

**CRAFT AND ISSUES IN FOLKSCRIPTS: SAM UKALA'S AKPAKALAND
AND IREDI WAR IN FOCUS**

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Abstract

Sam Ukala's dramaturgy is informed by the theoretical framework of folkism. He sought to create drama which can be collectively referred to as, African drama using African form and content. This development has been in progress from the masters of Nigerian drama notably, J.P. Clark, Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka among others. Consequently, using Sam Ukala's plays namely; *Akpakaland* and *Iredi War*, the paper recognizes and appreciates Ukala's effort in propagating the theory of folkism in modern African drama. However, the paper notes some areas of weakness. Thus, using a qualitative approach, the paper dwells on the content analysis and criticism of the theory of folkism by Sam Ukala against the following plays; *Akpakaland* and *Iredi War*, based on form and content. The paper x-rays some loopholes in the theory using the laws of aesthetics principles as advanced by Sam Ukala. These laws are analyzed in tandem with the above selected plays as well as African oral performance. The paper finds out that the theory of folkism is effectively utilized in a bid to project African form and content in drama. The paper therefore concludes that, although folkism is effective in realizing its primary objectives, there are notable areas of weaknesses and contradictions. The paper concludes with recommendations on how to further create the African form and content in modern African dramaturgy bearing in mind that the African is a child of two worlds.

Introduction

Folkism as a dramatic construct is a conspicuous attempt by Sam Ukala to inculcate the African ideals, contents, theology and structural pattern in drama. This is in a bid to carve out a product for the African, a drama which is to be referred to as; modern African drama. This is because, telling the African story is apt, although Africans may not completely showcase their drama without some

amount of western influence. However, the reason for the attachment to Western conventions in drama according to Ossie Enekwe is advanced thus:

I do not object to foreign influences; after all, no culture can grow without them. But I deplore a cultural contact that leads to the destruction of our culture, thereby inducing in our people a sense of rootlessness (sic). We need a modern drama that has its roots in the Nigerian (African) soil and can therefore absorb foreign elements without losing its own character. We must insist that the Nigerian (African) culture be the medium within which synthesis of values occurs so that the indigenous culture does not become a mere shadow of the European culture. Nigerian (African) dramatists must study the aesthetic habits of our own people so as to create a relevant and viable theatre, Ugwu and Orjinta (79).

As against the theory of folkism championed by Sam Ukala, many plays have been churned out in numbers based on Western dramatic conventions, mediums and textual adaptations. These plays to a reasonable extent project the African socio-cultural realities but in a manner that is not comfortably African, hence not popular. Ukala notes that:

It has been alleged by A. Bodurin, Oyin Ogunba, Bode Osayin and Biodun Jeyifo, among others, that the plays written in English, by Nigerian literary playwrights are usually unpopular with the Nigerian socio-economic problems. The unpopularity of Nigerian literary plays has been attributed by these critics, mainly to language: (i) the language is foreign and illiterate Nigerians do not understand it. (ii) It is deliberately made too 'difficult' for the average literate Nigerian to comprehend. The criticism that the plays are ineffective in helping to tackle Nigeria's socio-economic problems is expressed in three main ways: (i) subject matter does not reflect the recent history and current aspirations of Nigerians and is therefore, irrelevant; (ii) subject matter may be rooted in Nigeria's history and culture but it is often distorted beyond the recognition and appeal of the Nigerian masses, as a result of which the values are lost which the plays were intended to communicate; (iii) subject matter berooted in Nigeria's history and culture and may not even be distorted beyond recognition, but it may be presented in such a foreign or unfamiliar manner as the generality of Nigerians may not identify with (11).

Gbilekaa further lends credence to the foregoing alienating qualities of some Nigerian (African) plays as unpopular based on language and subject matter in espousing the socio-economic and cultural realities when he comments on pre-

colonial literary drama particularly of Ene Henshaw thus:

Most of Henshaw's plays are comedies which launch direct attacks on inflexible traditional practices. Characterized by a simple plot, simple characterization, Henshaw's plays exploited the socio-political issues of his time. When it comes to clash of cultures, Henshaw treads a middle path. While he does not accept European culture in total, he believes that the progressive aspect of it should be adapted by Africans (19-20).

These early plays were caught up between Euro-African polarities as observed earlier. It is important to note that the Western influence on African and particularly, Nigerian drama is enormous as producers and directors would rather mount foreign plays. According to Ahmed Yerima, the colonial repertory in Nigeria observed that the American and European plays that were performed in the 1950s were; "stale, old English plays with poor dramatic content and without any bearing on the tastes of Nigerian audience" (80). These plays for instance include; *The Bacchae* by Euripides, *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, *Othello* by William Shakespeare among other plays. Despite the cultural irrelevance, these plays were adapted into the Nigerian culture by playwrights in the post colonial era. Examples include; Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not To Blame* (1975) an adaptation of; *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles into the Yoruba culture. This work was further adapted into the Idoma culture by James Atu Alachi titled; *The Gods Are To Blame* (2002), Wole Soyinka's *Opera Wonyosi* (1977), an adaptation of Bertolt Brecht's *The Three Penny Opera and The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) which is the adaptation of Euripides's famous play, *The Bacchae*.

Modern African drama is characterized by reworking or recreating of history, myth, legends and folklores. This has steered scholarly banter between Ola Rotimi and Ahmed Yerima as portrayed in Ola Rotimi's *Ovonramwen Nogbaisi* (1983). The play is a representation of the British invasion and deposition of the Oba of Benin who was considered to be the last captured King. The story was however, rewritten by Ahmed Yerima titled *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* (1998), which is said to be acceptable to the Bini palace. Against the backdrop of this controversy, the acceptance of Yerima's version is succinctly presented thus:

I must quickly add that the play was finished, and went on to be proclaimed successful by the audience who saw it in Benin for one week. It was both the centenary play, and also the 1997 independence play. Gradually, it is becoming a school text of some importance (57).

Other plays that bear semblance with the above plays as influenced by the

Euro-African polarities which are based on historical imprecision as well as a highly elitist language include; Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* (1969), Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975), *A Dance of the Forests* (1963), J.P Clark's *Song of a Goat* (1961), *The Raft* (1964), among other plays. It is against this background that Bodurin in a critic of his plays as well as Soyinka's states that:

In literature, content and expression determine each other so fundamentally that the validity and authenticity of a work suffers as soon as the native content is expressed in a foreign language. This dissociation of content from expression is partly responsible for the difficulty in appreciating Wole Soyinka's plays. I am strongly convinced that if *A Dance of the Forests*, the most intriguing of his plays, were written in Yoruba, much of the obscurity will disappear (71).

As a comparative critique of the plays of Soyinka and J.P Clark by Bodurin, Clark continued as he states: "Now let me quote another piece of castigation, this time of me" (71).

Mr. Clark has not, as a dramatist, been fortunate in the kind of poetry he has admired. The... actors found it difficult to decide whether they were uneducated Nigerian lumbermen who spoke English indifferently, or poetic personages to whom imaginative poetry came naturally. Occasionally, they strayed into pidgin English rhythms as lumbermen. I doubt whether Mr. Clark considered this matter sufficiently (72).

There are numerous dramatic critics of modern African (Nigerian) drama devoid of holistic African folk content which may not be adequately discussed here. This paper therefore, identifies some perceived inadequacies with Ukala's novel theory, folkism. The paper asserts the reality of the African playwright as a child of two worlds who must maintain the duality in order to create stability in areas of dramaturgy.

The theoretical framework adopted in this paper is Sam Ukala's theory of Folkism. This is a theory of dramaturgy that advocates the use of the folklore tradition of a people in dramatic composition and presentation. As propounded by Sam Ukala, folkism emphasizes the exploration of the story-telling tradition which includes folktales, myths, legends and fables in creating a particular work of drama. It is based on the African storytelling tradition which according to Akporobaro maintains the following structure, "Folktale performance as basics of artistic communication, orality the mode of communication, personality of the artist, audiences as a factor, improvisation and artistic literary qualities" (1).

Ukala's Dramaturgy

Sam Ukala's contributions to modern Nigerian (African) drama cannot be over emphasized. As an experimentalist, he sought his materials from history, myth, legends and folklore. Using a national identity typical of a multi-cultural nation such as Nigeria, Ukala recreates *Ikam* mythology, history and folktale to reinforce his dramaturgy. Consequently, his plays captures in totality, the African content, form and structure of oral performance or folktale. This is portrayed in his plays viz; *Akpakaland*, *Iredi War*, *The Placenta of Death*, *Break a Boil* among other plays. His dramaturgy however is domiciled in a theoretical framework known as, folkism.

Folkism

Folkism is an indigenous dramaturgical theory that advances the use of the folklore tradition of a people in dramatic composition and presentation. As propounded by Sam Ukala, folkism emphasizes the exploration of the story-telling tradition which includes folktales, myths, legends and fables in creating a particular work of drama. Like every other indigenous theory, folkism is born out of the genuine quest to counter biased literary ideologies and correct the prejudiced views and 'anomalies' through decolonizing dramaturgical options and the employment of aesthetic elements that could relate to the African psychological, socio-cultural, political and historical realities. Unfortunately, a large percentage of these developments still ran short of fully authoritative and genuinely indigenous Nigerian performance idioms that would have accorded full relevance to the literary theatre. According to Ugwu and Orjinta, various theoretical propositions and alternative dramaturgical techniques have emerged as avenues for realizing full relevance, one of which is Sam Ukala's theory and practice of 'Folkism' (79).

According to Sam Ukala cited in Eregare, folkism is:

An emergent aesthetic principle ... 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 noted for its clear communication and its popularity among the folk, among the many reasons why it should provide a matrix for folkism (141).

Sam Ukala and several other African playwrights have based their dramaturgy on this indigenous theoretical premise in order to give what Ifeanyi and Ogwu refer to as 'relevance' to indigenous drama. Some of such folkist plays

include; *Iredi War*, *The Slave Wife*, *Akpakaland*, *Break Boil* and *The Trials of Obiamaka Elema* by Sam Ukala. Others include Efua Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa*, J.P Clark's *Ozidi*, Femi Osofisan's in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo*, and a host of others.

Ukala's *Iredi War* and *Akpakaland*

Iredi War

The play, *Iredi War* recounts the historical events in which colonial arrogance of the Assistant District Commissioner (ADC), O.S Crewe-Read, referred to as (Iredi) by the Owa people against the people of Owa Kingdom led by Igboba led to a brutal clash between the Owa people and the Colonial administrators and the subsequent arrest and detention of Obi Igboba. The play dramatizes clash of interest by two forces; while the British colonial forces seek to dominate from Agbor to Owa kingdom, the natives led by Igboba fights for cultural sustenance of the local authority. In the play, Crewe-Read the Assistant District Commissioner visits Owa and asks for more taxes, carriers and runners (young able bodied men as messengers and beasts of burden). The people of Owa kingdom on the other hand reminds Crewe-Read about the carriers he took earlier and are yet to return. Following this, the people decline his request. Read on the other hand would not abide by the terms of the people. Consequently, a meeting is arranged in order to deliberate upon the matter in contention. Before the time of the meeting however, the new converts in Owa sets the shrines in the kingdom ablaze. This raised the tension between the colonial powers led by Iredi (Crewe-Read) and Obi Igboga and the entire people of Owa kingdom. To further escalate the tension, Iredi in a bid to undo Igboba, humiliates the Obi by flogging him before his people as a mark of colonial supremacy. This acrimony leads to the killing of Iredi. The killing of Iredi did not go well with the British, as a reaction, they send soldiers to sack the palace of Igboba. Hence, Oba Igboba is lured into the courts of Chichester for a supposed truce and is arrested thereafter. Chichester who is the District Commissioner (D.C) of Agbor attempts to make a deal with Igboga; however, Igboba prefers to be imprisoned along with his people.

Akpakaland

Rooted in folktale, *Akpakaland* is a parable on mischief, intimidation and class oppression. Set in a country which is the play's title, *Akpakaland*, the story dramatizes palace politics as the play unveils President Akpaka and his wives, Fulama, Yeiye, Seotu (from the rich province) and Unata and Iyebi (from the province of the poor). Fulama, the head wife of President Akpaka bewitched

Unata, Akpaka's favourite wife due to jealousy, as Unata suddenly develops a mysterious tail. This is to ridicule Unata before everyone in the State House and to rob her of the President's love and affection. Building the conflict to climax, Idemudia, Unata's father visits Enwe the monkey, a medicine man in a bid to get rid of the tail. Enwe then uses his powers to reverse Unata's affliction back to Fulama. As a result of the alarm raised by Fulama earlier about one of the wives having a tail, President Akpaka directs that all the wives be examined in order to unravel which in particular is with a tail in order to expose her. Following the discovery that it is Fulama that is with a tail, President Akpaka becomes reluctant to punish Fulama as she is of the upper class, the rich. This creates unease that raises the awareness of the lower class, the masses as a revolt against injustice where the President is accused of having unjust sympathy for Fulama. This revolt leads to the death of Fulama and others. The resolution of the play is captured succinctly by Onuche and Salifu thus:

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 (118).

These plays are experimentation of Ukala's dramaturgy. Using myth, history and the structure and form of *Ika* folktale, Ukala produces these folk scripts, a practical showcase of the laws of aesthetic principles which constitutes folkism, the crux of his dramaturgy. Notwithstanding conformity to the folkist principles, there are further areas of peculiarities of folkist plays delineated by Oghenevize M. Umukoro. These areas are reviewed below.

Striking Features of Folkist Plays

Notwithstanding the laws of aesthetic principles advanced by Sam Ukala, there are peculiar features which are said to be likened to folkist plays. According to Oghenevize M. Umukoro. These features include:

Early point of attack: According to Umukoro, the point of attack in folkist plays is usually at the beginning of the play. In *Akpakaland* for instance, after the opening, Fulama quickly tells Akpaka, "Your favourite wife has a tail". This immediately ignites the conflict and leaves the audience (MOAs) with the protest

against suspense as they would want to know how the president's wife got a tail.

Dissolved Time and Space: Secondly a folkist play regards time and space as inconsequential hence the objective is not to achieve realism or make believe but to convey the message of the playwright in a manner that is indigenous. This feature thrives on the fantastical nature of the African folktale. For instance, in *Iredi War*, the set is a single space that is partitioned into palace, office, forest and so on. Also, the living and the dead can easily relate, even the unborn can sing from the womb and speak as well. Example is when Ide hails Enwe the Monkey in Akpakaland:

IDE: To get roots and herbs, Enwe jumps to and fro the land of the dead. (20).

Improvisation: Similar to the law of creativity and free enactment, there is room for improvisation in folkist plays against the structures of realistic plays. The performers are at liberty to engage their creativity.

Simple Characterization: Folkist plays are seen as simple satires that evoke social action. Its main objective is to engage the spectator in a participatory manner to query prevailing social issues which form the spotlight of the playwright. Therefore, there is no in depth character development. Other features include; fluidity of plot where action is set in continuous progress from beginning to end. Simple poetic language which bears African colorations such as; proverbs, idioms, riddles, and chants. In *Iredi War* for instance, rather than tell Crewe-read that they will inform the people of his request, the chiefs reply Through Acholem:

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)

These poetic language is typical of the the rich imageries, symbolism, metaphors and sarcasm that is embedded in African orality.

Finally, folkist plays incorporate music and songs in a bid to create awareness for the story telling session and to encourage a seamless participation that goes beyond ordinary bridging of scenes or situations. The music and songs employed are dramatic rather than incidental. Apart from encouraging participation, music and songs reinforce the thematic preoccupation of the tale. These songs and music are taken by the MOAs who form the chorus as well as the entire audience.

Critique of Sam Ukala's Folkist Theory

Folkism, a highly successful experimentation towards realizing an exclusive Modern African Drama by Ukala came about as a result of the dire need towards creating a purely African drama in language, form and content. In a paper titled, "Folkism: Towards a National Aesthetic Principle for Nigerian Dramaturgy" in *New Theatre Quarterly* (NTQ), Ukala argues that:

Several Nigerian critics claim that plays written in English by Nigerian playwrights are usually unpopular with Nigerian audiences, and ineffective in helping to tackle Nigeria's socio-economic problems. This unpopularity is attributed mainly to the use of a language that is foreign and incomprehensible to illiterate Nigerians, and too difficult for the average literate Nigerian to understand. (279)

Not only did language pose a problem to Nigerian drama but, irrelevant subject matter, staging conventions and techniques and general dramatic forms. Hence the need for a more popular drama that expresses indigenous form, style and content. Although the theory has shown great potency in furthering this course, there are notable areas of lapses as observed in the two plays under consideration. The essence of the laws of aesthetic response, hence folkism is justified in Ukala's thesis below:

In all, it seems clear that a thorough going application of the aesthetics of the African folktale may remove or reduce the shortcomings of Nigerian literary drama. Such an emergent aesthetic principle may be called 'Folkism': the tendency to base literary plays on the history, culture and concerns of the folk (the people in general: according to chambers dictionary) and to compose and perform them in accordance with African conventions for composing and performing the folktale. (285)

Having faulted the previous plays basically in language, subject matter, structure and staging conventions, Ukala justifies the need to create his "drama" the folkist drama based on the following laws:

1. Law of opening
2. The law of joint performance
3. The law of creativity, free enactment and responsibility
4. The law of judgment
5. The law of protest against suspense

6. The law of expression of the emotions
7. The law of ego projection
8. The law of closing

These laws have been extensively discussed in this study and they have been acknowledged as potent in creating the African drama which assume an African form and content. Consequently, the areas of weaknesses identified in Ukala's theory of folkism are basically; language, form and style.

Language

Ukala's query of the existing dramatic works in language identified the language of these plays as; foreign and difficult to understand. The writers of these plays may have been reenacting the African content inspired by; myth, history, legend, folklores among others but in a language which according to Ukala is "foreign and difficult" (279-280). Interestingly however, these playwrights may have been conforming to the classical language requirements in creative writing. This requirement is conveyed in a 3rd century A.D document titled. "On the Sublime" by Longinus in Bernard Dukore. This work is considered by critics as the standard requirements for the linguistic content of any good literature (drama). In this document, sublime or sublimity simply put is; "elevated language". This, Longinus admonishes thus:

... As I am writing to you, good friend, who are well versed in literary studies, I feel almost absolved from the necessity of premising at any length that sublimity is a certain distinction and excellence in expression, and that it is from no other source than this that the greatest poets and writers have derived their eminence and gained an immortality of renown (76).

To assume a prominent space in literary (dramatic) writing according to the above position, one must deploy sublime language. In fact, the same projection is made about elevated language in Aristotle's poetics as he defines tragedy thus:

Tragedy, then is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament... By "language embellished" I mean language into which rhythm, "harmony" and song enter... (36)

Modern Nigerian playwrights adopt this style of writing, the use of superior language, the language of the elite in their works. These playwrights did not only conform to the language specification of these classical documents but

they began by adapting classical plays into indigenous cultures. Some of these plays include; *The God's Are Not To Blame* by Ola Rotimi, J.P Clark's *The Wives Revolt*, Wole Soyinka's *The Bucchae of Eurepedes* among other plays. Not only that these playwrights adapt classical works, they sought to write after the order of English writers such as; William Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Consequently, as a reaction, Sam Ukala who acknowledges the works of these writers as commendable in creating the African epic form in drama laments that:

Obi Wali seems to have fired the first shot at the mere use of foreign languages by African creative writers. In 1963 he called such languages 'elitist' and predicted a 'dead end' for African literature written in them. A. Bodunrin, in 1965, Oyin Ogunba and Bode Osanyin articulate similar views to Wali's. Also, at almost all learned conferences on African literature held in Nigeria since the mid 'sixties' there have been calls that Nigerian creative writers should abandon the English language and write in "the language of the people" (279)

The people here are the 'folk'. Therefore, returning to the language of the folk entails writing in indigenous language of the people. Unfortunately, the nation Nigeria is a compendium of divergent tribes and ethnic groups. The only common language is that of 'her' colonizer, the English language. Dwelling on this 'crossroad' Ukala observed that:

Interestingly, however, only members of Nigeria's major ethnic groups – Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa – seem to make these calls. They seem convinced that there would be a large audience for a play written in Igbo or Yoruba or Hausa. But the danger in heeding them lies in the fact that a play written in any of those languages can only achieve regional popularity, and will be inaccessible to most members of the numerous other ethnic groups in Nigeria and if writers from the minority groups such as J.P Clark, also heed the call then fewer still will have access to their drama (279).

The above exposition which has fixed the Nigerian writer in a state of dilemma demands a swift resolution. The 'battle' for linguistic identity can be likened to the Negritude Movement in Francophone literature. Designating the Negritude movement which calls for the drastic abandonment of the European (French) policy of assimilation, Gbilekaa submits that:

Senghor's brand of Negritude, besides showing no intense nostalgia for Africa, romanticized everything African. Africa

became the inviolate, tender, beautiful virgin that was raped by the white imperialists. To restore the order that was disrupted, the African must accept his pre-colonial heritage (52).

The Negritude Movement as we know may have obviously become a manifesto that promised more than it can offer. Similarly, to bail out Nigerian drama from this fangs of 'elitism', Ukala brought to the fore, the theory of folkism in which; "plays are based on the history, culture and concerns of the folk" (285). Consequently the plays created by Sam Ukala in this regard have failed to be linguistically encompassing. These plays are written in the 'same' English language with songs, proverbs and other linguistic elements of his folk. The vacuum therefore, is that linguistically there has not been a total return to indigenous language in drama. The total abandonment of the English language will be therefore, almost unachievable. This is because we have established earlier that the African is a child of two worlds. By implication, 'we' cannot entirely detach "ourselves" from the grip of the western culture and style in the production of literature giving credence to this assertion, Gbilekaa maintains that:

If Senghor's conception of negritude is unrealistic and metaphysical, his notion of the role of the contemporary African artist in an independent state is equally problematic, if not disappointing. Senghor advocated the borrowing of literary ideas because the history of all civilizations has been that of inter-breeding (53)'

Inter-breeding in this regard exposes the reality of the African and particularly, the Nigerian playwright as a child of two worlds in order to strike a balance between dramatic-enculturation and wider audience-ship.

Dramatic Form and Style

The second area of weakness is the form and style of the folkist plays. While the style affords participation and joint performance which breaks the "Alienation Effect" or the realistic "Fourth- Wall", a creation of western theatre notwithstanding the essence of drama cannot be social engineering only. Plays are written to be performed, however the interjections and general participation of the audience questions the essence of drama. Drama is imitation while imitating human actions there must be a conscious effort by the dramatist to entertain and captivate the audience by deploying the devices such as, suspense, believability and cathartic effect in the instance of tragedies. However, Ukala's work depends greatly on deploying African elements to the point where the essence of behind the scenes as well as realistic spectacles are not observed. It is worthy of note that

in African traditional theatre, there are elements that enforce believability. These include; magic, rituals, masks and sacrifices. On this note, believability, which is the hallmark of drama, is scanty in Ukala's folkism. By having the general audience response and participation, creating the characters, Members of the Audience (MOAs) makes the characterization cumbersome. The narrator in African storytelling performance serves the purpose of the African epic form as well as audience participation. Consequently, it is obvious that characterization is cumbersome in folkism, make-belief is poor in the sense that supernaturalism or the fantastical creates a larger than life scenarios, suspense is dismantled by the narrator and the curiosity of the MOAs. The folkist plays therefore assume the form of melodrama of fantasy which makes it almost difficult to realize on stage.

These are the areas which this study seeks to improve on. This is because; the search for modern African drama in form, content and language is a work in progress. Not undermining great stride achieved so far by renowned dramatists, especially Sam Ukala's masterpiece (folkism), it is crucial to note that the quest for an authentic African drama is progressively on course.

Conclusion

This paper has established two striking areas of weakness in the Sam Ukala's theory of folkism in a bid to recommend necessary remedies in the quest for the actualization of an African drama which identifies with the African storytelling tradition, orality and general performance aesthetics. Against this background, this study proposes for a total switch into "Nigerian-pidgin" in drama. Nigerian pidgin has proven to be effective in gaining wider coverage in the media (print, electronic and the new or social media), home-video, inter-personal and inter-communal relations as well as the general mercantile endeavor in Nigeria. This is so because, 'pidgin' is a hybrid- English which code-mixes and code-switches the popular communication indices in Nigeria. It is all encompassing, both the literate and the illiterate Nigerian have an almost exclusive understanding of it.

Secondly, if characterization is cumbersome in folkism, make-belief is poor in the sense that supernaturalism or the fantastical creates a larger than life scenarios, suspense is dismantled by the narrator and the curiosity of the MOAs, this paper therefore recommends a realistic characterization and equally calls for a realizable dramatic action and scenario, that which can be staged bearing in mind; entertainment, information and education. Hence, the form and style of the folkist play should be constructed to show that the African is a child of two

worlds. This should consequently fuse the Aristotelian, Brechtian and the folktale forms into one. This fusion will create believability where needed, it will alienate the characters (actors) where necessary and the material for this drama must emanate from the African realities of; rituals, myths, history, legend, folktale and aesthetic linguistic nuances typical of the environment of the writer.

Finally, it is important to note that modern Nigerian playwrights must be committed to the need of their society. Not only showcasing the African cosmology, and dramatic elements in drama but to capture the socio-political and economic realities biting her hard in this dispensation. The society today is confronted with global challenges which seek to pose a threat to her (Nigeria) livelihood, existence and development. Amidst pangs of still waters of colonization and neo- colonization as observed by Gbilekaa thus:

African society today is witnessing sever tremors. Where she is not choking under the firm grip of colonialism, she is sweating profusely under the drillings of neocolonialism. If she is not wallowing in abject poverty, illiteracy and backwardness, she is choking under the tyrannical leadership of a demented demagogue (50).

This is not only true but timely. The neocolonial grip now is the unending debt Africa and particularly Nigeria is wallowing in. there seem to have no end to this debt. Furthermore, current trends of corruption, terrorism and the novel deadly corona virus pandemic which have shaken the foundations of developed nations, one can only imagine the damage it will bring upon African nations if not properly checked. To this end, this paper recommends the projection of current African throes in developing subject-matter of modern African drama, as a conscious effort towards creating authentic African drama.

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