-modern Nigerian literature..." (p.151). It is however expedient to note that the oral ingredients acclaimed to have metamorphosed are formative basis for examining the functionality of the post-modern Nigerian literature. These oral mediums are lenses through which readers are welcomed to the society and the prevalent social interaction that justifies each culture.

Orature explains that literature is influenced by culture and relatedly, culture is preoccupied with the ingredient of social interaction in the society. Invariably, orature is literature that is oral and it is evident in folk epics, myths, proverbs, rituals, dance, and folksongs. Orature is considered to be verbal expression handed down from one generation to another based on Pio Zirimu's (1930) coinage. In the same vein, Finnegan (2012) as cited in Shehu, (2021) viewed orature as the formulation of words by a performer on specific occasion. More clearly and lucidly, the words formulated can by no means be realised except through literary production (p.177). The collective view on orature has positioned it to be the representation of human life and experiences. These experiences which are predicated on social interactions are what Nigerian dramatists reflect in their works as aesthetics that bring about extensive dramaturgies. Olu Obafemi is a household name in Nigeria theatre landscape. His theatrical techniques, aims, and objectives are condensed in aesthetics built on the broad view of the socio-political and economic issues in the society.

### **The Writer and Society**

The society can however be assumed to rot in anomalies if not for the relentless effort of some individuals who painstakingly mirror the society through their creative output, and are saddled to correct the unusual in the society. The society is shaped through the tireless effort of the sacrosanct individuals who serve as a watchdog against excesses in the society. They are cognisant of so many negativities in the society such as corruption, exploitation, tyranny and oppression, inequality, needless classification between the rich and the poor and the lots. The rich exploit the poor and under the guise of immunity, they also do the unbelievable in the society. As asserted by Ojaide (2010), "one of the major causes of lack of peace is the relationship between the powerful and their victims" (p.12). They have however charged themselves with the duty to affirm the positive values of peace, freedom and equality through writing. As a result of all these, writers have focused on the need for change. Olu Obafemi belongs to the group of those who demand change in the society. Writing for social change is paramount in Obafemi's works. The change Obafemi professes in his writings is always a revolutionary one and is predicated on interactions emanating from the society that are geared towards attitudinal change.

Olu Obafemi is an acclaimed theatre practitioner whose theatrical objectives are revolutionary. He is better situated among the generation of literary artists such as Osundare, Sowande, Osofisan, Fatunde e.t.c who are 'revolutionaries'. These revolutionary artists take

a radical deviation from the writing inclination of writers such as Wole Soyinka, J. P. Clark and Ola Rotimi. Studies have categorized Olu Obafemi to be a faction of the second generation writers who see themselves as revolutionary, and who have distinctively replicated the concept of revolution for seminal social change in their literary outputs, Bamikunle (2000); Anthony (2016); Obaje (2019); Garuba (2022) and Ajidahun (2024).

### **Review of Literature**

Olu Obafemi is an acclaimed writer whose ideological stance is geared towards seminal social change being socio-politically committed to positive social transformation of the Nigerian society. Bamikunle (2000) study recounts Olu Obafemi's revolutionary ideology. In the study, he affirmed that Obafemi's revolutionary ideology is rather radical and reformative. The author submits that "...at each stage, the hopes are in the youths who symbolises the future" (p.113). According to the study, Obafemi's revolutionary vision is carried out by the youths and achieved through collective struggle for social change. Similarly, Abubakar's (2007) study describes Obafemi as revolutionary and that the inclination is channeled through the youths and the downtrodden in his works. He observes that "the hope is reposed in the youth and other downtrodden classes to eliminate Agurumos internally and at the same time remove the shackles of internal grips" (p.32).

In another submission, Abaje (2010) viewed Olu Obafemi's revolution as reformative. The scholar submits that 'Obafemi empowers his characters to courageously find lasting solutions to their problems through dialogue and not violence' (p.325). The contribution on Obafemi's revolutionary ideology takes a rather different turn from Bamikunle (2000) and Abubakar's (2007) studies. The ideology here is a move from a violent revolution to a dialogical and reformatory push for change.

In Balogun's (2014) exploration of his works, he submits that Obafemi's revolutionary inclinations are metaphorically represented. In *Naira has no Gender* (1993) and other works, Balogun submits that Obafemi uses characterization as a metaphor to drive his revolutionary quest. Metaphorically representing characters keeps resurfacing in his works. The study concludes that the ideological perspectives of using metaphor for his revolutionary quest have been a recurring motif in his works.

Ajidahun (2024) examines the revolutionary aesthetics and the semiotic analysis of Obafemi's selected works. The scholar points out that the thematic concern and themes in Obafemi's works are the prevalent socio-economic and socio-political situation in Nigeria. The study observes that Obafemi understands the societal dynamics and the various inanities perpetrated by African people; these he tries to epitomise in his works with varying themes reflecting these disorders. The study concludes that Obafemi always looks at the society from a sociological point of view.

Relatedly, it is deduced from Garuba's (2022) work that Obafemi's artistic creativity resonates with social functionality and commitment to his society. Garuba remarked that Olu

Obafemi's commitment has been situated within the conceptual frameworks of vision and revolution for a better future. The study concludes that Obafemi upheld the theme of socio-political and economic inequity in the neo-colonial system of Nigeria. Obafemi's concern for his nation is pervasive in his works. He does not only create and recreate the problems inherent in his nation, he also conceives the self-dream of a better nation.

Falola (2021) attempts a deep assessment of Olu Obafemi as a public intellectual as informed by ideas and ideals in his works. The academic observed Obafemi's ideas and ideals through the lens of peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. The study pointed out that Obafemi who enjoyed the mixture of African cultural traditions and Western culture that is infused with formal education has been a talent for scholarship. The study reiterates that "his body of work has contributed to shaping public consciousness in resisting social inequities and promoting good governance especially as it affects the less privileged of the Nigerian society" (p.90). Obafemi's contribution to revolutionising the society cannot be overestimated.

Similarly, Elegba (2021) shared a view of Olu Obafemi's social and political commitment. Elegba's study finds that Obafemi is committed socially and politically to the cause of the downtrodden. The work concludes that Osofisan and Obafemi "direct their drama of commitment at exposing the social vices perpetrated by the political class and the nature of their commitment to conscientise, that is, revolutionise the mind of the poor..." (p.161). The works of Obafemi are clear messages of the social and political revitalization of his nation.

Based on the foregoing clarifications, this study however suggests a paradigm shift from the acclaimed description of Olu Obafemi as revolutionary to describing him as being socio-cultural. Beyond the revolutionary content of Obafemi's plays and as a part of his aesthetic vision, he is a cultural ambassador that is deeply rooted in African custom and tradition. To corroborate Obafemi's socio-cultural inclination, Adeyanju describes him as a quintessential and astute promoter of African traditions. However, anyone familiar with Obafemi's level of "cultural rootedness and cosmopolitanism" as affirmed by Falola (2021) would understand "the connection between him and his cultural background (p.91). Thus, the study shows how Obafemi's cultural connections are reflected through interactions emanating from the society; using orature as analytical parlance for extensive dramaturgy.

### **Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design to analyse the dramatic techniques employed in the selected texts for this research. Two plays of Olu Obafemi that showcase the social and political problems inherent in Nigerian society are selected. The plays served as the primary data to engage the oratory aesthetics of social interactions in the society. The thematically selected plays are Olu Obafemi's *Naira has no Gender* (1993) and *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows* (2003). These texts are selected because they evaluate social and political issues in the society and it aligns with the ideology of the playwright's motif of social change. However, their embodiments of key social themes are projected using relevant dramatic techniques and

this aided the choice of cultural theory to analyse the texts. Stuart Hall's cultural theory is adopted to look into how characters relate to ideology, social class and matrix of dignifying cultural practices evident in the formation of the society. The secondary sources of data collection include literature, journals, seminar papers, books, and the internet. Obafemi's works are selected for this study because of the mixture of African cultural traditions and Western culture that is infused with formal education that is constantly reflected in his works.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study therefore adopts cultural theory, with a particular focus on the social interactions in the society, and the varying means through which the interactions are aesthetically incorporated and exemplified in oral mediums for extensive dramaturgy. This is with a view to ultimately determine the socio-economic essence of the selected plays and the playwright's cultural tendencies undergirded through oral aesthetics.

Cultural theory is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of culture, with emphasis on the social interaction of the constituents of the said culture. Cultural theory as a multidisciplinary approach is broadly-conceived and institutionalised to look into the array of dignifying cultural practices evident in the formation of the society. These arrays of dignifying cultural practices are evident in scholarship. Scholarship asserts that scholars of Cultural Studies assume that culture cannot be understood apart from the prevalent underlying social and political practices. The theory therefore sociologically investigates the society with attention on specific social and political struggles, questions, and problems that characterised the society.

As enumerated by Habib (2008), leading figures of cultural studies are Raymond Williams (1921 – 1988), Stuart Hall (1932), Dick Hebdige (1951), and Richard Hoggart (1964) (175 -176). Habib's position on cultural theory is that the theory has been influenced by modern theories like Structuralism and Marxism (p.174). The academic believes that the scholarly canon of cultural criticism corpus is a reflection of the instrumentalities of Marxism and Structuralism. The confluence of these critical modern theories is a full inquiry into the society. After oppositions and elaborations, Habib (2008) observes cultural theory as "... the ideological context of prevailing beliefs, and broad political issues of class, race, and gender, and the operating power" (p.173).

According to Templeton (1992), cultural criticism "historically encompassed with issues such as literary form, ideology, and the production and reception of literary works..." (p.19). The ideology of literary form in the submission above suggests the preoccupation of race, class, and gender issues emanating from the society. The preoccupations are signaled by the pattern of social relationships that define the culture (way of life) of the people. Similarly, Adesami (2008) in his description of post-colonialism explains the political, economic, and cultural interaction in the society, which is relevant to this study. He describes that "postcolonial theory emerged in an internaturalist context marked by the reconfiguration of the idioms of political, economic and cultural interaction" (p.38). The interaction seems not to be measured with an existing culture in a society. This is where cultural criticism comes to mind.

In another submission, Schakel & Ridl (2012), opined that “cultural criticism explores the relationship between an author and her or his work and the cultural context in which they exist” (p.1464). The opinion of the scholars justifies that an author, his/her work and the cultural context are inseparable. An author is influenced by his environment, that is, he/she accepts and reflects the attitudes in his culture and challenges them in writing. These attitudes are reflected in the economic conditions, political situations and social conventions of the author’s society. Similar view is shared by Mulhern & Collini (2024) as they assert that cultural studies “...certainly responds to the energies of social and cultural movements – and their eclipse” (p.16).

Additionally, Agir (2022) claimed that Ngugi Wa Thiongo, an African cultural theorist who explored the role of culture in shaping human behaviour views culture as a dialectical process and stresses the need for cultural freedom. He explored the role of culture in the liberation of African custom and tradition based on Marxist perspective. Also, Worugji (2007) submits that Okot p’Bitek is a cultural figure known for his appreciation of African culture and this is evident in his presentation of *Song of Lawino* (1972) and the later *Song of Ocol* (1972) to African scene. Okot p’Bitek’s cultural theory is based on the idea that African culture is dynamic and criticised western perception of African culture. He employed different dramatic techniques in his works like storytelling, representation, songs and dance to foreground his powerful critique of how western perceptions of African culture have contributed to the erosion of the traditional values and marginalisation of African voices.

The above literature validates the aim of this research as the study seeks to explore the social relationships and interaction in the society from the purview of orature. These social relationships and interactions are embedded in a plethora of aesthetics that form the dramaturgy of the selected texts. The ideas of the narrator and role-playing technique, songs, proverbs, parables, and other dramaturgical aesthetics are relevant to appreciating the beauty of African oral literature and the study adopts a hybrid of theoretical framework of cultural theory for this purpose. These aesthetics are often in contact with modern theatrical techniques to achieve the desired dramaturgy.

### **Cultural and Oratory Aesthetics in Olu Obafemi’s Plays**

Structurally, *Naira has no Gender* (1993) is divided into five parts, consisting of atmospheres one to five. The play tries to picture how the youths mediate in politics to actively transform the narratives. On the other hand, *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows* (2003) is divided into six parts with five episodes and an epilogue. The play reveals how those who spearhead and champion the liberation of the downtrodden are treated unjustly. The play strongly advocates for restoration from the unmeasured deviations in the society and seeks fairness and respect for fundamental rights.

The structure of *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows* (2003) helps to achieve role-play and some other techniques as some characters are made to play other roles different from their

original roles. This is achieved when Gafa (the social crusader) is incarcerated and the consciousness of him gives a collective voice to other inmates to rise against the forces of oppression (pp. 137 and 138). Relatively, the division of *Naira has no Gender* (1993) through different oral aesthetics comments on social and moral issues that have posed great challenges in the contemporary Nigerian society as championed by Dokun and Debby. The division of the plays into different parts enables the playwright to achieve the techniques of total theatre and these dramatic techniques aesthetically form the dramaturgy of the plays.

The selected plays, *Naira has no Gender* (1993) and *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows* (2003) like other plays of Olu Obafemi are written to unequivocally showcase and address sociological problems in the society. Thus, the plays reveal the anomalies of class divide, political manipulation, bribery and corruption, and man's inhumanity to man (as illustrated through the corrupt Chief Awadanu while Otunla, Aina, Dokun and Debby are characterised to show a great deal of decency against Chief) that have enveloped and thrown human society into a dank and pitiable state. These themes and other subthemes in the plays are revealed through social interactions and are orchestrated through the myriad of oral means. The imaginative creativity of orature to explicate cultural tendencies forms the basis of aesthetics in the works.

### Songs and Dance

Music is deployed by Obafemi in various ways to exemplify communal orature and artistic effect. In *Naira has no Gender*, the play opens with "Idu..." song. The song establishes the setting of a streamside, a typical African representation of a communal life. The first song in *Naira has no Gender* is championed by Dokun and Debby after an interactive tussle between Chief Awadanu and Dokun. The dialogue between the characters informs the orchestral and the audience to participate in the song as they all declare the need for change as captioned in the text as "we want a new world" in the literary text (pp.31 and 58). Dokun decides for change and is joined by Debby. Another instance of rendition is revealed through Mama's dirge, who renders a song after the distasteful incident in the market (p.43). The dirge is incorporated to create the needed purgation and serve as a significant pointer to dignify the esteemed cultural and communal songs.

The aesthetic of the music is also realised in *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows* when Gafa's revolutionary propensity is exalted by other inmates. The order of the song is done in a ritual sequence to honour *Gafa*. While 221 champions the song, other inmates chorused it as they dance around the cell with the song:

221: E ma jeo fese kanle(2)	Lift him aloft
Chorus: E e gbeee	Carry him high
221: Eni mekunu nfe ni	Darling of the wretched
Chorus: A a gbe oo	We'll lift him high...(p.9)



Also, the epilogue of the play explicates the song of determination towards a determined and well-structured revolution. The song is accompanied by dance by the inmates to celebrate their conceived freedom (p.47). The song resonates with the characters action and helps to establish the theme of social change that is conceived by the interactions between the characters.

The songs are written in the playwright's native language with translations to reveal the cultural rootedness of the playwright and his esteemed admiration for oral literature. The songs are aesthetically incorporated with dance to show a sense of communal interaction and a blend of orature. These songs are pointers through which the theme of the restoration of equity and justice is communicated because the songs speak to the characters' emotions. The songs motivate and stir the characters to form a voice that unanimously call for social change. The songs deployed in the texts are symbolic as they lay the ambience for social interaction and commentary in the society. Thus, they are significantly incorporated to foreground the actions of the characters and to serve as the channel through which readers get to understand the social change desired by the playwright in the society.

### **The Employment of Proverb**

According to Oluremi & Olugbemi-Gabriel's (2022) study, Yoruba proverbs are linguistic resources that are deployed by the Yoruba people to achieve certain communication goals. Similarly, Ademowo & Balogun (2019) submit that proverbs are vital in relationship management and are essential aspect of effective communication delivery. Proverbs are an essential medium of transmitting indigenous values because they are discourse pattern through which meanings are encrypted. Proverbs are universal property of Africans because they are believed to be condensed vehicles of wisdom. Obafemi employs Yoruba proverbs to give commentary on pertinent issues central to the thematic concern of the selected texts.

In *Naira has no Gender*, employment of the proverb is realised in the conversation between Otonla and Aina. Aina replied, "Have you ever seen a banana tree dying without its siblings sprouting?", "Where have you heard red coal perishing without ashes?" (p.13). These proverbs suggest a direct translation of the indigenous Yoruba proverb which would read; "Bogede ba ku aa fi omo e ropo and Binaa ba ku aa fi eeru boju". The usage connotes a similar meaning and is used by Aina to reinforce and validate his traditional belief of the old having a child or children who will live to replace the old. The proverbs are relevant to the discussion of Otonla and Aina's distinct materialistic and realistic notion of marriage and the ostentatious glamour. The proverb is significant to the overall plot of the play because it reinforces the characters viewpoint about marriage and birth and also gives a commentary on societal belief about birth control and finance. Metaphorically, the proverbs denote the notion of birth and lineage continuity as part of the belief of Africans when it comes to the issue of marriage.

Another instance(s) of proverbs in *Naira has no Gender* are the ones construed in Nigerian Pidgin English by Chief Awadanu. They are: "You no say e don tay when the goat don dey sweat, Na the skin no let the world see the sweat" (p.22), "Na with my eyes and my wing

naim I dey take see” (p.25), “E get many ways for to kill one snake” (p.26). The English translation would read: “The goat skin conceals the rigour of its effort right from time”, “I am fully aware of every happening around me”, and “There are many ways to an end”. Thematically, the first proverb expresses electoral manipulations and political party’s exploitative ideology; the second proverb expresses Chief Awadanu’s vigilance in the corridor of power while the third proverb specifies how Chief plans to embezzle public funds for personal gains. The performative power of these proverbs indicates many dubious ways of embezzlement in the political system of contemporary Nigerian society. The proverbs are to show Chief’s personality and how he is being characterised by the playwright. The proverbs are employed to investigate the society with attention to the prevalent social and political problems in the society. Also, these proverbs are realised in the cultural context of the people and channeled through communal social interaction to give commentary on the socio-political problems in the Nigerian society.

Gafa’s expression- “... How many shall we count in Adepele’s teeth?” (p.14) is the first proverbial occurrence in *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows*. Its Yoruba version reads: “Melo la fe ka ninu eyin Adepele?” The translation of the proverb as used by the playwright shows his vast knowledge of his mother tongue. ITS’s expression presents another proverb- “... A cursed day, gives the devil a drink of water.” (p.22). The Yoruba translation reads: “Ojo buruku esu gbomi mu.” The knowledge of the Yoruba language informs the use of the proverb. The proverb can be interpreted metaphorically to mean unfavourable day for the context of its use.

Another Gafa’s expression- “Those infant siblings who keep their mother awake will not sleep” (p.33) also suggests a direct translation from Yoruba proverb. The Yoruba translation reads: “Omo toba ni iya oun oni sun oun naa oni foju kan orun.” Literarily, the expression suggests that parties that rise against each other will both keep vigil while metaphorically, it suggests impending unrest for the troubled and the troubler as in the context of use. Gafa expression- “The hen mounts the rope. Both hen and the rope shall swing all night long” (p.34) presents a similar direct translation from Yoruba language. The Yoruba version reads: “Adiye baa lokun ara o rokun ara o radiye.” In the context of its use, the “hen” and “rope” symbolically represents two parties involved and its significance is to state that, in the course of a revolution, both parties involved will not know peace until there is a resolution. The social-cultural ambiance of these proverbs cannot be overemphasised because they serve as fundamental instruments of transmission of indigenous traditional values. The proverbs are incorporated to drive the plot of the unequivocal call for desired social change as occasioned by the characters involvement in the text and to also establish the power of unity in the quest for social change in the society.

### **Role-Play Aesthetic**

The role-play technique is a form of character representation in a dramatic text and a theatrical performance. Though the role-play technique is best realized in theatrical performance for

stage management and economy but that is not to undermine its effect on a dramatic text. It is a dramatic way of expanding the audience's participation in the issues about the society. Role-play technique is well employed in *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows* and it is signposted to address the theme of the play as embedded in the directorial instruction - "*In this way, a degree of 'subversion' or substitution of roles between HUMAN OBJECTS and MATERIAL OBJECTS will be possible to make 'a theatrical statement about the THINGIFICATION and reification of human beings which the system embarks upon.'*" (p.xiii). 222 is seen by other inmates as Gafa the popular activist; thereafter, 222 acts as Gafa. The playwright uses this technique to present his animal tale in the text as Gafa and other inmates quickly adjust themselves to different animals like Esin, Antelope, Hare, Fox, Ekun, and Tortoise.

Gafa is role-played as G the Tortoise while other inmates represent other animals. As intended by the playwright, the employment of the role-play technique is "...not only for stylistic and dramaturgical reasons but also for ideological purposes" (p.xiii). The symbolic importance of the role-play representation of human and animal character is to criticise the extent of societal dehumanization of human in the socio-political sector of the society. Humans are metaphorically characterised as animals to foreground the notion of dehumanization. It can be presupposed that the reification of the abstract characters is to give identity to the nameless individuals who engage in the discussion of larger issues emanating from the society from different ideological points of view. The use of this technique and its artistic effect is to consider human beings as impersonal and to also lay credence to the social interaction in the society. The role-play aesthetic enables the playwright to project the idea of systemic form of oppression that is conceived through character reification.

### **Audience Participation**

The playwright painstakingly deploys audience participation to show the kind of social interaction that characterises communal living. This technique is employed to bring happenings in the society to the audience, which is artistically believed to be part of the plot of the play. This aesthetic gives an expansive mood to the thrust of different subjects of discussion in the text. The use of audience participation is well grounded in *Naira has no Gender* unlike in the *Scapegoats and Sacred Cows*. The audience is actively involved in the song rendered by Dokun and Debby (p.31). The orchestra joins Dokun and Debby while the audience is invited to participate with claps (p.31). The aesthetic of audience participation is to move the theme of the text from just being a drama text to the confinement of a theatrical performance. This narrative technique of social interaction helps to create extensive dramaturgy.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The aesthetics of music establish the significance of song and dance to African oral literature as an inseparable ingredient of the traditional way of life. Music is one of the mediums of

expressing the core values and norms of the society and Obafemi uses it to project the communal interaction and tradition of the people through inclining theme of formative revolution for desired social change. The elements of music and dance are incorporated for theatrical experience with prompt emphasis on performance. However, they are employed and sustained in Obafemi's writings to underscore his socio-political issues through the lens of Yoruba traditional theatrical elements and techniques.

Proverbs are special and condensed ways through which the beauty of a set order of words expresses the aesthetic of language obtainable in a culture. Obafemi prerogatively exemplifies his vast knowledge of the Yoruba cultural expressive tendencies within the ambiance of social interaction in a typical Yoruba setting. The proverbs are objectively used to heighten his promotion of African cultural heritage, and at a deeper level, they are woven to add layers of meaning beyond ordinary usage to showcase Yoruba cultural relevance and significance in the context of use.

Obafemi through role-play and audience participation aesthetics, uses the socio-political and economic complicated situation to form the basis of communal interaction in the text. Through these aesthetics, societal imbroglios are discussed and relevant solutions are proffered in the texts. Audience participation and role-play techniques expand the narrative beyond the characters in the texts as it is employed to share audiences' point of view about the subject of discussion to foreground the inclusiveness of the audience in performance. This aligns with the focus of the playwright on the concept of community engagement in arising issues in the society.

It is construed that for dramatic literature, the written form cannot be independent of the oral medium. The oral form of literature is the aesthetical ingredients through which the message(s) of the written form are projected. The techniques of the written form are enmeshed with oral form for extensive dramaturgy. The idea of a merger of traditional theatrical means with modern dramatic techniques validates the essence of oral literature as an inseparable compendium of dramatic literature.

### **Recommendation**

This study therefore recommends oral aesthetics of oral literature as a distinctive dramatic style of projecting relevant preoccupations within a literary text. The idiosyncrasies of oral aesthetics are sources of inspiration for the expansion of motifs and artistic subjects that encompass the written form. It is therefore expedient to expunge the notion of the vulgarity of the oral form because it precipitates and rubs on the written form for desired dramaturgy.

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