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## THE TORTOISEAN ARCHETYPE : A THEORY OF SATIRE IN NIGERIAN DRAMA

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Let us start out on a cautionary note. The reader may not walk away at the end of this discourse with a homologous, final and exhaustive theory of satire in the genre of Nigerian drama. Such a destination, wholesome and desirable as it is, is somewhat beyond the brief of literary criticism. Satire given its natural involution is not a literary mode that is easily disposed to a definitive realization. Besides, the concept of archetype, even when divested of its original primordially and mythological forms, is fluid. It is capable of infinite manifestations and it is subject to diverse interpretations from people to people, time to time. That makes it difficult to be finally tackled in a single critical inquiry.

However, we will attempt to stimulate literary discourse in the direction of a theoretical investigation of satiric drama by Nigerian playwrights and make certain suggestions, which will serve as starting step: towards a theory of satire in Nigerian drama. This will be done, taking due cognizance of the wide variety of Nigerians' indigenous cultural artistic experience.

### Why Theory, What Theory ?

One vital questions which we will attempt to answer presently is that: Why do we need a (separate) theory of satire, and indeed, any literary mode manifest in Nigeria drama ?

Undeniably, the urge to formulate theories is basic to scholarship in general and literary criticism in particular. A theory is the product of an investigation of concepts and general

principles of a particular phenomenon or reality. It encapsulates fundamental information about the interaction of various components of such a phenomenon or reality. Because of its mediatory outlook, theory can introduce symmetry into a likely 'disorder' of its component. Literary theories demonstrate that harmonising tendency by bringing together varying elements, however vast in scope, in order to temper the artistic disorder that is text or performance. And since a literary work (for our purpose here, drama) is an attempt by the writer to mediate the 'chaos' of divergent social experience, literary theory can guide the audience - critic in wading through the 'chaos'. It should therefore not be seen as a dull, encumbering exercise. Says Allan Rodway;

Theorizing always seems inhuman, being necessarily abstract but the result of following a reasonable theory should be less lamentable, in any given case, than those of not doing so, for not following one simply means muddling — through that is to say, carrying out most of the same operations haphazardly, (1970; 101)

Unfortunately, not much of theorizing seems to have accompanied the criticism of various literary modes in Nigerian (African) drama, including satire.

Scholarly discussions of satire in Western/European literature have over the years, spawned several theories. But quite an insignificant amount of these are mindful of the indigenous literary traditions of Africa on the one hand and modern African writings on the other. This tendency is exemplified in Feinberg (1963), Hight (1972), Hodgart (1972) and Bloom and Bloom (1979) among others.

It is our contention, therefore, that the discourse of post-colonial Nigerian drama should be guided by theory of mode arrived at through the mediation of recognizable indigenous artistic matrices. According to Bill Ashcroft et al, "Post colonial literature ought to be considered in the context of their sponsoring cultures" (1989, 161). Such a theory should be rooted in those inter-cultural "eternal presence" in traditional art forms which neither age, time nor space can render obsolete. These are essentially images with wide interpretive possibilities

Archetypes, as they are called, share the universalising, summative and harmonizing principles of theory. Hence, their adoption in this essay as the conceptual framework for our theory of satire.

### The Archetypal Construct

The term 'archetype' has over the ages held a special fascination not only for scholars of psychology, sociology and anthropology, but also for critics and theorists of literature. Carl Gustav Jung, a disciple of the Austrian psychoanalyst-Sigmund Freud argues that archetype resides in the 'collective unconscious'. The latter, he believes, is the repository of man's typical response to universal existential realities. What the artist does is to give expression to the content of the collective unconscious.

For Philipson, archetypes are motives and images which can spring anew in every age and clime without historical tradition or migration (1963, 49). This finds a corroboration in Stevens and Stewart's assertion that "archetype excites interest in recurring patterns and images which are deeply imprinted in the human mind across time and culture". (1987, 82).

One of the most significant applications of the archetype concept to the study of literature is found in Maud Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. Bodkin uses "archetypal patterns" to refer to "...that within us which... 'leaps in response to the effective presentation in poetry of an ancient theme'". (1934:4).

Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* provides another illustration. However, what distinguishes Frye's effort as well as that of subsequent archetype critics is that Jung's principle of collective unconscious has lost its centrality. Frye consequently describes it as "a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole" (1957, 305). He posits that the recurrent archetypes are just there, 'however they got there'. From this, their manifestations become more important than their sources,

Our conception of archetype in this essay will refer to those repeated narrative or dramatic configurations, symbols, patterns of actions, character types or images" (Abrams : 1993, 223) which are found in African literary experience, from the oral to the written. An archetype could be a man, an animal, or a process. Whatever its form, countless experience and images are plausibly projected into its multi-plexity, Its apraori, a historical and cross-cultural manifestations facilitate such projections. Arnis Pratt underscores the infinite possibilities of the archetype when she notes that "a single archetype can be subject to a variety of perception, not only from culture to culture, but even within a given culture or the mind of a single individual" (1981, 4).

It can be deduced from the foregoing that because an archetypal image is intrinsically expressive of the diversity and complexity of human experience, it is a convenient point to anchor the theory of satire in Nigerian drama.

Tortoise (Ijapa, Mbe, etc) - the cunning, recidivist and humbug found in many folk narratives of various ethnic groups in Nigeria<sup>2</sup>-is an archetypal figure. From time to time, this 'eternal' figure is summoned consciously or unconsciously by the playwright and it is made to interact with realities. The interaction is rendered in the dramaturgical language acceptable to the present (Jung: 1928, 248). Consequently, a perceivable interpenetration between the past and the present, between the orality of a past generation and modern literary/theatrical forms is achieved. Put differently, the Nigerian satirist - dramatist in his quest for a restoration of the violated social equilibrium, blends the primordial, remote, fantastic, grotesque and irrepressible configurations in the milieu of folk tales with contemporary incidents and images.

Consequently, Tortoise becomes the necessary theoretical armature, if we accept the reformatory, didactic and aesthetic preoccupations of satire.<sup>3</sup> Basically, the target and the agent of satire are emblemized in him with all his ambivalence. The plays evoke a Tortoisean world of limitless possibilities with its own familiar and relevant, even though distorted class of values. Here, anything goes, ranging from conformity to deviations, from correctitude, to infraction. Each satire makes its own

exploration of the underlying Tortoisean archetypal pattern in addressing social infirmities.

### The Tortoisean Archetype

Based on preceding exposition, Tortoise is an archetype of satire's butt or adversary on the one hand and the satirist's tool on the other. Adopting the reformatory, retributive, pedagogical and artistic schemes of satire as our guide, Tortoise has much in common with satire as to provide a basis for a theoretic proposition.

Trickster tales are almost a universal element in African thought system. They are born out of some perceived socialization needs, judging from their encapsulation of societal norms and values which the child is brought up to uphold. Though woven around other animal protagonists like Hare, Fox, Beer in some cultures, Tortoise is a key trickster figure in Yoruba, Igbo, Efik, Ibibio, Edo, Itshekiri and Kalabari folktales among others.<sup>4</sup> The fictive image of animals' world thinly separated from that of human beings in the tales provides the audience with a paradigmatic illustration of acceptable and intolerable conducts. We perceive existing formal socio-political superstructure in the society through the fabled analogue.<sup>5</sup>

Quite of significance is Tortoise's persona. He is an ambivalent character who is enthralling for his superior intelligence and cunning. Yet, he is repulsive for his evasiveness, duplicity, greed and self centredness. By trying to expose in order to correct moral infirmities of others, (through ridicule), he is doing the 'fictional' and by extension, the human society some good. On the other hand, by being enmeshed in the same vices detected in others, he is liable to ridicule. So, censured vices are portrayed in him whenever he is the target of satire. But whenever he plays the satirist's agent, the vices are represented in his victims. In this ambivalence lies our theory of satire. We will come back to it shortly. Meanwhile let us dwell a bit more on Tortoise's persona.

Tortoise is renowned for hatching one stratagem after the other to swindle, hoodwink, hex or outwit others. He

emasculates tough enemies or de-powers the powerful by exploiting their innate weaknesses. Sometimes, he undermines their logic with deception. In fact, he is credited with much exploits that astonishingly belie his nature as a slow-moving terrestrial creature who has short elephant-like feet and webless toes, a high-domed carapace with geometric patterns.

Perhaps, the intelligence that produced the countless Tortoise tales would have recognized something in his physical constitution to attribute much trickery and cunning to him. Perhaps, his amble connotes caution and calculation. He is not given to haste, petulance of rashness. Besides, he can immune himself in the shell to escape danger. He can also squeeze himself into the crevice of a rock or roots of a tree and inflate the body to elude capture. (Netting: 1963, 376, Ojo: 1973, 20-21). This somehow accounts for his longevity. When he is floored by his flaws in one tale, he bounces back in another tale with more contrivances like Henri Bergson's jack-in-the-box (Dukore: 1974, 741).

At times, Tortoise directly suffers public disgrace when his stratagem goes away. Sometimes, his plot brings harsh consequences upon some other characters due to the latter's frailties. There is a close link between Tortoise (Ijapa) and Esu Elegbara, the Yoruba trickster god whom Femi Euba has elaborately presented as an archetype of satire and satirist in black drama. In *Archetypes, Imprecators and Victims of Fate* (1989), Euba surveys the experience of the blackman in Africa, in the Caribbean Islands and in the plantations of America. He argues that Esu, the divinity of destiny is the archetype of satire who impels people to their fate. His vice-virtue complementarity is contiguous with satire's and satirists' phenomenal ambivalence. Esu, "the confuser of men", "mischief maker" and "agent provocateur" can induce his targets to pursue a course which will reveal their aberrations, just as *Ijapa* is capable of doing.

Unfortunately, the kinship between these two trickster figures' satiric disposition is discountenanced by Euba and other researchers of the trickster concept in Yoruba culture (especially) like Pelton (1980) before him.<sup>6</sup>

We consider Tortoise more suitable for our theory of satire as an archetype. This is because Esu's persona is confusive as a human being, deity, historical figure and a mythical character. Tortoise is free from such problematic indeterminacy. His essence remains largely in the fictive realm despite its projection in human terms. All his exploits beyond zoological possibilities are purely products of folk fecund imagination. In other words, he is more literary in dimension. Besides that, however, the polemical thrust of Euba's work is the "Drama of Epidemic" which emphasises tragic satire. Granted that Esu is an archetype of 'tragic' satire as Euba asserts, Tortoise, it is our contention is the archetype of comedic satire. It is to this "type" that we will limit our focus in the paper.

Perhaps, we can underscore our proposition by considering two sample tales from the innumerable Tortoise tales. (See Appendix). Tale A is about Tortoise and Elephant while B explain the reason why Tortoise's carapace is coarse and rough. It should be noted that the latter apart from its moral vision is an aetiological tale. In Tale A, Elephant falls prey to his unrealistic ambition, gluttony and gullibility. These are weaknesses which Tortoise inveigle him into displaying. In Tale B, Tortoise suffers reprisal for his overreaching, greed and dishonesty. (Adeoti: 1994, 74-76). In both, Tortoise provides a platform for the exhibition of vices and foible.

A careful survey of Nigerian drama will show that satire's central humanistic concern is well demonstrated, whether in the literary drama of Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Ken Tsaro-Wiwa, Femi Osofisan, or in the television drama series such as "Alawada", "Awada - Kerikeri", "New Masquerade" and Basi and Company". They seek moral rehabilitation of mankind through the aesthetic matrices of wit and humour. They castigate so as to regenerate. The prevailing ethos in each play is the need for man to turn his back at enervating misdeeds in the interest of individual and communal well-being. Ours is a society where morality and order are still valued in spite of their unceasing violation (or atimes, near absence). Hence satire expresses a yearning for the moral centre to always hold so as to avert the likely consequence - anarchy.

The rehabilitative ethos of satire finds expression in the Tortoisean archetype, even when Tortoise is wilfully a - moral or when he appears to be consciously questioning the basis and order of morality. Satirical plays by Nigerian dramatists present before the audience hypothetical errant beings who are confronted with their short comings. But the reference goes beyond the textual culprits. It extends boundlessly to humanity with similar faults. It is in this light that we can appreciate the archetype of Tortoise recreated in Jero, Semuwe, Lejoka-Brown, Bási, Awero, Oriebora etc.

Two basic paradigms can be abstracted from the above and it is on these paradigms that we will erect our comedic, character-centred<sup>8</sup> theory of satire. They are : Instrumentality and Intentionality.

#### Instrumentality Paradigm ; the agent proposition

In Nigerian drama that illustrates this proposition, the protagonist is the agent or instrument of the satirist. Through the former, moral infractions regardless of their loci are ridiculed. Being re-enacted here is the Tortoise order, using cunning to unmask erring individuals or groups who threaten social harmony. The central character exposes or creates conditions for the disclosure of improprieties found in others and brings them to ridicule in the process (Tale A, Appendix).

There is an ostensible dualization of identities in the instrumentality paradigm. The real identity open to the audience is concealed from the victims who are manipulated. Nonetheless, the satirist uses theatrical resources to show the disparity between the real identity and the simulated 'other'. Consequently, pseudoseers, false prophets, impostors and libertinists are held up as 'executrices' of satiric censure. Such plays are often resolved with a kind of triumph for their 'aheroic' protagonists. Some practical analysis will be appropriate here. It is worth making a brief illustration of our submissions with Femi Osofisan's *Who is Afraid of Solarin?* (1978) and Soyinka's *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1984).

*Who's Afraid of Solarin?* is tagged "a dramatic creation afre Gogol's *The Inspector General* ; in honour of Dr. Tai

Solarin, former Public Complaints Commissioner for Ogun, Oyo and Ondo States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria". The play as such, is a censure of corruption especially among political and ecclesiastical authorities.

Osofisan created a tortoisean archetype in the grotesque Isola Oriebora (Ghommid's head), city rascal who rubs the noses of a corrupt Council Chairman, his corrupt officials and a fake church leader in the dirt. The play is structured to accommodate an exposition of the characters' moral rot and their consequent abasement.

Oriebora capitalizes on a hook and mistaken identity to swindle his credulous victims of their fraudulently acquired money. In him, therefore, we recognize, a complementary anagogic truth projected from the figure of Tortoise. A circumstance is [created (typical satire) whereby the evil doer is defeated through his own munitions.

The remoured arrival of Solarin, anti-corruption crusader and Public Complaints' Commissioner in a remote local government headquarters stirs disquiet in the Council Chairman and his rapacious councillors. They are unanimous in adopting every means to escape the prying eyes of solarin, including divination and bribery. Oriebora, as resourceful as Tortoise, acts out the Solarin's image in which he is cast by the anxious officials. Using his proposed engagement with Paster Nebuchadnezzah Ifagbemi's daughter as a bait, he extorts money from the council officials. In the course of heightened expectation created by his arrival, greed, corruption and other shortcomings are unmasked. The city dwelling rascal, oriebora, becomes the instrument or medium through which Osofisan generates contempt against the semi-literate council chairman Chief James Dada Gbonmiayelobiojo<sup>9</sup> and his cabinet.

Through the mutual exposition of defects, the Councillor for Cooperative and Agriculture is described as "This unnamed monster who eats up council contracts like a woodworm". Councillor for education is "stunted by the burden of plunder from the UPE building projects" (p. 7). The Chief Magistrate delights in corruption as he perverts justice for material gains, "In my court, we always take money into consideration to know

who is guilty" (p. 65). In the same vein, the Chief Medical Officer is ironically a born of disease and a case study in maladministration. These oddities are complemented by Pastor Ifagbemi who upholds anything but ecclesiastical precepts; he is a prime suspect in the missing church fund; he is also a patron of Ifa divination.

Oriebor's diary (a strategic stage property) vindictively read by the victims at the end reinforces the satiric representation. The chain of swindling - revelation - derision, absurd as it were is significant in its instantiation of the Tortoisean archetype. Thus, the victims of Osefisan's satire lick their wounds, head bowed in shame while the trickster, Oriebora escapes unhurt with his gold mine. He elicits scornful laughter from the audience at their expense.

*The Trials of Brother Jero* and its sequel, *Jero's Metamorphosis* by Soyinka present an ingenious pseudo-prophet whose artifice is employed to unveil the failings of others.<sup>10</sup> The satiric jibes are here well-aimed at Chume, other members of the congregation, other Beach Prophets among others who are greedy and gullible enough to fall prey to the shamming Jero. *Jero's Metamorphosis* (1984) will be used subsequently for our illustration.

Brother Jero escapes from the wrathful cutlass of Chume in *The Trials* to become the leader of a quasi-military confederate of beach prophets named Church of the Apostolic Salvation Army of the Lord (CASA). By virtue of his leadership, he now has all the beach land in his care. The acquisition of 'spiritual monopoly' over the beach is not a triumph for the government nor for the Tourist Board of the city Council, nor for other prophets. Rather, it is a victory for Jero, the confederate's leader and the unrivalled superintendent of the beach.

The victory of Brother Jero (now metamorphosed into General Jero) can be passed off as an evidence of Soyinka's cynical view of human nature. To us, this (ir) resolution structurally reinforces the perspective of satire on the one hand and our archetypal proposition on the other. As earlier pointed out, since the character of Jero as a satiric agent is a throwback on Tortoise<sup>11</sup> in folk narratives, he has to pass unapprehended

with his "misdeeds" like Tortoise. But through him, Soyinka pillories fake prophets, religious bigots, corrupt public officials, repressive military regime(s) and other aberrations in Nigeria under General Yakubu Gowon. The jibe at inadequacies of the military in government is sharply delivered in Jero's seeming self-indictment at the end of the play.

**JERO: After all, it is the fashion these days to be a desk General.** (p. 86).

The moral viewpoint of Jero's self-indictment becomes more meaningful when considered as an ironic indictment of those parodied in his new image.

As in *The Trials* the play's action is predicated on a threat to Jero's enterprise as a beach prophet. But here, the threat is not "woman" but an injection order from "a land flowing with spiritual honey", placed on the prophets and other squatters by the city council. From an initial position of insecurity to the vantage position from which Jero negotiates in the name of CASA with the Chief Executive Officer, the course is lined with Jero's assorted Tortoisean antics. His possession of the Tourism Board's file strengthens his trickster symbolism as it proves a formidable weapon against the authority.

In responding to the evictor threat, the ludicrous is mixed with the monstrous in the prophets. They appear unreal despite their mirroring of contemporary vices. The rapprochement organised by Jero to address the issue presents "a most bizarre collection of prophets" (p. 67). Here are religious pervers in clerical robes like Ananias (thief, thug an arsonist); Matthew (sex-maniac and rapist); Isaac (drunkard and fraud) among other ungodly types. In their fuddled state, they substitute chaos for order. They speak a vile language and freely exchange diatribe in a manner that depict them not as clerics but as the 'scum' and 'riff-raff' of prophethood foregrounded in *The Trials*. As an aside, *A Dance of the Forests* and *Requiem For a Futurologist* (1985) by the same playwright is also well suited for analysis of this paradigm.

Clearly discernible from the instrumentality paradigm is a denunciation of reprehensible social realities accomplished



through the agent motif of the Tortoisean archetype. The ultimate goal of course is the restoration and/or reinforcement of the moral order. It is important to remark here that the tortoisean archetype in its twain manifestation by implication moralizes through the principle of negativity. He or his victims represent what the people should *not* do. The satirist overtly or covertly beseeches the audience not to do like Tortoise's victims in the instrumentality paradigm or like Tortoise in the intentionality paradigm.

#### Intentionality Paradigm ; The Target Proposition

A basic framework of intentionality paradigm is present in Tale B (See Appendix). In order to confront the society with its hideosity, the satirist-dramatist evokes a theatrical ambience in which the butt is the architect of, or a major contributor to his own humiliation. In this context, the archetype objectifies the satirist's ethical and aesthetic intentions while effectively participating in a programme of auto-stripping. Through his designs and through his somewhat misanthropic tendency, the protagonist/butt constitutes a menacing force to social order. As the action progresses, however, his deviations are discovered. He is appropriately sanctioned. Sometimes, he retributively falls into the pit dug by him to ensnare others.

In a related instance, the tortoisean archetype can be a-moral. He engages in a pre-meditated transgression of communal resolve about order and morality, simply to question their basis. Usually, such an action is informed by his self-interest at the expense of the group. What then starts out as an egotistical assertion of his individual will in the society impels the entire society toward the cliff of anarchy. However, beneath the humour often generated by the manner of the archetype's deviations, is an affirmation of the general preference for order in place of chaos. He is either forced to eschew his antagonism to the society and repress his egotistical desires or he is eliminated altogether as a negative force in order to restore some social balance. So, despite the initial "invincibility", he is floored and upturned, thereby providing a means for greater awareness of man's imperfection.

The adopted dramati structure usually facilitates a transition from the target's initial privileged position (attained through deceit) into defeat to show a dialectics between motive and method. To demonstrate our hypothesis, let us attempt a survey of Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977).

To begin with, the wile and guile propensity of Tortoise is typified in Rahman Taslim Lejoka-Brown (Di Major). Lejoka-Brown is dissembling, overreaching and inherently a threat to social harmony whether in his private (Domestic) life or in his public (political) activities. An ex-soldier, Major leaves lucrative cocoa farming business for politics - a new calling for which he is temperamentally and intellectually ill-equipped. His strategy to win victory for the National Liberation Party at the 'Poles' (polls) is whimsical. The need to sell this peculiarly idiosyncratic electioneering strategy to the rest of the party, achieve victory through it in spite of its apparent absurdity and extricate himself from domestic quagmire (being married to three wives now) serve as the driving force for the satire. His efforts to contend with these problematics reveal his inadequacies as an individual and as a type. That is, Africa's military and civilian power desperadoes.

Politics to Lejoka-Brown is defined essentially in gourmandic terms. It is an opportunity "to chop a big slice of the National cake" or stuff his partymen with "huge" mouthful of the Nation chinchin" (p.4). Hence, the huge financial investment in it. Apart from this, politics is equated incongruously with military expedition. That necessitates army campaign tactics of "surprize and attack" (p. 50).

Like a dissembling Tortoise, Lejoka-Brown's marriage to Sikira is part of a scheme to win women's vote in order to secure himself a parliamentary seat and become the Minister of Agriculture and Housing. Says he : "And as for Sakira I only wanted her to help me with the Election" (p.69). Expectedly, the ossified, addle-pated and self-centred leadership of Di Major is swept away in a re-organisation exercise by NLP members. Having suffered individual and collective



humiliation as his hands, they resolve to rid the party of 'an abjectly myopic, not to say old-fashioned, authoritarian leadership of Mr. Rahman Lejoka-Brown' (p 69). By satirically imaging greed and allied vices in Major, Rotimi is warning others in the society with similar frailties to purge themselves before their re-incorporation to a social order which they have deviated from.

The Tortoisean archetype is a readily discernible element in the actions of the duo of Basi and Alali in Ken Tsaro-Wiwa's *The Transistor Radio* (19 0) as well as in Kamini in Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* (1984). Space constraint will not permit a detailed study of these plays here. However, we can proceed a step further in our discourse with some Comments on *The Transistor Radio*.

In Basi and Alali, Tsaro-Wiwa ridicules the survivalist instincts of city-dwellers which spawn fraudsters, gamblers, thieves etc. The golden rule of urban life is eloquently stated by Basi:

You've got to be clever and smart in Lagos  
if you must live... I learnt the lesson  
trudging the streets. You must have your  
wits about you all the time or you're  
ruined, (pp. 96-97).

It is through this kind of tortoisean wit that the duo hustle to survive harsh realities of unemployment and its attendant anxieties. They rely on same to withstand the pressures of a cantankerous land-lady who is ever hankering after her never-to-be-paid rents and also a myriad of parasitic cormen. But they suffer ridicule deservingly as their happiness or triumph through "wit" and smartness is shown as illusory and highly ephemeral.

Since satire's literary and performative polemics subsists on a deviation, this play in particular and those that fall within the theoretical framework of intentionality paradigm in general, scorn characters who are perceived as typifying infractions of social ethos.

So far, it is observable that Tortoise persona appears corrective and instructive. Indeed, the two examined paradigms are the converging point of the archetypal manifestations that furnish our theory of satire in Nigerian drama.

### Concluding Remarks

The essay has proposed a character-centered comedic theory of satire in Nigerian literary drama through archetypal patterns. What we have done is to provide as far as possible a starting point or foundation from which a fuller theory of satire can be developed.

Clearly, the essay proceeds from a realization that literary criticism is strengthened whenever conducted through a theory. It notes that post-colonial African literature can be more appropriately appreciated through critical theories which have roots deep in Africans' (in this case, Nigerians) cultural experience. Such theories would be more mindful of Africa's existential peculiarities.

As the textual analyses have shown, satire in Nigerian drama is articulated through the archetypal construct derived from those moonlight folkloric narratives woven around the character of Tortoise. In essence, the tortoisean archetype is consciously or unconsciously evoked by the satirist is his theatrical mediation of socio-political experience. Thus, each play is a re-discovery of an 'eternal' presence called archetype. It is an appropriation of communal aesthetic experience for an appropriate individual treatment of societal sores.

The satirist, a consummate omniscient social observer, manipulates conventional tools of the theatre around the fictionality of the archetype in order to make his artistic statement. The object is to assist the society in securing a threatened or violated harmonious order. A centre is therefore, designed for the works (through the archetype) toward which literary and theatrical constituents radiate. Archetypal patterns in a way ensure the relevance of the plays beyond the immediate-here and now-into the vast province of other times.

It is hoped that the paper will stimulate further interest in the formulation of indigenous theories of literary genres and modes in Nigerian literature. Such theories, it is important to say, need to be rooted in socio-cultural back-ground and traditional artistic experience of the people. Post-colonial discourse of African literature stands to benefit from such an undertaking.

## NOTES

1. The concept "Nigerian drama" is problematized not only by the country's cultural divergence but also by the multinormity of its expression. However, in this essay, we will limit its application to the tradition of literary drama or dramatic literature.
2. Lengthy volumes would be required to document the innumerable tales associated with Tortoise in Yoruba as well as in other cultures. However, some attempts have been made to collect them, see the following:

Adeboye Babalola. *Akojopo Alo Ijapa* Vols 1 and 2.  
Ibadan: University Press, 1973.

Olagoke Ojo. *Ijapa Tiroka Oko Yannibo*  
Ibadan: Longman, Nigeria, 1973.

3. Oral narratives of traditional societies in Africa provide models for modern African novelists. That Tortoise is being proposed here as an archetype in drama in defiance of generic boundary is significant. In African oral tradition, it is difficult to accurately erect generic frontiers between prose, verse and drama. Each makes use of elements of the other. But more important, the suspense, conflict and tension usually generated by Tortoise in action, as well as his overall bearing make him an important model for dramatic creation.
4. Among the Tiv for instance, Hare is the trickster figure. See Folabo Ajayi. "The Hare and the Tortoise: a tale of two Teachers". *Folklore and National Development*. Proceedings of the 4th Annual Congress of the Nigeria Folklore Society. University of Ife, 1984, 640-660.

5. Apart from their instructive and cohesive values, Tortoise tales have other uses. Some are aetiological tales which seek to explain the whys and the wherefores of certain aspects of cosmic reality as demonstrated in Tale B.
6. Oyekan Owomoyela tries to some extent, to redress this omission in "Tortoise Tales and Yoruba Ethos" *Research in African Literature*. 20: 2 (1989), 165-180.
7. These Television drama series were popular in the 70's 80's and early 90's. They were creations of Moses Olaiya Adejumo, Ojo Ladipo, James Troha and Ken Tsaro-Wiwa respectively.
8. The emphasis on character is informed by the fact that it is a pivotal performative element around which the dramatist deploys other communicative apparatuses of the theatre like costume, make-up scenery, prop, music, dance and dialogue.
9. His name cannot waste. It means "he who wastes communal resources as if they were rain water".

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Olagoke Ojo. *Ijapa Tiroka Oko Yannibo*  
Ibadan: Longman, Nigeria, 1973.

3. Oral narratives of traditional societies in Africa provide models for modern African novelists. That Tortoise is being proposed here as an archetype in drama in defiance of generic boundary is significant. In African oral tradition, it is difficult to accurately erect generic frontiers between prose, verse and drama. Each makes use of elements of the other. But more important, the suspense, conflict and tension usually generated by Tortoise in action, as well as his overall bearing make him an important model for dramatic creation.
4. Among the Tiv for instance, Hare is the trickster figure. See Folabo Ajayi. "The Hare and the Tortoise: a tale of two Teachers". *Folklore and National Development*. Proceedings of the 4th Annual Congress of the Nigeria Folklore Society. University of Ife, 1984, 640-660.

5. Apart from their instructive and cohesive values, Tortoise tales have other uses. Some are aetiological tales which seek to explain the whys and the wherefores of certain aspects of cosmic reality as demonstrated in Tale B.
6. Oyekan Owomoyela tries to some extent, to redress this omission in "Tortoise Tales and Yoruba Ethos" *Research in African Literature*. 20: 2 (1989), 165-180.
7. These Television drama series were popular in the 70's 80's and early 90's. They were creations of Moses Olaiya Adejumo, Ojo Ladipo, James Troha and Ken Tsaro-Wiwa respectively.
8. The emphasis on character is informed by the fact that it is a pivotal performative element around which the dramatist deploys other communicative apparatuses of the theatre like costume, make-up scenery, prop, music, dance and dialogue.
9. His name cannot waste. It means "he who wastes communal resources as if they were rain water".