

Content and Form of Selected Ukwuani Lullabies

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Abstract

This paper examines the content and form of selected Ukwuani lullabies. Lullabies have been studied by various scholars over the years for their sociological, literary and linguistic values. However, not much attention has been paid to Ukwuani lullabies by oral literature scholars. This study engages some Ukwuani lullabies with the intent of identifying some of its themes and technical qualities. The songs selected for this research were sourced in the course of a fieldwork where those interviewed were made to perform some of the songs. The researcher recorded the songs and transcribed them for analysis. Formalism was adopted as the theoretical fulcrum for this research with its focus on literary texts as independent aesthetic entities. The findings of this paper reveal that Ukwuani lullabies reflect various universal truths and lessons, with themes such as infertility, fear of leaving home, fear of not being loved or giving love, happiness, kindness, friendship, generosity, and merits of hard work. These themes are conveyed using techniques such as metaphor, imagery, repetition, proverbs, symbolism, personification, hyperbole, etc.

Introduction

Lullaby can be described as a soothing song, sung primarily to children to lull them to sleep. Ukwuani lullabies, therefore, are indigenous songs, sung in the Ukwuani dialect of Nigeria, to send a child to sleep, calm the child or simply to entertain one or more children, among other things. Few studies has been carried out on lullabies in general, including, L. R. Castro (2013), Güneş, H. and Güneş N. (2012), and Uwemedimo, E. I. (2009), apparent study or documentation cannot be readily found of the Ukwuani lullaby, this research attempts to rectify that.

Güneş H. and Güneş N. (2012), see lullabies as “rhymed and harmonious words; in the form of poetry and prose according to a certain melody generally sung by mothers but sometimes also by relatives like grandma, aunt, elder sister etc. in order to soothe crying children or make them sleep” (p.321). Since response to sound is one of the most highly developed abilities in the infant, children need to be musically nurtured from birth. Scientific studies have proven that the effect on the infants works wonders. For example, an online site called *The Loving Nest*, featured a write-up on the importance of lullabies to children, claiming that another area that has received quite a bit of attention are studies that focus on the effect of music and lullabies on premature babies that are in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU). “Studies have shown that newborns who listen to recorded lullabies or to their parents singing lullabies see their heart rate slow down and their feeding and sleeping improve, which leads to an earlier discharge from the NICU. An interesting fact, is that when it’s the parent singing to the child (vs hearing a recorded song), there is a higher impact on heart rate, indicating that the parents’ voice is able to soothe and calm down the baby”. Moreover, music to adults has been said to calm the soul, and if the mother is calm, the baby would also feel calm and secure fostering in the caregiver a sense of one of the “joys” of motherhood. Words used in lullabies are supposedly often altered from the regular spoken words, in order to make them sound more assonant and pleasing to the ear (Oxford Music Online; Cass-Beggs and Cass-Beggs, 1969). And like other forms of poetry, Nigerian lullabies stand up to the claim staked for poetry as contributive in value to health and the growth of literature and language (Uwemedimo E. I, 2009).

Tanya Lavoie in her work, *The World of Lullabies*, opines that there is little literature on what constitutes a lullaby. She further mentions the work musicologists have done on the sonata, rondo, mazurka and about music from native cultures but says “...I have yet to see any extensive study or work on the lullaby” (p.1). She also identifies some key elements that make up a lullaby, “melody, phrases, soft, calm, relax, holding, and rocking”, and all these can be achieved through “various tonalities, modes, rhythmic patterns and tones” (Lavoie, 2013, pp.48-49).

Lullabies from the greatest composers and spontaneous melodies sung and hummed by loving caregivers bring comfort and sleep to babies. For generations, people throughout the world have sung lullabies to their babies as they cuddled them in their arms and gently rocked them to sleep. Modern research is only beginning to discover the full importance of lullabies. Hearing soft, rhythmic songs brings a sense of calmness and security to the sensitive infant (Cass-Beggs & Cass-Beggs, 1969). Besides soothing an infant, rocking and singing help the infant become accustomed to the “feelings” of sound motion. Without this type of gentle introduction to music, many babies will continue to react with a startle to sudden movement and loud sounds and noises. Cass-Beggs & Cass-Beggs (1969) write that, although the lullaby is deemed as simple music, it is “colored by the thoughts, beliefs and feelings of the nation or race from which [it comes]” (p.5).

It has also been noted that in some cultures, the lyrics are positive, while in others the message is negative. In other cases, the lullaby is more a story of the teller than for the audience, or an instilment of cultural values which children learn and assimilate as they age (Trehub, Unyk & Trainor, 1993; Unyk, Trehub, Trainor & Schellenberg, 1992; Cass-Beggs & Cass-Beggs, 1969; Uwemedimo, 2009).

Scholars, including Ruth Finnegan, are of the opinion that not much academic interest has been shown in children’s poetry in Africa, and though isolated instances have been recorded these have been done, arguably, without any discussion of context or local significance (Finnegan, 2012: 291; Uwemedimo, 2009). This problem is tackled in this study.

Uwemedimo Enobong Iwokedok in his paper, *Analysis of Lullabic Songs in Traditional African Communities: Some Nigerian Examples*, describes African lullabies as contributing to world and cultural development, he analysis some lullabies each expressing aspects of the performers’ experiences thereby making a universal statement about women, the socially disadvantaged and life in general. The harmful practise of child marriage is criticized in the lullaby Uwemedimo sourced from Ejagham in Cross River State. Songs, serve as outlets for sorrow and anxiety (Finnegan, 1977). This song is a plea, a cry for help and an outlet of

sorrow and indignation against child marriages, a harmful practise that is still being done in Nigeria. The song goes thus:

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Nsumoh ayumo o! | My father has killed me o! |
| Nye nome ayumo o | My mother has killed me o! |
| Kpekum meh ñkakueh | Even when I'm still a kid, |
| Ato mmeh nko ndumo o! | They've asked me to get married; |
| Ndum Ökot chango ayumo o | To a husband who is not loving. |

(Uwemedimo, 2009: 154)

One can infer that the protagonist is a babysitter as is stated by Uwemedimo (p.154), who is lamenting over her difficult situation. The protagonist is obviously under-aged; (hence the reference to “kid”) whose parents must have forced into an early marriage. “Kid” is used metaphorically to describe the innocence, vulnerability and helplessness of the girl. The repeated use of “killed” and the separate mention of her parents, intensify the degree of exploitation, oppression and abuse. The word “killed” signifies the destruction of her destiny, abuse of her right, the psychological destruction of her self-worth and the overall trauma she is facing. (2009: 154).

Ozah Michael Ozah in his book *Ukwuani Nursery Rhymes*, an introductory anthology of Ukwuani poems (egede) intended to assist children to experience poetry as an integral part of their culture, focuses on nursery rhymes for and sometimes, by children (2015:1). Finding write-ups about indigenous Nigerian lullabies, particularly Ukwuani, is like looking for a needle in a hay stack. This apparent scarcity is leading to the gradual extinction of the Ukwuani lullabies. Today, one finds that there is hardly any formal writing or publication on Ukwuani lullabies and until we turn our intellectual searchlight on them and bring them to the limelight, nothing will be known about them, and they may only exist and die with the few great and older griots who still possess this knowledge.

This study is intended to function as a means of social education on the Ukwuani lullabies. The specific objectives include: to show the significance of the study of Ukwuani lullabies to the development of a

Nigerian society; to evaluate the themes and techniques present in Ukwuani lullabies; and to document Ukwuani lullabies for the benefit of posterity.

It uses the qualitative research method. The primary data was collected in the course of a fieldwork through a series of recorded performance sessions with relevant persons. The recorded lullabies have been subjected to critical content analysis based on their relevance to this research. The lullabies were recorded, transcribed as recorded and transliterated with the assistance of Mrs. Jane Anigala, Mrs. Benedicta Obianugba, and Mr. Andrew Osham, aged 45, 36, and 47 years respectively, they reside at Benin City, Edo State and Obiaruku, Delta State, Nigeria. This research was conducted in Obiaruku and Abraka, located in Delta State, Nigeria. The latter is purely an Ukwuani village while the former is an Urhobo town with many Ukwuani settlers. Ukwuani is a minority ethnic group in Delta state, Nigeria. At most six Ukwuani lullabies will be purposely selected. Ukwuani is a minority dialect in Nigeria, not known to many, their lullabies have been chosen, not only because it is readily available but as a representative of other minority tribes in Nigeria that are not well known which as a result is leading to the gradual extinction of this particular cultural heritage. The lullabies chosen are selected for their relevance to this research in terms of themes and styles, among others.

The theoretical framework for this study is Formalism. Formalist criticism originated in Russia at the dawn of the 20th century mainly through the works of the Moscow Linguistic Circle members such as Roman Jakobson and Viktor Shklovsky. Its main tenet is that a text must be studied as an organic whole without extra-textual analytical methods and tools to avoid the intentional and affective fallacies (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 1946, pp.468-488). In applying Formalist critical theory, the themes, structure and techniques found in a text are analysed and harmonised to form an organic unit in the creation of meaning. Through the concept of defamiliarisation, Formalists believe that literary language is unique in its rights and must be given proper attention in literary analysis (Shklovsky, 2015, p.24). Some of the key Formalist analytical tools that feature in this work are; imagery, symbolism, metaphor, structure, allusion, diction, style, satire, and other literary techniques.

Content and Form of Ukwuani Lullabies

The lullabies will be presented firstly in Ukwuani, then their English transliterations. Their themes and style will be discussed. Subsequent analysis will be carried out referring to them according to their number of presentation. The first Ukwuani lullaby to be examined in this research is rendered in one stanza, and the method of its rendition often varies, according to performer, but it is usually sung with modulation of voice to sooth the baby:

Song 1

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Nwata las<u>u</u> ula</i> | Baby sleep |
| <i>Ba kwa ekwa</i> | Don't cry |
| <i>Ni nne jeni afia</i> | Because your mother went to market |
| <i>Koje gos<u>e</u>ni apampa</i> | To buy you groundnut |
| <i>Ita b<u>o</u>s<u>u</u>ye y<u>e</u>mta</i> | If you eat and leave some give me small |
| <i>Idi ta b<u>o</u>s<u>u</u>ne ya tafu</i> | But if you did not leave any eat it |
| <i>Ni o<u>b</u>u okumo!</i> | It is not my fault! |

This lullaby is didactic and has no particular rhyme scheme. The themes in this lullaby include; responsibility, security, manners and cultural truth. It teaches the child at this early stage the importance of responsibility. As it is the parents responsibility to feed the child and the mother has gone to buy this snack. It is also expected of the child to go to sleep when he/she is supposed to, so as to reduce the strain of the otherwise stressed caregiver. The child is assured of food security, one of the necessities of life. The lullaby also uses this avenue to educate its listeners on one of the produce common to the Ukwuani people “groundnut”, which is a cultural truth.

It also instils a quality of sharing in the child as the performer advises the baby to give out the “leftover” rather than waste it. This is also teaching the child good manners. The lullaby advocates for generosity, as in Africa, communalism is more often than not, practised. It is then advisable to begin this sense of sharing from home before extending it to the society, because ‘charity begins at home.’ The next lullaby has five lines and the dominant theme may be stated as the intensity of a parents love.

Song 2

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>Omakeanna Omakeanna</i> | Most beautiful most beautiful |
| <i>Okani nne nma</i> | More beautiful than mother |
| <i>Okani nne nme</i> | More beautiful than father |
| <i>Omakeanna chuni eso n'ofe</i> | Most beautiful spits into the soup |
| <i>Nwanne lachane</i> | The sister/brother licked |

The Ukwuani lullaby can also be a viable site for intertextual aesthetics. In this respect the relationship between the lullaby and the genre of praise poetry is evident. It is a praise poem that also serves as lullaby. The fact that some lullabies can serve as praise poetry is in agreement with Oluwole Coker's dissertation on Orin Aremo, ('baby rocking song'), a Yoruba genre of oral literature, in relation to a genre like Oriki, Yoruba praise and descriptive poetry. Obviously the parent is very proud of the child, hence the praise title, 'most beautiful', not just plain 'beautiful'. Using the comparative and superlative determiners "more" and "most", this lullaby tells the child of his/her extreme importance to the parents. Listening to this, the child and the audience, if any, is assured that the child is important and loved. According to the performer of the third song under study, this lullaby is a poem sung in different forms across the various minority tribes emerging from Igbo, a majority ethnic group present in different states of Nigeria. It is sung on different occasions including marriage, child naming ceremonies and of course as a lullaby:

Song 3

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Obune si nwam</i> | If not for my child |
| <i>Onye je ke yem</i> | Who is going to give me |
| <i>Obune si nwam</i> | If not for my child |
| <i>Onye je ke yem</i> | Who is going to give me |
| <i>Icho fo ishi</i> | Scarf of head |
| <i>Onye je ke yem</i> | Who is going to give me |
| <i>Ife onu</i> | Something for neck |
| <i>Onye je ke yem</i> | Who is going to give me |
| <i>Ife nti</i> | Something for ear |
| <i>Onye je ke yem</i> | Who is going to give me |

Obune si nwam
Onye je ke yem

If not for my child
 Who is going to give me

This lullaby is rendered in twelve lines with a sustained rhyme scheme, creating a balanced rhythm. The poem discusses the theme, of the importance of children in African culture and the responsibility of the said children. Across different African countries there is a widely held belief that a married woman without a child is not a complete woman. There is a stigma that usually goes with barrenness. So many homes have been broken due to lack of children. More often than not, in Africa, when a couple has been married for a while with no signs of children, people, including the family members talk, and most of the talk is bad. Since communalism is practised, this talk gets to the woman as for the most part the blame is placed on her. She is shamed in the community; her home is also made uncomfortable as there is the likelihood that her spouse will take on a second wife. In some cases, she will be kicked out because she is deemed ‘less-than-a-woman.’

Among her peers, she might be scorned secretly and sometimes openly. Thus the poet persona asks who would give her ‘head-tie’, if not for her child. As she has her child to do it for her, the audience hears the joy and pride, in the words of the persona, in her having a child of her own.

The theme of responsibility is also explored in this poem. The responsibility of the child to his/her parent is explicitly stated in the lullaby as the child is expected to grow up and provide for the parents when they grow old and are unable to provide for themselves. It is the children that are expected to provide, hence in the lullaby, it is the child that is responsible for delivering the ‘head-tie’, ‘necklace’ and ‘earrings’ for the mother.

The next lullaby is an entertaining poem with an up-beat rhythm that is expected to stop a child from crying or get the child excited enough to sleep, a paradoxical view, but nevertheless tenable.

Song 4

Nwa nnunu na tu nkpọr, nkpọr!

Little bird is hopping and
 hopping!

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Sα ìshí kem kem kem, nkpor</i> | Nodding its head nod nod nod, hopping |
| <i>Sα odudu wēlechēm wēn wēn, nkpor</i> | Shaking its tail shake shake, hopping |
| <i>Wēlechēm wēn, wēlechēm wēn!</i> | Shaking shake shaking shake! |

The theme of the importance fun and happiness is explored. The singer is accompanied by the constant echoing of “nkpor” by the audience. For the little bird to be involved in all manner of acrobatic dancing, it has to be happy. Because dancing is something that is usually done when someone is happy, reasons for this happiness may vary. It is this joyous sense that the performer tries to pass unto the child, to get him/her happy, as it might be easier to fall asleep peacefully, when one is happy.

The fifth Ukwuani lullaby is different in theme and style from the previous poems. It espouses ideas like communal living, making reference to a common soup of the people, assuring the child and the audience of food security and love of the parents.

The lullaby is a song with eight lines. It is another popular lullaby sung in different forms, with different variants among the Igbo people. The difference between them is usually the spelling. For instance, if you want to say “bring Uziza” in Aniocha (a minority Igboid group in Delta state, Nigeria), it is “wete Uziza”. But in Ukwuani, it is “wese Uziza”. It has the theme of security, happiness, cultural appreciation and communal life etched within it:

Song 5

| | |
|--|---|
| <i>Onye mu ni nwa nakw ekwa</i> | Who gave birth to the child that is crying |
| <i>Egba muni anakite nwaoke</i> | Vulture gave birth to the crying child |
| <i>Wese Uziza, wese Uda,</i> | Bring native leaves, bring Negro pepper, |
| <i>Wese akpa Onye muni nwa nakw ekwa</i> | Bring the bag of lizard male |
| <i>Umu nmunu na le eka</i> | Children of birds lick hands |

| | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Nbuka ni anakite gbani baye ugboko</i> | Rat and lizard run into the bush. |
| <i>Uwa o egwu joo</i> | World, dance of joo |
| <i>Jojo egwu joo</i> | Jojo dance of joo |

Food security is addressed in this poem as is evidenced in the cultural food being prepared. To stop the child from crying the performer asks for Uziza and Uda, a native leaf and a local spice used in cooking soup. All these draw attention to the importance of children being well-fed, for them to be healthy and happy. This brings us to the theme of happiness, this is evident in the dance of ‘joo’, leading to the idiom, “all work and no play...,” so when the children start to play, ‘rat’ and ‘lizard’ run away, as they are prime targets, for little kids’s sport. In a way, the performer is already passing down a very important message especially if it is a girl child or female children. How to cook like the traditional women as well as a call to start early in training their females on the importance of knowing how to cook. In the song, the child is invited to stop crying, eat, and play, but not alone.

This is where communal life comes in, the word “children”, as used by the performer, could be interpreted to mean the invitation of, not only the crying child, but other children in the compound or area, to eat together, and after they “lick hands” from eating the sweet native soup, they are encouraged to play together, chasing rats and lizards, and dancing the “dance of joo”. This evokes a typical life of growing up in a communal setting. The sixth lullaby has a couplet rhyme scheme (-a-a-b-b-c-c). It uses atmosphere, metaphor, style, and tone to suggest a theme of love and care:

Song 6

| | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <i>Basikolo, Nwaigwe, Nwaigwe, Nwaigwe</i> | Bicycle, small bicycle (3x) |
| <i>Basikolo, Nwaigwe, Nwaigwe, Nwaigwe</i> | Bicycle, small bicycle (3x) |
| <i>Ba kwa ekwa,</i> | Don’t cry, |
| <i>Nwata lasu ula</i> | Baby sleep |
| <i>Mili agaje-zue</i> | Rain is about to fall |
| <i>Mili agaje-zue</i> | Rain is about to fall |

It may be interpreted in several ways, one, the personae wants the baby to go to sleep because it is about to rain. Sometimes when there is threat of rainfall, the day becomes dark, and the atmosphere becomes cool, the mood is more or less mellow. The performer sings of this cool weather, with the aim presumably being, to calm the child, and lull it to a peaceful slumber.

Again, the child might be crying because he wants to play in the rain outside, but his mother, calling him ‘small bicycle’, prevents him, pointing out the dangerous turn the weather is about to take. Due to the love and care a mother has for her offspring, she protects him, from both, the weather and from himself, because as it is said, “Mother knows best.”

The Language of Selected Ukwuani Lullabies

The choice of language a poet uses is called poetic diction. Poetic diction is achieved using different devices. Devices here, refer to techniques employed in the lullabies, to evoke certain emotional or physical response from the child and audience. The poetic devices to be discussed in this chapter are: repetition, use of refrains, musical phrases, symbolism, vivid imagery, rhetorical question, exclamation, allusion, hyperbole, personification, and metaphor.

The use of repetition is very common in the selected Ukwuani lullabies. This device helps lull the baby either to sleep, calmness or makes the baby stop crying. It can also make the baby start babbling in response to the music thereby aiding in the child’s language development. For easy understanding, all the lullabies that make use of this device will be interrogated in a table summary and then explained thereafter.

| Song 1 | Song 2 | Song 3 | Song 4 | Song 5 |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Nwata lasu ɔla Ba kwa ɛkwa The /æ/ vowel = Assonance. | Omanma Omanma Okani nnɛ nma Okani nnɛ nme Word (ln 1) and sentence repetition (ln 2/3). | Qbune si nwam Onye je ke yem Constantly repeated = Refrain. | Nkpɔ (Triplet rhyme) = ln 1-2- 3/ kem = ln 2/ Wɛlɛchɛm wɛn = ln 3-4. | Onye muni nwa nakw ɛkwa Egba muni nwa nakw ɛkwa Ln 1-2. Word repetition = Wese/ egwu joo. |

From the Table above, different forms of repetition has been employed in the various lullabies to achieve diverse effects. In Song 1, it is for

rhythm and flow. It makes the song soothing as it lulls the baby to sleep. In Song 2, the repetition of the word “Omakekama” and sentence “Okani nne nma” in the second line with a slight variation in the third line, is for emphasis as well as aesthetics, the performer wants to live the child beyond doubt, that she is the most beautiful and so she has no need to be sad or to cry. The refrain in Song 3, helps to convey the emotional message of the mother’s joy and pride she has in her offspring. Her “child”, has saved her from all manner of unrest, disgrace and shame, the reality of her having a child causes her, —not just to herself, but to anyone that is listening— to repeat it as many times as is possible. While creating a rhythmic flow, it also aids in highlighting the perceived duty of children —to take care of their parents in their dotage.

Song 4 is made interesting by the “wave-like recurrence of sounds in...a unique phenomenon”, which is rhythm, in the lullaby (Dasyuva and Jegede, 2005, p.15). It has a rhyme scheme—a sequence of three...rhyming lines, this develops the musical quality of the lullaby (p.17). The first two lines in Song 5 are repeated for their musical effect of grabbing attention and promoting memorization. It makes the performer feel safe, as she is likely to remember her lines, and the child safe, as he is likely to fall asleep to a set rhythm, as well as leave the audience satisfied, as they can easily join in the performance of the simple lullaby

Several types of imagery are used in the lullabies for various purposes, including, but not limited to, animal imagery, nature imagery, agricultural imagery, and a touch of scatological imagery. Animal imagery is arguably, a favourite usage in Ukwuani lullabies, as we find in some of the songs presented. In Song 4, a “little bird” is hopping, nodding and shaking, this picture creates a fun atmosphere for the child and listeners. In Song 5, “Rat and lizard run into the bush” (line 5). Here, the image it creates, is a familiar environment for the child, since sightings of these animals are a usual occurrence in a given compound. Nature imagery has to do with the use of natural phenomenon in creative writing. In Song 6, a weather imagery, rain, is used to fuel the driving theme. The image of a changing weather, from either sunshine or a cloudy day to rain, is transplanted into the minds of the child and the listeners, and when the picture takes root, it should help convince anyone to listen to the performer and have a peaceful, cool sleep.

In Song 6, we are introduced to a direct comparison between a child and a bicycle. “Small bicycle”, is a metaphor for the child, as is evident in the performer asking the bicycle not to “cry”. Also “Rain is about to fall”, could be a metaphor for an ominous event, not necessarily rain fall. A popular saying goes thus, “when it rains it pours”, rainfall has been associated with some unpleasant experiences, so the composer might just be issuing out a warning to the child and audience to avoid danger. The bird in Song 5 is metaphorical for the parents: “Children of birds lick hands” (line 4). The child crying in Song 5 is directly compared to the offspring of a vulture, and it can be agreed that no one wants themselves or their loved ones to be physically likened to a vulture.

The choice of the machine, “bicycle”, in Song 6, to describe the child, could symbolise the mode of transportation that was common at the time the lullaby was composed. Song 3 has previously been extensively discussed, where it was stated that, among the Ukwuani people, only married women are expected to tie scarfs to cover their hair, in honour of their husbands. So the “Scarf of head”, symbolises the status of the woman in the lullaby. “Something for ear” (earring) and “Something for neck” (necklace) (lines 7 and 9), symbolise the luxury a child is expected to bestow on his/her mother in due time. The “Little bird” dancing in Song 4, could be said to represent a little child playing, as children are often known, to be energetic and hyperactive when they are toddlers. So, the performer could be referring to a child, and not any bird.

A “bicycle” is personified to have the human ability to cry, in Song 6. It is an inanimate object that is ‘asked’, not to ‘cry’, “Bicycle, small bicycle.../Do not cry” (lines 1 and 3). Song 5 portrays a bird as having human qualities: “Vulture gave birth to the child that is crying” (line 2), “Children of birds lick hands” (line 4).

Song 2 uses hyperbole with the end-game to heighten the poems result, so the audience knows it is an overstatement but the intense feeling is achieved, even with the improbability of the statement. The child’s beauty is exaggerated to the point where she “spits into the soup” (line 4), and her siblings “licked it”. It is usually next to impossible for a human being in his or her right mind, to witness another person, blood relation or not, spit into a food or drink, and still consume it. In fact,

some people purposely spit into their food in view of others to avoid sharing.

Conclusion

This work has examined the content and form of Ukwuani lullabies. It is predicated on the need for African oral traditions and literature to be preserved and appreciated. Ukwuani oral literature has received some measure of attention over the years, like Ozah's *Ukwuani Nursery Rhymes* that has been mentioned, but its lullabies have not received ample critical attention. This research engages selected lullabies after a fieldwork which involved recording and transcribing some Ukwuani lullabies. Lullabies are cultural treasures so precious that we cannot afford ignoring them. Consequently it should not be forgotten that singing lullabies is not a new method in the education of children and is used very effectively. It is very easy to see how singing indigenous lullabies can be a great way to bond with your child, calm both parent and baby down, and help babies feel regulated, soothed, comfortable, and secure. When the child grows older you would notice them singing the same lullabies to their pets or younger ones, and when they grow to have children of their own such lullabies would be passed on to them and so forth, thus teaching and preserving the culture, Ukwuani lullabies. One can say that Ukwuani lullabies have literary merit due to the universality of its themes, such as, food security, respect of elders, love of parents, etc. as well as its poetic form. Even though this paper has attempted to document some songs, it is imperative to note that Ukwuani has a rich arsenal of lullabies and other forms of oral poetry which are yet to receive ample critical attention. The recommendation here is that further research should be undertaken on Ukwuani oral literary forms.

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