

PERFORMATIVE TRINITY

*Rasaki Ojo Bakare's Theory and Practice of
AFRICAN THEATRE*



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**PERFORMATIVE TRINITY: RASAKI OJO BAKARE'S
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AFRICAN THEATRE**

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THE POETICS OF BAKAREISM AND THE RIVER WITHIN

ABDULRASHEED A. ADEOYE

Introduction

As an important agency of culture, the survival of the theatre depends on its constant reinvention, newness and uncommon innovation. The African theatre artists who are mostly in the indigenous, popular and literary traditions are mostly responsible for the uncommon innovation, creative imagination and celebrated artistry that are extended to accommodate the postmodern and the postcolonial theatres.

Notable African theatre artists such as Wole Soyinka, Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Kalu Uka, Martins Owusu, Muhammed Ben-Abdallah, Athol Fugard, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Efua T. Sutherland, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, Sam Ukala, and Ayo Akinwale have created ingenious theatrical styles from our customs, stories, rituals, masquerades, festivals and events in our postcolonial to re-invent the African theatre. These re-inventions are the constant promoters of the African theatre because they relate to the non-static and dynamic nature of our theatre. Interestingly, critical studies have been carried out on Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Athol Fugard, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Zulu Sofola and others on the creative ingenuities and artistic excellence of their works. Playwrights among them have had their plays produced through different styles while the theatre directors among them have created new directorial styles that comparatively hybridised the African indigenous artistic resources with those of the Western and Asiatic traditions.

Critical studies from Wole Soyinka (1976 and 2006), B. Uwatt (2002), Sam Ukala (1996 and 2007), Saint Gbilekaa (1997), and Femi Osofisan (2001), among others, are interpreted within the lens of the author study. Indeed, the

author's study is created to interpret the connection between the author's worldview and the reality of his or her art to the space within and without. Author study is the detail foregrounding of the sociology and authentic resources of an author. It celebrates the author's intellectual essence or artistic success. It validates the author's ideological leaning and his commitment to the global society. An author study combines the dialectics of an author's works and the elements – vicarious and omnibus of the micro and superstructures of his views to reconstruct or deconstruct the fictitious and real societies of the author.

Consequently, this chapter is on author study and the uncommon tendencies that define the theatre and scholarship of Ojo Rasaki Bakare. Bakare can be described as a rounded artist leading the fourth generation of Nigerian dramatists in the literary theatre tradition. For a start, Bakare is poetically inspired, and this inspiration is vivid, quixotic and ideological in his writing. His creative movement has also been inspiring because he moves from the sublime to the ethereal and the spaces and agencies of politics, revolution, protest, performativity, gender, and dramaturgy to the cultural and syncretic theatre of Africa. Bakare combines and learns from so many platforms and artists such as Hubert Ogunde, Kalu Uka, the Gambian National Theatre, the traditional theatre of Africa, the National Troupe of Nigeria, the saturated literary tradition, and the Nigerian Nollywood. As much as he learnt from these individuals and platforms, he has also imparted them with his essentially rebellious and radical inventive art. At the University of Calabar, his imprints are still evergreen. At Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; University of Uyo, and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, he infused the artistic scholarship with his uncommon and incredibly imaginative touch. The themes and tendencies of his work have led us to create a new theatrical idiom and style known as the poetics of Bakareism in which Bakare's creative essence is critiqued, relayed and validated.

Theoretical Imagination

An author study is a validation of the success of an author whose works have gained national or international prominence. The taxonomy of the author study resonates with the details, evolution and innovation that any given author might have brought to the literary space. Thus, the theoretical imagination of this work is based on the realities of the author's study. Subjectivity or emotional bouncing will be avoided while social coherence, artistic excellence and uncommon creativity of the author will be adopted in our exploration.

Compagno (2012) has carried out a major work on theories of authorship and the work is relevant to this study. Compagno argues on the positions of Edmund Husserl, Benedetto Croce, and Jacques Derrida that:

In the twentieth century, the concept of author has undergone a radical redefinition, playing a pivotal role in the studies of language, writing and meaning. The increasing autonomy and importance of human sciences needed to better understand how people and works are related, and how the former can control what they say or write (Compagno, 2012: 37-38).

One major theoretical imagination that is inescapable from Compagno's study is New Criticism of the Author's reality that "the author is today what *has to be* understood if we want to interpret texts". Here, we can be talking of meanings, intentions or what they are not, and the summation is that "intentions do not live along with texts, and texts alone constitute the proper object of literary studies". This study benefits from Jacques Derrida's deconstruction in which the death of the author is pronounced and this is the second phase of theorisation on authorship and literary coherence or lack of it. The study also shares the reality of *what a text is*, with the felicity of who an author is, and with the conclusion that; "there is no hidden author. A scapegoat for an entire century, the author is usually us dearest son, a linking consciousness and the unconscious" (Compagno, 2012: 51).

Andrew Lang (2022) has, however, produced a major work on *literary* authorship in modern literary theories. He reviews the debates on the controversies surrounding authorship, touching on vexatious issues of “death and resurrection of the author”, the concept of authorship, the three main issues about the concept-agency/creativity, intention/authority, and self-presentation/self-construction. Authorial creativity, authorial intention, and self-presentation are therefore key points that will guide our examination of the poetics of Bakareism.

The anti-authorial dimension has been reviewed by Jakob Stougaard-Nielsen (2019) and his reflections are on the fact that the author is a central agent in the production of literary work and that we have so much to learn from understanding the author and his works. Indeed, the author's study is one of the critical sites in postcoloniality.

Our theoretical imagination has thus shown that Bakare as an author is a creation through a series of play-texts and performances whose authorial intentions can be radically different from the end-users of the texts. With Bakare, the author is not dead, but his texts or productions are deliberately created to preach a unique style with different techniques which we will soon unveil as our pedigree of the river within the poetics of Bakareism.

The Sociology of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's Academic, Literary and Creative Works

To understand the sociology of Bakare's academic, literary, and creative works, it is important to start with his historical development. Born on 8 November 1964 to a Police Officer father, who later worked as a security officer in the South-Western States of Nigeria, and a petty trader mother from the palace of Ado-Ekiti; discipline, art and royalty were his first adornments and attires. He learnt the Yoruba fixed and dynamic cultures at infancy from his maternal

relatives and he transits from being a disciplinary artist to a rebel, an iconoclast and radical without much ado.

Bakare started his education at Ansar-ud-Deen Primary School, Ado-Ekiti between 1971 and 1976, and had his secondary education at United High School, Ilawe-Ekiti between 1976 and 1981. He confronted his parents by being critically independent. He chose his career path and was never going to allow anybody to do this for him. His insistence to ply his trade in the theatre profession paid off quickly because he became an actor and dancer with the Jimoh Aliu culture group of Nigeria between August 1981 and February 1982 before he later ran away to work with the doyen of the Nigeria professional theatre, the late Hubert Ogunde between February 1982 and December 1982. Before this, he had followed and participated actively in the masquerade festivals at Aramoko-Ekiti (his hometown) and Ado-Ekiti to earn the sobriquet of "The Baby Masquerade – *Atori Ijo Gbagbe Omu*". His traditional background talents and arts, infancy, rebellion, radicalism, apprenticeship and his uncommon creative dominion have been partly responded to by him, and documented by Adeseye (2014) where a clear affirmation that "every theatre leader worthy of the title began the race as a vagabond minstrel" to reconstruct the man, his world and his unique art.

Ojo Rasaki Bakare trained as a teacher at Ondo State College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti between 1982 and 1985. He was at the University of Calabar (Unical) between 1986 and 1987 for the BA (Hons) degree in Theatre Arts and subsequently for the MA. Theatre Arts between 1990 and 1991. He completed his doctorate at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (ABU) in 2000. His artistic ingenuity was visible both at Unical and ABU while future successes came through his professional and academic experiences.

As a moving scholar-artiste, he worked at the University of Calabar, Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Uyo, University of Abuja, and now at Federal University, Oye-Ekiti as a lecturer. These Universities were used by him

to act Aristotelian, proclaiming materially and dialectically that, the life of a man of action is better than that of passive amusement. With Bakare, new methods and styles must evolve. Outside the Universities, he was the Director of the National Troupe of Gambia (1994 – 1996), Assistant Director of the National Troupe of Nigeria (March 2001 and July 2005), Artistic Director/CEO, Abuja National Carnival (2009 – 2013), and Choreographer and Consultant for many States Councils for Arts and Culture. He is now the Honourable Commissioner for Arts, Culture and Tourism, Ekiti State, Nigeria. This rich background is important in the author's study, and it will certainly assist us to understand his academic, literary and creative works.

As a cerebral academic, Bakare's BA Long Essay is on "The Social Significance and the Theatrical Potentials of Bata Dance", submitted to the Department of Theatre Arts of the University of Calabar in 1989. The Long Essay examines the inherent socio-cultural, entertainment, ritual, religious and theatrical fortes of Bata dance among the Yoruba people. His 1991 MA Thesis is on "The Influence of Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre on the Modern Theatre Practice at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria". This Thesis is an examination of the Brechtian epic theatre and its adoption on the Nigerian literary stage. Brechtian styles and methods and how they have been deplored at ABU necessarily make Bakare a Brechtian scholar and he gained tremendously from this intellectual engagement. His PhD. thesis is on "Choreography in West Africa: Kinesis, Proxemics, and Adornments in Nigerian and Gambian Dance Practice". This is a comparative study on the essentials of dance in Nigeria and Gambia where the meeting points and points of departure on movements, floor patterns, styles, choreographic forms, props, make-up, and accessories are investigated. A critical scrutiny of the three major works shows that; there are points of connection to dance and styles on one hand, and theatrical essence and potentials on the other. Creative exploration, originality, inventiveness and imagination are also at the centre of most of these academic degrees. They, in turn, influence Bakare's publications. Most of Bakare's academic publications

are on dance vocabularies, and choreography. He extends these main areas to dance and administration, West African dance, Welsh Asanke's African dance, dance and underdevelopment, choreographic theory, contemporary choreography, Obitun and Aje dances, dance patronage, dance and popular culture. He also makes a redirection by publishing critical works on Media Arts, Nollywood and film.

The literary works of Ojo Bakare are many. However, most of them are play-texts that are written to celebrate critical issues of corruption, nepotism, ethnicity, social stratification and inequality, evils of war among other thematic considerations; in our postcolony and within the intellectual expanse of the postcolonial theatre. These plays are: *The Land Must Sacrifice* (1991), *Rogbodiyan* (1995), *Drums of War* (1995), *Once Upon a Tower* (2000), *The Gods and The Scavengers* (2007), *Ifajuyigbe* (2020) and *The Voyage* (2021). Earlier, he published *Adanma* with Sam Kafewo in 2008. His main concern in most of these literary works is how men rescue man from man, and how man creates an enduring path of liberation for himself in his society. At one point, Bakare is post-traditional and at another, he is a revolutionary Marxist, promoting in the process, that no one-fits-all ideology can liberate the African man and the African nations from oppression, disunity, war and corruption. His zero-sum ideological leaning is apt if we consider the consistent plans of African oppressors living in the continent and the West on how we should continue to be under their control.

Bakare's creative works and performances are as popular as his academic and literary works. Here, the dexterity of his choreographic, directorial and acting skills is placed on the African, European and American theatre performance stages for enervating ingenious and creative performances that elucidate his vision for the arts and society. Notable among these performances that he directed or choreographed were "Circus at the Freedom Square" (1996) at ABU, Zaria; *Drums of War* (1998) at Ile-Ife, for the Obafemi Awolowo University Convocation; "Salts" (1999) at Innsbruck and Vomperberg, Australia for the

Africa-in-Tyrol festival; "Jaganmolu" (1999) at Abuja as the command performance for the inauguration of Olusegun Obasanjo as President of Nigeria; "Victims" (2000) at Abuja for the visit of Bill Clinton to Nigeria; *Yemoja* (2001) in Maputo, Mozambique; "Come we Jump" (2003) in Kingston, Jamaica; "The Gods are to Blame" (2004) at University of Abuja; "Reflections" (2007) for the inauguration of Alhaji Umar Yar'Adua as President of Nigeria; "The Circle" (2007) in London for the Commonwealth Games 2014; *Kurunmi* (2011) performed at the University of Abuja, *Langbodo* (2011) in Abuja as a command performance for the inauguration of President Dr. Goodluck Jonathan; *Lanke Omu* (2013) at Ikogosi-Ekiti for the 40th memorials of Kola Ogunmola; "Moremi Ife; Moremi Agbaye" (2016) at the palace of Ooni of Ife; "Peace in Nigeria" (2016), a callisthenic performance for the Nigeria Police Games at the National Stadium, Abuja; and "Ojukelekele" (2017) with Dele Odule, performed around the States of South-Western Nigeria and Kwara State (Ilorin). Other recent performances directed and choreographed by Bakare were: *Ifajuyigbe* (2019 and 2023); "Amotekun" (2019); "Prodigals and Parable of Motherhood" (2021); *The Voyage* (2021); "Ladi Kwali" (2023); "Kasimawoo" (2024); and *Langbodo* (2024). These performances were mostly either commissioned or self-imposed and his artistic vision, directorial style, thematic concern and worldview were almost the same within the poetics of Bakareism as we re-image in this chapter.

Part of the reasons why Ojo Bakare can never be wished away remains his romance with professionals in town and those of the gown. He has served as Consultant, Dance Trainer and Choreographer of most Arts Councils in Nigeria from 1990 to date; Consultant Artist Director for Command Performance of presidential inauguration in 1999, 2007 and 2011; Consultant Artistic Director for the Nigeria's entry at the World Dance Competition in North Korea, 1997; Consultant to National Troupe of Nigeria, 2002 and 2008; Consultant on Culture and Education to Abuja 2014 Commonwealth Games Bid Committee in 2006; Consultant Artistic Director, Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Nigeria

University Games, Nsukka, 2008 among others. The flagship of these consultancies was that; he worked with gifted artists in town, and he also learnt from them.

The sociology of Bakare's academic, literary and creative works are, therefore, rooted in post-traditional characteristics, radical and rebellious inclinations, quality education, discipline, postcolonial tendencies, gifted and uncommon creative inventiveness, learning from, and working with professionals and consistency.

A Prelude to the Poetics of Bakareism

Popular theories, aesthetics and poetics that are universally recognised especially in the theatre have backgrounds that are carefully designed or created by the proponents. Theories, aesthetics and poetics are, therefore, produced to satisfy the artistic curiosity, innovative streak, experience, vision or ideology of proponents. Consequently, there are several factors that we consider as a prelude to the poetics of Bakareism. Some scholars have created unique identities, poetics and aesthetics for Ojo Bakare as a result of working with him, studying his play-texts or his major performances. NE Akwang (2014) has worked on what he terms **Bakaresque** dramaturgy in which African total theatre aesthetics, mythopoeic antecedents and propensities, visual contrasts, narrative surplus, design-led approach to playwriting, pastiches of surplus or meta-textual significations, cognitive boost, technical verities, mass appeal and others, necessarily define the **Bakaresque** dramaturgy in playwriting, performance and the theatre.

AbdulRasheed Adeoye (2014) has created **Ojoism** to celebrate Bakare artistic tendencies as comparative theatre with the indigenous African masquerade aesthetics. He states that:

Ojoism holds the core assumption that "all areas of the arts; performance, visual and technical aesthetics as well as oral traditions are independent

and interdisciplinary creative faculties in which one single artist *may* possibly be endowed". Thus, Bakare's art is adopted as a benchmark for reviewing and validating the total-theatrical genre... Therefore, when a single individual is endowment (sic) with the creative gifts of dance, music, drama, visual design, poetry and the likes, as they sometimes would be, such individual is a total artist: an **Ojo** (Adeoye (2014: 267).

The spinal cord of Adeoye's **Ojoism** is that there is one artist known as Bakare who combines and can handle, very successfully, all the major arts of the theatre.

NB Asuquo (2014) has the pride of interviewing Bakare, Ojo Rasaki in his paper and the African notion of performance trinity re-echoes along with audience engineering and directorial devices. In that interview, Bakare coined the term performance trinity to represent his theatre. Asuquo implies that the performance trinity is Bakare's fusion of dance and music in play to make a performance as his directorial technique in regaling encouraging and sustaining wide audience participation for his play performances. However, Asuquo's (2014) paper and Bakare's interview only manage to introduce the performance trinity, without the expected details.

V. Thompson (2014) also reviews Bakare's *Jagunmolu's* performance and he theorises and literalises his nickname, *Dancerasaki*. Thompson also created *Jagunmoluism* out of the abundance of Bakare's theatre. He insists that:

Jagunmoluism is not silent on the dearth of professional infrastructure. It recognises the importance of dance/choreography training and training facilities; well-equipped dance studios and well-intentioned dance exchange programmes with artists from other parts of the world. Intercultural choreography as a means of globalised art should be encouraged. For instance, e-dance should be employed to improve choreography, dance training and preservation.

Thompson (2014) also reflects that the dance and choreography brand of Ojo Bakare is *Dancerasaki*.

In all, we have five main names or concepts that have been created to capture the dance, drama and theatre of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki. These are:

- (a) **Bakaresque Dramaturgy**
- (b) **Ojoism**
- (c) **Performative Trinity**
- (d) **Dancerasaki**
- (e) **Jagunmoluism**

As much as the above are important in describing the dance, drama and theatre of Bakare; there is a compelling need to revisit the inherent literary and artistic gaps in some of these names and terms; hence, the poetics of Bakareism. Before we move on to theorise on this through practical and literary references, it is important to dwell a little on Bakare, Ojo Rasaki's performative trinity and his theatre.

Performative Trinity and the Theatre of Ojo Rasaki Bakare

In his inaugural lecture delivered on 17 July 2019, Bakare conceptualised the theory and practice of the Performative Trinity and relates to us the healing properties of our troubled Nigeria. Bakare (2017: 60) describes as inadequate, the generally held view of describing the African theatre as total theatre. He submits that:

In my estimation, not even the later invention of the descriptive expression-total-theatre would fully explain the nature of African performance. The idea of total theatre still suggests the existence of different artforms, which when assembled, now make a total picture. The expression-total-theatre-therefore is still different because it is

defining the African performance from the Euro-American prism, *not* from the authentic African perspective.

Indeed, the indivisible nature of dance, drama, and music is to Bakare, quintessentially African. The fact that the three cannot be separated gives birth to the Performative Trinity.

As a scholar-artist, Bakare (2019) reflects that he functions within the borders of his tradition and perspective and that in his scholarly and artistic practices, the “Trinitarian essence” cannot be overemphasised. Thus, the “performative trinity is the art while its properties are drama, dance and music” (Bakare, 2019: 7). In his continuation, Bakare insists that “his performative trinity attempts to help in ridiculing and satirising human follies to correct such ills” (p. 29), and that he has “always deployed the properties of his performative trinity – Drama, Dance and Music, processing them to yield their healing contents with the intent of contributing to the healing of our nation, Nigeria, of his myriads of trouble” (pp. 29-30).

In comparative theatre, Bakare’s performative Trinity shares major characteristics with Christopher Balme’s syncretic Theatre. Balme (1998) defines Syncretic Theatre as “the theatrical products which result from the interplay between the Western theatrico-dramatic tradition and the Indigenous performance forms of a postcolonial culture”. It is picking one important element from the other to form a unique whole or package which aims at “*decolonizing the stage*, utilising as it does the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination at their respective elements, without slavish adherence to the one tradition or the other” (Balme, 1998: 210). Thus, Bakare’s blending of Drama, Dance and Music falls into the intricate web of the artistic reality of Balme’s Syncretic Theatre.

The second observation on Bakare’s Performance Trinity has to do with the critical issue of content and context or nature and form. Bakare’s inaugural

lecture contextualised the notion and meaning of the Performative Trinity and what it can do through its healing properties. However, we are yet to see the forms, patterns, techniques or styles of the context of Bakare's Performative Trinity.

If you introduce a celebrated artistic package, we will want to know its performative, choreographic, directorial, consume-make nature and so on. We will be interested in seeing its aesthetic projections or artistic valorisations. We will be interested in its intersection with the major elements of the performing arts. Performative Trinity is, in all honesty, yet to be explained. We can relate easily with the *Rotuman Theatre*, we can list; materially and dialectically; Ododo's *Facelaurade Theatre* through his Ebira-Ekuechi's performative examples and the typologies within it, and it is not difficult to appraise Adeoye's *Neo-alienation Theatre* and style which he has written and directed plays on, and that which he has valorised into twelve aesthetic projections. Sam Ukala's *Folkism* and its eight laws are ever refreshing and illuminating while other creative styles have also been theorised, discussed and practicalised. It is, therefore, important for us to state here that Bakare, Ojo Rasaki has underwritten his great efforts and authentic art by the trite treatment given to his Performative Trinity. It is this lacuna that informed the Poetics of Bakareism which we hope will capture the directorial, choreographic, dramatic, costume and make-up force, acting, deployment of music forms, properties and the total professional architecture of the theory and practice of African theatre by Bakare.

Ojo Rasaki Bakare's Music Theatre

Bakare's music is political, cultural, sociological and entertainment driven. A profile of his major plays and performances points to theme-centred music within our immediate world and its tenderness in the fanfare of the postcolonial. He composed songs with grace; he adopted and reworked some while he considered rhythm and the rhythmic essence in his composition.

He has 26 songs in *Drums of War* and most of these songs are for war, unity, dirge, praise, placation and others which are tone reflective of Hausa, Igala, Ibira, Yoruba, Edo and Ekiti dialects. In all, there is a mark of originality in the songs although some are adopted from the rich folkloric tradition of Africa. The hunter, dirge, Ekiti songs of praise of the child are in our fixed history while we have a corresponding reality of intertextuality of song 10 "Ose kereeee" in the *Drums of War* which is equally in Ola Rotimi's *Kurunmi* and other Yoruba mythopoetic cosmological performances. Other than all these, 70% of the songs in this play are composed by the playwright Bakare.

Rogbodiyan is another play where Bakare makes music an integral part of his theatre. He suffices the play with point-by-point realistic songs that amplify the thematic and interpretative essence of the play. The play has nine songs with many apt calls and responses. Bakare's Ekiti dialect is reflected in most of the songs. Ifa and Orunmila songs re-echo in the play while the last folkloric song on page 59 is reworked to capture the military-centric intervention in the play, starting from "Ologunbawa o, onimaro". The folkloric song is from Kola Ogunmola's *The Palmwine Drinkard* in which the response of "Nini kun ni" folktales is relived.

Once Upon A Tower starts with a musical band with a good highlife tune of a solo and chorus; alternating between English and Pidgin-English lyrics, and some Hausa words which are reflective of happenings in Nigerian universities and that which Bakare satirises as Mariapino University, Nigeriana. This is an original creation and it is also overtaken by the call and response song of "when Omo waye Day Convoke" on pages 5 and 6, "I love my provost" (pp. 14 and 15), "Ofin Muse" (pp. 22 and 23), "Block no man's way" (pp. 27-28), "Teacher don messi, messiooo" (pp. 36-41), "Kiss me" (pp. 49-50) and "Dirge" on page 64. Unlike Bakare's other plays, *Once Upon A Tower* is a contemporary play on the sad events and politics of interests in the Nigerian university system and the play benefits more the total structure of music. Thus, Ekong and Udoh (2014:

493-514) have concluded that *Once Upon A Tower* has different musical styles such as highlife, Afro-beat, Kegite, Afro-American gospel, traditional folksong and popular style, and that the sociolinguistic essence of these dramatic songs include the Nigerian English, Efik/Ibibio language, Yoruba language, English language and Kegite/ gyration language.

In *The Gods and The Scavengers*, the play also starts with a song with operatic nuances that will have the lead and chorus in the Prologue, echoing the catchphrase of "Yes, it's dawn of a new morning". Movement 1 starts with four hungry Scavengers singing, "We are the Scavengers..." as they sort the discarded materials in the refuse dump. What is innovative here is that; once a Scavenger raises a song, other Scavengers will provide a chorus of sadness and disillusionment: "We make them our gods and they loot our treasury" ending most times with "We are the Scavengers". This is also overtaken by Osun Song, the Song of we beg for forgiveness and a song that mimics the 2nd verse of the Nigerian national anthem. In *The Gods and The Scavengers*, the lead characters are lead singers, choristers, and choirmasters while singing popular Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo songs (Bakare, 2006: 1-62).

The Gods and The Scavengers have songs of agony, pity, revolution, deconstruction, transformation, determination, liberation and reformation. The play is a musico-dramatic metaphor of the postcolonial and its fusion with the didactic essence of traditional folklore. This is a music theatre where each movement is interpreted with a series of musical experiments.

There is a thin line between the use of music and its fanfare in music theatre in *The Gods and the Scavengers* and *The Voyage*. The *Bakarean* tender also opens the play with a political song in the prologue. From the prologue to the opening, and to the end on page 52, 20 major songs in Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, Ibibio and other ethnic settings are composed to dramatize the political history of the Nigerian nation from the pre-colonial period to the Buhari regime.

Ifajuyigbe is a play on the late Colonel Francis Adekunle Fajuyi, the former Governor of the Western Region of Nigeria who demonstrated uncommon loyalty and patriotism during the 1st military coup in Nigeria. The play has a Prologue, 41 movements and an Epilogue with 25 songs. Unlike the other plays discussed in this chapter, the lyrics of most of the songs are that of Ekiti-Yoruba Dialect. Call and response, military, traditional wedding and English songs dominate the play. The success of the play also lies in the dexterous use of music and the enervating music theatre. The six plays discussed here have been directed by Bakare, Ojo Rasaki and other Nigerians with the mid-set of music theatre.

Ojo Rasaki Bakare's Dance Theatre

The reality in the theory and practice of Bakareism lies in dance theatre. Most of the early critical works and books written by Bakare are on African dance with a focus on West African nay Nigerian dances. The six plays discussed in this chapter also shared the Bakarean dance styles and forms. His stage instructions aptly celebrate the power of the African drums while communicating dance patterns. It is important to see phrases such as naming ceremony begins with dance; chanting and dancing; leaves the stage dancing; the entire dance sequence of a typical Ekiti traditional wedding ritual; three groups of occupational dancers dance in; movement of the boat; the people dance round and offer what they have into a bowl; a process of electioneering done in perfect choreography; she dances towards other scavengers in ritual posture; the fishing couple sings the second verse as they dance unto the stage; a mime/dance of the Chief hunter; their movement is rhythmic; coronation scene-enacted in dance; music and dance resume; collects the instruments of fight from the soldiers and dances out with the instruments; and others are in his six major plays (Bakare 2000, 2004, 2006, 2020 and 2021). What is clear is that most of his plays can also be interpreted fully through the dance theatre medium.

After careful consideration of the tendencies, characteristics, performance forms and styles of Bakare, we believe that his theory and practice of the African theatre fall under the poetics of Bakareism. Therefore, the following are the major poetic forms of Bakareism and the saturated creative river within its realistic taxonomy:

1. The Musically of Live Band Orchestration from Instrumentalists

Ojo Bakare uniqueness lies in his constant use of a live band as an integral part of his theatre. He punctuates each dramatic movement of his plays with music theatre in which vocal rhythm is mixed with traditional and postcolonial songs.

2. Theme-centric Songs of Identity and Cultural Affinity

Most of the songs used in Bakare's plays and performances are composed and adapted by him to reflect the theme of identity and cultural affinity. He has explored, reworked and reflected on the folkloric songs of Yoruba gods and deities while celebrating at the same time, the theme-centric realistic demands of his plays for performance articulation.

3. Audience Driven Theatrical Dynamics

Audience choice and taste are considered in the theatre of Bakare. Consequently, he is always environmentally friendly by using the semiotics, material and immaterial cultures of any environment in which he finds himself to appear in his performances. At Ife or Uyo, Abuja or Oye-Ekiti, you find a different Bakare exploring environmental muse for consistent sustenance of the audience's love for his theatre. He loves the songs, instruments, acting nuances and theatrical dynamics of the environment that he finds himself to drive his theatre.

4. Federal Theatre of Nationalism

Through his settings, binaries, character selections and thematic concerns; Bakare has produced a federal theatre of nationalism. Unity, togetherness, patriotism, common ideal, peaceful co-existence and national development are deliberately used as metaphors in most of his major plays and performances. We can find political subversion in *Rogbodiyan* and the message is that we should stop it. We can see a total condemnation of mediocrity in *Once Upon A Tower* and the message is that we must promote the idea of national merit. *The Gods and The Scavengers* condemns political failures, and the ideal is that we must revolutionise our political process whereas *Ifajuyigbe* remains a potent manifesto for national unity and patriotism.

5. Open-ended Narrative Technique

Bakare's addiction to the narrative technique is real and this is quintessentially reflected in his plays and performances. Interestingly, his narrative technique is open-ended because most of the issues raised in the prologue or Movement 1 of his plays and performances are often punctuated from the beginning of his plays or performances to the end. Bakare's open-ended narrative technique accommodates call and response, the music theatre and the dance theatre performative form.

6. Subversion Aesthetics

Coded in Bakareism is the theory and practice of subversion. Subversion is footed in deliberate creative reversion, contradiction, sabotage, radical transgression, resistance, protest and others. Bakare undermines existing theatre traditions through his uncommon creative interpretations. You will expect a line of action, but Bakare will deliberately subvert it. The resolutions of most of his plays or performances are definitive yet, they wear the mask of open-ended subversive metaphor. Bringing Odewale, Priest, Gbonka and Akilapa from Ola Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* into his *The Gods and The Scavengers* is a

subversive model. Changing the 2nd verse of our National Anthem is also subversive. Indeed, the politics of subversion is at the core of *Rogbodiyan* while *The Voyage* is rooted in the aesthetics of subversion where existing values, ideas, ideologies and traditions are reworked within the poetics of Bakareism.

7. **Highlife Lyrics of Postcoloniality**

We have reflected on the music theatre of Bakare, but certainly Bakareism celebrates gestic, vitriolic, crisp and sarcastic highlife lyrics within the materiality of our postcolonial nation. Highlife lyrics such as:

Yes, it's dawn of a new morning...
We are the scavengers, we the main men...
We make them our gods and they loot our treasury... (Bakare, 2006, pp. 1-5)

Once Upon a Tower
In our country Nigeriana
the tower upon an ivory
on a gold on the marble ooo
Later but later... the tower on the silver eee
Later but later the tower on the bronze (Bakare, 2000, p. 1)

Deconstructing the colonial also finds its way into the highlife lyrics of sarcasm of the postcolonial in the changing of the 2nd verse of the Nigerian National Anthem to reflect the radical but progressive rebellion in Bakareism.

8. **Excellence in Trado-Modern-Postcolonial Choreography**

The profundity of the poetic^{*} of Bakareism lies in choreographic force. Bakare is the widely celebrated wizard of dance and choreography. He is a professional dancer and choreographer. He choreographed most of the dances in his performances with ingenious excellences in traditional, modern and postcolonial themes. All movements, floor patterns, and so on, are often blended to please the audience and the choreographer. Bakare is the engine room for major successful dances that define his performances. He trains dancers and he has produced many choreographers in this process. He is also a success story through his

dance theatre performances where acrobatic displays, waltzes, unique pantomimes, puppetry and others, have been creatively designed.

9. Experimental Directing Style

Ojo Bakare is a unique gift in theatre directing. He guides, inspires, motivates and supervises his production. Each play from Bakare comes with a unique style yet most of his directorial styles which are collaborative classical, authoring and so on, can be harnessed under the experimental school of theatre directing. One principal success of Bakareism is the rebellion to experiment and do things differently. As a stage wizard, his instructions and directions are excellent.

10. Professionalism in Paralinguistic Aesthetics

Bakare is his costumier at which he has succeeded. He is his make-up artist and we cannot take this credit away from him. He is a confirmed property manager in the theatre. His gift as a semiotician has paid off and we cannot talk about Bakareism without recourse to his expertise and professionalism in the paralinguistic aesthetics of costume, make-up, props, set construction and soon.

11. Deployment of Town and Gown Traditional and Modern Casting and Acting

Yoruba professional theatre artists especially in the Nollywood industry and committed artists in the universities are Bakare's live colleagues of the theatre. He, just like Ola Rotimi, has broken the fourth wall of the university to accommodate the refreshing experiences of the saturated town. He recruits the best hands through a competitive process, has no issue with age, is gender friendly and works with willing greenhorns and experienced artists who are ready to tame their egos. He believes in the traditional acting style which deploys the modern theories of acting for his literary theatre performance. The direction here is that Bakareism is flexible while accommodating the best of theatre ethics and ideals.

12. Performative Trinity

Certainly, most scholars have accepted the Trinitian essence of drama, dance and music, and their success through total theatre as the major definitive signal of the theatre of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki. Performative Trinity is also accepted as the last poetics of Bakareism. Indeed, this acceptance has been explored in this chapter.

Our observation is that Performative Trinity is not enough to capture the theory and practice of the African theatre of Bakare, Ojo Rasaki although we acknowledge its relevance. Bakare's theatre towers above Performative Trinity, hence, the poetics of Bakareism which has many uncountable rivers within its nexus.

The above exposition is diagrammatically represented below:



Diagrammatic Representation of the Poetics of Bakareism

Conclusion

The poetics of Bakareism, we are certain, can be validated as the authentic poetics that can capture Ojo Bakare's theory and practice of the African theatre. Although we acknowledge that *Bakaresque* Dramaturgy, *Ojoism*, Performative Trinity, *Dancerasaki* and *Jagunmoluism* have been theorised to celebrate Bakare's theatre; we are nonetheless further convinced that most of these catchphrases are scanty, and they present no details that can be relied on to discuss Bakare's theatre. Indeed, Bakareism is a drum with sixteen eyes that has travelled far while his two octopus-like sprawling legs have been used to reinvent the trips. We, therefore, conclude that the poetics of Bakareism has the details that can accommodate the main theme, tendencies and characteristics of Bakare's dance, drama, music, playwriting, directing, acting, training and so on, which are reflectively representative of his postcolonial theatre because of its series of intersections on the experimental and didactic nature of the theatre of Ojo Bakare.

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