

DANCING OUT A NATION'S STATE OF PITY AND  
AMUSEMENT: KELANI'S RETELLING OF OGUNDE'S  
YORUBA RONU<sup>1</sup>

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Abstract

This article dispenses with the continuing dialogue on Tunde Kelani, as a filmmaker with a conscience and one who strives at discussing the on-going political quagmires, which have instigated reactionary movements and forces to clamour for an ideal leadership suitable for the appropriate governing of Nigeria. Tunde Kelani's major works are politically committed and illustrate contemporary issues and politics as well as critique the inevitable conundrum of corruption. In this paper there is an affirmation that with Kelani's adaptation of Hubert Ogunde's Yoruba Ronu, the imaginative communication in the context of dance has become a means for him to examine issues with the aid of the visual elements of film. Dance is employed in addressing a faulty political system in Tunde Kelani's adaptation, Yoruba E Ronu. With music, song, drama, dialogue, mime and poetry and the artistry of dance on screen, Kelani's postcolonial logic is further buttressed in his tenacity as an auteur filmmaker who is highly concerned about the very nature and consequences of Nigeria's ossified political system.

Keywords: Tunde Kelani, Hubert Ogunde, Yoruba Ronu, Dance, Film, Yoruba E Ronu, Auteurism, Cinema of conscience

Introduction

This paper considers the rare but inextricable link between dance and film studies, philosophy and meaning, and the significance of dance to the matters concerning postcolonial leadership and political issues and themes in the works of Tunde Kelani. Kelani's filmic oeuvres are steeped in Yoruba tradition. In special instances as well there are inherent celebratory and felicitous performances. As an experienced cultural advocate his screen works show how much he is well versed

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in the exegesis of Yoruba philosophical worldview and cosmology. His penchant for producing politically inspired films has recently encouraged him to produce a re-write through the very art of film, as inspired by the power of dance, of Hubert Ogunde's 1963 political song and play, *Yoruba Ronu*.

*Yoruba Ronu* was first inspired as a song which became a slogan for the then first republic party, Nigerian National Democratic Party that ruled the former Western Region of Nigeria in place of the Action Group Party after the fallout between Obafemi Awolowo and Chief Akintola. Against the backdrop of this unfortunate disagreement between the two leaders, Hubert Ogunde composed the song and eventually turned it to a play in order to instigate and foster a reunion among the Yoruba ethnic group to avoid any form of antipathy that would destroy the unity. Efun Clark's report on the inspirational song and dramatic enactment is relevant in this section:

Ogunde's aim in composing the song 'Yoruba Ronu' was to ask Yoruba people to unite once again to become one of the most powerful and prosperous groups in Nigeria. Given the political atmosphere of that period, the recording of the song became immensely popular. (389)

Much like Hubert Ogunde Tunde Kelani's attention is also drawn to the present situation of the Nigerian political quagmires, and the kind of division that has occurred among the Yoruba people in recent times where factionalized politics has become the mainstream practice. Beyond this, Tunde Kelani's version: *Yoruba E Ronu* comes in the form of a film production with an admixture and composite marriage of dance, music, dialogue, poetry, and so on. Therefore, not only does this version speak to or criticize the Yoruba ethnic group but all other ethnic groups in the country. The film preaches orderliness and a call to all to dialogue as one nation in spite of our ethnic and religious differences

### Understanding the Concept of Dance: A cursory Survey

Dance can be seen as a social art much like theatre, music and drama. This is because such a performance art is actually brought to life by people and professionals who understand the excitement, meaning and potential that come with it when getting involved. Dance can be complex and demanding. It has the potential 'to sensitize the society on how such a society can harvest developmental benefits through the art of dance' (Ugolo 232). This kind of sensitization is observed at

several instances in the cinematic conventions and experimentations of Tunde Kelani's works where dance is employed to intermingle with every other art form. Dance is also a visual art, and because we can see those who painstakingly partake in it, it then becomes more lucid to understand why dance is also a structured and stylized movement in time and space.

Within the Nigerian scheme of artistic and social conceptions, dance by default will involve music. In addition to this, "the Nigerian traditional context of dance will also include: gymnastics, mime and acrobatics structured to or orchestrated by music" (Nzewi 4-5). Dance is a cultural art because it is relative to an individual society and has the tendency to be dynamic in its functional reflection of that society and its culture. Like every other art, it is shaped by the culture of the people who give it birth and form. This is why Gbemisola Adeoti has rightly observed that, "what exists is a common notion of dance as a functional and purposeful manipulation of the body in a rhythmic manner, expressing personal identity and cultural association" (19).

Dance is a form of communication and, it involves in this case, the efficiency of those who are capable of interpreting 'steps' and 'choreographed' movements to pass across a message. Therefore, it is very significant to say that like drama, film, and music, dance is the imaginative communication of significant experiences. Given the subtext of this essay, therefore, the fusion of all the arts then comes in handy as a body of composite means of communication. Dance, drama, music, dialogue, speech, rhetoric, and poetry are all fused together to add up and complement the filmic components recorded with a video camera and presented to a mass audience who then views and consumes the message. With the potentials of each component that constitutes and enhances the filmic medium, and as explicated by dance scholar and critic and playwright, Felix Akinsipe, what is observed is, "a kind of common fusion of music, dance and drama and other related arts. Indeed these elements are so interwoven in the traditional performing arts that the absence of one renders the whole performance incomplete and in most cases unacceptable to the people" (224).

To affirm Akinsipe's claim, it is extremely important to make reference here and particularly to Tunde Kelani, who in his major works employs the tools of the total theatre conventions. His reminiscences of and contact with practitioners of the Yoruba travelling theatre groups of the 1950s and 1960s only attest to the fact that he has a penchant for and commitment to using local tropes to examine and explore significant issues of immense concern in his films, much like they were expressed in the performances of the former mainstream travelling troupes, during the early practices of the theatre on wheels in Nigeria.

In Kelani's cinematic conventions, there are specificities of the travelling troupes that find sufficient space for effective operation. Prominent among these cinematic oeuvres (and also within the frame and subtext of this paper) are *Campus Queen*, *Saworo Ide*, *The Narrow Path* and *Arugba*. All four works accommodate a great deal of measure of the total popular African theatre (Kerr 92), and performance strategies (Olaniyan 2), which constitute the Yoruba enclaves. These elements of the dramatic and the performance also function sufficiently and significantly as tropes with semiotic meanings at various and specific levels. Not only do they perform these functions for the purpose of enjoyment, but also they subversively challenge Western hegemonic traditions, conventions and, theorizing universally accepted paradigms and standards in order to formulate a set of local ideas and concepts of irreducible Africanness.

#### Tunde Kelani and the Universe of his Films

Tracing my journey in the medium of filmmaking, my main inspiration comes from my cultural experience. For example, I am immersed in a fusion of folklore. Yoruba literature, philosophy, art design, dance, music, drama, etc. (Kelani 2)

It is evident that Tunde Kelani's personality as an auteur of longstanding is indicative of the filmic oeuvre he has so far painstakingly produced in the last two and a half decades and are also specifically dedicated to highlighting and analyzing the numerous discourses that surround our impressions of the socio-political issues of Nigeria and he does this in the most perceptive, sensitive and conscious manner. His commitment to the problems of Nigeria can be likened to writers and dramatists like Wole Soyinka, John Pepper Clark, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Niyi Osundare and Kole Omoso, among others, who have devoted a lot of their literatures to such political and social problems. This group of writers are also well educated in the Yoruba cosmological episteme, and such aspects of the Yoruba worldview are also present in the works of Kelani. That is why he believes that when he traces his journey in the medium of filmmaking his inspirations are drawn from "cultural experience ... I am immersed in a fusion of folklore, Yoruba literature, philosophy, art design, dance, music, drama etc." (Kelani 2)

There is no other filmmaker in Nigeria that devotes his ingenuity and talent to addressing issues of political concerns as much as Kelani

does. This is remarkably true because his works however steeped in the Yoruba cultural matrix, are geared towards postulating an agenda in the creation of an ideal society; top on the agenda of all third cinema makers. His career did not begin from filmmaking, but rather photography; taking pictures of people, places, communities and events, festivals that were embedded within the structures and epistemology of the Yoruba life and schemes of social existence. It was this fascination towards the power of images and the rhetorical potentials of visuals that instigated and encouraged this phenomenal cineaste to venture into the art of filmmaking, a profession that has made him one of the most important figures in Africa, and that has also singled him out as a foremost filmmaker and marked him out exceptionally as a 'politically committed' cineaste, at the forefront of politically driven film concepts and artistes alike.

I discovered photography from my primary school days. I had seen my first mobile cinema when they came to my school and I can remember some of the images of the first film that I saw. Because I missed my mother I would come to the front of the whole compound and sit all by myself and watch the taxis (Morris Minors) zooming past. I noticed the shadows of women returning from Iberekodo market, thrown across the side of the barber's shop. When a car approached I could see them with the shapes of their baskets balanced on their heads, bobbing up and down the wall, and I could see the speed as the car pulled along the wall, they moved faster until they disappeared completely, only to start again when another approached. These were the kinds of early images that I had in my head, so I suppose it would not be possible to ignore all that. (Kelani in Haynes 3)

It is possible to assert that Tunde Kelani's experiences at taking pictures partly shaped his idea about filmmaking. His training as a cinematographer at the London Film School in England was a plus to gather good enough experience at becoming acquainted with the technical know-how, since he had already started out as a Technical Camera Assistant at the Western Nigerian Television. Although, on his return back to the country everything had changed completely

and the adventurous hope of working more professionally with the celluloid was dashed, as it became "rather too expensive to manage and make films on celluloid" (Ekwuazi 27). It is the death of celluloid filmmaking in Nigeria that led to the gradual emergence of the Nollywood (Esonwanne 27).

The evolution of the video technology saw the involvement of non-artists and business men and women investing a great deal and heavily on film, using the video cameras; what Tunde Kelani has conceptually described as 'the alternative technology'. This is the technology that has also made his works popular and shaped his idea at producing quality productions; "all of which he arguably and distinctively identified as not essentially Nollywood" (Onikoyi 69-70). In the hope of making a splendid mark around the current trends and practices in Nollywood, Tunde Kelani's decision to make films out of literatures became the necessary condition for what he thought good filmmaking should look like. For him, these were ready made works that any filmmaker could "engage with and scripting for the screen, especially as they illustrated issues that affected one's immediate society" (Kerr 92). Filmmakers of the typical Nollywood genres do not adapt literatures and most of them have actually complained that demands for such serious task of recreation of literature for screen were artistically and financially demanding. Technically, the art of adaptation was extremely demanding and time consuming for the crop of filmmakers who birthed Nollywood. Such enormous considerations could not have been fancied by a set of philistine-mindset marketers and mutinies whose sole aim had been occasioned by the sheer profiteering inclination that followed the mass production of slipshod and badly made films.

For the serious minded filmmaker who was fully aware of the advantages of adaptation, the retelling of a literary source was nothing more than a welcome idea for reinterpreting the deeply rooted historical, cultural, sociological, anthropological and political experiences of familiar societies. Take for instance, Kongi's Harvest (1965), a play written by Wole Soyinka. Because of the subject that dealt with the problem of political leadership which it treated, it became a ready template for the socially and politically inclined filmmaker to adapt for the screen. The play is steeped in the discourse of some kind of revolutionary ethos and clamours for an agenda towards socio-political change by attacking "corruption, the empty rhetoric of political sloganeering, the manipulation of the mass media to legitimize dictatorship and the cult of personality" (Kerr 93).

It was not surprising that film producer and director, Francis Oladele and his American colleague, Ossie Davies (now late) respectively

decided in 1970, under the Calpenny Film Production Company, to produce the book (Kongi's Harvest) into a film on celluloid. Tunde Kelani's decision to also make films out of literary sources is not surprising too. Arguably, Kelani seems to be the last of the surviving practitioners of the mainstream celluloid technology, and one significant figure who manages to merge his experiences as a celluloid technologist with the alternative technology to create highly rated films and adaptations. The adaptations and works produced by Tunde Kelani and considered as productions of immense quality include *Ina* (1985), which was adapted from *Idamu Paadi Minkailu*, written by Bayo Faleti; *Kosegbe* (1995), adapted from Akinwunmi Ishola's book of the same title; *The White Handkerchief* (1988), adapted from a book entitled, *The Virgin*, written by Bayo Adebawale; *Thunderbolt Magun* (2000), adapted from a novel by Bayo Faleti, *The Whore with the Thunderbolt AIDS*; *The Narrow Path* (2006), adapted in full and in collaboration with Ni'ji Akanji, from *The Virgin*, again by Bayo Adebawale; *Maa mi* (2010), adapted from Femi Osofisan's novella and auto-biography of the same title; *Dazzling Mirage* (2014), adapted from Yinka Elhokare's novel of the same title; and recently, (the present paper's case study, *Yoruba E Ronu* (2014), a musical dance adaptation of Hubert Ogunde's classic Yoruba *Ronu*).

### Theoretical Framework

What will be considered here is the postcolonial theory, with one of its most critical approaches amongst a plethora. This approach is not from a Eurocentric notion of the theory which addresses the encounter between the colonized subjects and the imperialists. In this context, the postcolonial theory is employed from the point of view of reactionary scholars, theorists and critics who address the potentials of the theory at emphasizing the 'critique-home' paradigm. That is to say, exploring a situation where the theory is able to examine links between African cultures in the light of their shared history and in relation to accounting for the neo-colonial engagements. For instance, issues of dictatorship, political instability, economic instability, corruption, despotism in Africa and the kind of resistance exhibited by those who suffer from such negative political tendencies.

The thrust of this approach does not, privilege, as Kenyan Tomaselli would later put it, "old truths" concerning "developed-underdeveloped" and "core and periphery" regions, as the "reality of disparity and inequalities persists" (12). Such an approach of the postcolonial in its own terrain also addresses what Michael Chapman observes as an interrogation of "the constitution of 'own' culture, stasis, bounded; ... It examines themes of exile, belonging and non-belonging,

identity, orality and indigenous languages in modernity... (and more significantly) African constructions of themselves" (19). In simple clarity and coherence, this is exactly what Nollywood tries to offer as an agenda.

The notion again insists on transcending the possibility of using mainstream Western ideas, logic and paradigms to explain or analyze African films. This thrust of the postcolonial theory is drawn from Arun Mukherjee's 'writing-home' paradigm which essentially advocates for an entirely socio-political critique of the goings-on within one's immediate society. The theorist criticizes and argues against the 'Empire Writing Back' model, which sees a whole lot of writers of postcolonial societies embark upon such a continuity of over flogged journey of writing back. Mukherjee interrogates post colonialism by exposing the problems associated with the group /canopy theorizing by 'all postcolonial theorists who insist on talking about all postcolonial cultures' within the culture of selectivity of issues of identity, hybridity, creolization, subversion of imperial text and language, parody and mimicry which connote the 'Negritude and Pan African instances.' The significance, therefore, in critiquing the postcolonial in order to 'write home' becomes crucial to the ongoing discourse.

Yemi Atanda's critique and examination of Arun Mukherjee's approach foregrounds this crucial and urgent reception when he points out that such a position is easily inspired by "the Caribbean Canadian writer Dionne Brand while interrogating Derek Walcott's works in her poetry with the affirmation of writing home instead of writing back" (164-165). Given the foregoing, in this regard, there is an urgent need to suggest, as Mukherjee does, a creation of a discursive arena, where postcolonial theorists and creative artistes can aim to direct their interest and attention, such that they will be obliged to investigate their immediate postcolonial society. This advocacy is crucial to the survival of documentation of the contemporary issues within societies; rather than relying heavily on stereotypic narrow brand of the literary texts.

Atanda's paper seems very relevant to the present discussion of Kelani's forte and to the thrust of this paper. However, while employing the writing home paradigm as instituted by Arun Mukerjee to analyze Kelani's recent attempt, Arugba, Atanda failed to draw attention to the nativist concept of Kelani's works. This 'nativist concept' is very significant in that it resourcefully helps in the understanding of how functional the cultural and traditional tropes are, and which Kelani employs in distilling his aesthetics in a large body of films. Atanda does not address in full this significant part of the postcolonial requirements and of artistic demands which, as a matter of fact,



constitute, to a very large extent, some of the requirements needed to come to terms with the Mukherjee approach (167). This is because it solidifies the toehold of Mukherjee's approach to the purposes of the discourse of post-colonial studies, and with regard to the challenges most postcolonial societies like Nigeria experience.

### An Explication of Tunde Kelani's Yoruba E Ronu from the Point of View of the Postcolonial Critic of the Writing/ Shooting Home Paradigm

In what we refer to as the postcolonial African cinema there is a meticulous intention by the Nigerian Auteur to deliberately anchor the process message embedded in his short musical-dance political film. By placing the production within the earlier discussed theoretical framework (writing/shooting home paradigm), the assertion here sustains the argument that Kelani in this film not only critically addresses a common problem in Nigeria, but artistically employs native-traditional arts, tropes, and elements to drive home his points. The subtext here is that Tunde Kelani deliberately confronts and addresses a national problem with dance movements that are peculiar to the Yoruba people and as a veritable vehicle through which the auteur again reminds us of his innovation, uniqueness, worldliness and rootedness in traditional culture.

Yoruba E Ronu is a direct parody of Hubert Ogunde's classic musical-dance drama Yoruba Ronu. Concerned with the state of Nigeria's political situation and the resultant intrigues, Tunde Kelani's decision to produce a short film that comes in the form of a musical-dance presentation is seen as Kelani's continuing of a patriotic and passionate act for the genuine survival and development of his country. He has also affirmed that by producing this adaptation of Hubert Ogunde's classic and satirical drama, he is critiquing the excesses and the antipathy that exist between various Yoruba groups in the present political dispensation. Another part that begs for explication is that the film also generalizes in his criticism of every other ethnic group in Nigeria: Hausas, Igbos, and other minority groups perhaps, as he implores all to put an end to the various rivalries that constantly truncate the progress of the country. Above all, he believes strongly that by reproducing the classic he is also invariably paying a tribute to the late doyen of the arts and the tremendous contributions he had made to the growth and reputation of the social histories of the arts.

## Hubert Ogunde's Yoruba Ronu vis-à-vis Tunde Kelani's Yoruba E Ronu

The attainment of moral standards is very crucial to the many works that were produced by Hubert Ogunde. His style was a combination of satirical overtones with allegorical milieu, and this play *Yoruba Ronu*, in particular, is a major work that was politically inspired in 1963. It has on the surface a historical theme analyzing a nineteenth-century defection by Field Marshal Afonja of Ilorin from the authority of the Alafin of Oyo, Oba Fiwajoye. Afonja allies himself with the invading Fulanis, but is eventually killed by the people of Ilorin. Oba Fiwajoye is reinstated on the throne, the Fulani are expelled and the Oba brings a renewed era of prosperity. Although, *Yoruba Ronu* is based on real events of history, it met with a lot of serious setbacks, which were prone to reactionary artistes who dared to challenge state functionaries and perhaps un-constituted authorities in post-colonial milieus. In spite of the play's traditional aesthetic premises, it had some relevance that was essentially modern. David Kerr's lucid and affirmative description is useful in this regard:

The plot was accepted as a thinly disguised allegory about post-independence politics in Nigeria's Western Region. Oba Fiwajoye was identified with Chief Awolowo, the leader of the Western Region Action Group. The defection of his deputy was paralleled by the creation in 1962 of a splinter party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party led by Chief Akintola, away from the Action Group and in alliance with the Northern and Federal politicians. (92)

The consequences that followed Ogunde's enactment of the play are well-known. But as important as the outcome of those events appeared to be, they are not significant to this explication or the entire essay. What is of greater concern is how Hubert Ogunde's *Yoruba Ronu* has been transformed into a film production of the same musical-dance drama. The work is timely, and yet timeless. And it is because of its timelessness that Kelani chose to attempt an adaptation of the work with regard to its genuine intent and relevance.

The imaginative and creative strength of Tunde Kelani's version, *Yoruba E Ronu* innovatively replicates the various antipathies in the Ogunde version and also depicts the same antipathies that exist even among all the ethnic groups; but mostly it interrogates the hateful manners and revelations that occur inter-ethnically. Through a whole

plethora of different dynamic dance steps and situational movements of meaningful rhetoric, certain aesthetic strategies for understanding the plot develop, since it relies on the artistry of the dancers who produce them. These movements of dance are well choreographed and they also manifest in manifold forms such as: combative movements, reactionary movements, movements of hatred, movements of inhibition, movements of uproar, movements that instigate, etc. We also notice the gradual emergence, flow, retention and sustenance of the movements of conscience; movements that seek friendship, movements that seek lasting peace or, that show the subjects in their helpless state, placating (an) imaginary god(s) to come to their aid. Like Hubert Ogunde's classic, Tunde Kelani also adopts the same 'rhetorical reasoning as a symbol of getting at the moral behind the appearance of the physical present, namely, a political situation which developed among the Yoruba wherein one political leader betrayed another only to score a mere political advantage. With an entertaining medium of dance and music, Tunde Kelani depicts situations of combat, and a state of anarchy in a society in need of urgent transformation. His version is a clear broadening of Ogunde's classic and he makes the presentation so perfect without disrupting the intended process message. The film begins with an establishing shot of a market square in a supposed and obvious Yoruba milieu. The appearance of every single person is deplorable. There is a composite element of sadness, squalor, abject poverty and lack. This scene is constantly juxtaposed with close shots of two opposing groups who are distinctively dressed in different costumes. One group seeks the votes of the electorates at the arena. The other group, in combative postures, disrupts their campaign, and discourages the electorates from voting for the first group.

In a series of boastful songs and poetry, accompanied with dance steps that illustrate such boastfulness, the first group reacts to the various verbal attacks from the other group, whom they assume does not have the guts to stop them from campaigning. Using various songs with colourful poetry and lineage-derived oral corpus that measure up with the dance steps, the illustration of such reactions from the opposition are also equally glaring. They are full of confidence and also show that, they possess the will power to withstand the presumptuousness of the boastful group without cowering. While these groups continue in their quarrelsome display, simultaneously another scene shows a group of custodians of tradition (priests and priestesses), in a measured procession, heading for a massive rock, where they retrieve a big calabash. As they begin to make a movement away in the same manner as they arrived, a quick jump-cut reveals

the groups as they engage in a free-for-all, beating and inflicting injuries upon themselves. As this scene goes on, another jump-cut reveals a young man who also looks like a traditional custodian, observes from above the fighting subjects and shakes his head in bewilderment. He breaks into a song that reflects the show of shame of these groups who he refers to as Yorubas.

His song emphasizes the past; how the people of Yoruba extraction were once respected for their unparalleled integrity, education and unrivalled wisdom. He criticizes them for their present involvement in what was considered a series of taboo; taking lives, stealing, and engaging in all sorts of corrupt practices, on the strength of acquiring political power and wealth. There is a constant accusation of greed and a will to kill because of power, rather than seek after love and unity among themselves. From the artistic angle one can observe that the figure of the young man looking down upon the fighting subjects is like an intermediary between the gods and the people. He speaks to the gods to intervene in the ongoing matter that has boxed the Yoruba people into a space of disadvantage and outright humiliation. The figure pleads on the people's behalf to restore them back to their former place as reasonable people of leadership qualities that can coordinate an entire race towards a call to coexist as a meaningful society.

Gradually, the sequence shows an approaching entourage of the earlier procession of priests and priestesses. There is a leader among them, who carries a palm frond while another carries the big calabash which is perhaps filled with water. As the two groups observe the approaching procession they find themselves in a position where they are forced to respond reasonably to the custodians of tradition, and gradually cling together into one communal group. At this point, their dance movements become rather peaceful and coordinated; depicting a sense of unity which the intermediary craves for. The procession has by this time gathered among them. They perform some *etutu* (rituals) and sprinkle water upon the group and the entire community.

At the end, there is restored peace and everyone has a sense of starting all over again to coexist as a community; a motif that usually permeates every single politically inspired work of Tunde Kelani and a kind of reassurance that, in spite of the challenges of a nation, there is hope that those challenges will one day become a relic of history. Such a meta-narrative only registers Kelani as the most respected auteur who sustains his film with such *élan vital*. The leader of the procession in the art of mime points to each and every one to engage in meaningful reasoning together, to live as one by imploring each and every member of the community to desist from any form of immoral

act that could truncate the peace and harmony among them; a *sine-qua-non* to a progressive and forward looking society.

### Kelani's Use of Dance and other Aesthetics in Yoruba E Ronu

In Yoruba E Ronu there is a celebration of all the cultural aesthetics that are located in all Yoruba traditional societies, and that are evidently present in the political economy of lifestyle among the Alarinjo travelling theatre performers of the 1950s and 1960s of which Ogunde himself was an important member during his formative years as a theatre practitioner. Since these elements were crucial to their thriving performances, it is significant to note that enough evidences have shown that Tunde Kelani is extremely influenced by the aesthetics of Hubert Ogunde vis-a-vis the Alarinjo theatre groups. Not only does he retain the local tropes (where functional dance plays a prominent role) but further enhances these tropes to function as the medium through which the process message in Yoruba E Ronu is adequately told. Dance as employed in the film is not only functional as an aesthetic but also complements, to a very large extent, the visual rhetoric of the film, and contributes immensely to the varied functions of the cinematic components.

The essence of the cinema of conscience is also observed in the film and more specifically Tunde Kelani drives home his politics and post-coloniality as a socially committed filmmaker. One is likely to understand that dance, as a motif, appears to have become a prominent traditional motif and aesthetic that recur in most of Kelani's narratives, much more than any other aesthetic element. Much like Hubert Ogunde, Tunde Kelani's employment of dance is very eclectic, and this is as a result of his patriotic passion to reinvent culture and tradition. This act of reinvention enables Kelani, to confront the challenges of ethnicity and cultural identity. As a cultural advocate, Tunde Kelani is very much aware of the significance of dance in the Yoruba society and how it functions in many ways. It serves as an integral part of community life which takes on several social functions that are at times closely connected with customs and rites. It serves as a means of social organization among the African people.

Like most of Tunde Kelani's works, Yoruba E Ronu is like a combination of so many things. At once it comes in the form of a complex metaphor, a complex musical dance enactment, a short complex film, or a rare kind of musical-dance genre in film form or, a postmodern documentary. However contentious the aforementioned description may seem, it is rich and colourful in cultural imagery, music, dance, poetry, proverbs, humour, drama, magic and characterization. A mini-story with a sizeable location and short but well stringed scene

of sequential order, Kelani constructs a rather compelling meta-narrative which illustrates "the tensions between how Nigerians grapple with their nation's corruption, greed, lack of development on one hand, and how they continue to find strength and unity in their unique cultural resources, on the other hand" (Klein 142).

Tunde Kelani's films contain elements of political economy of lifestyle and aesthetic preferences. In this corpus, there is a collection of cultural business that comes to the fore; a belief that describes the Yoruba people as cultural producers in their own rights, rather than consumers of western cultures alone. This adequately explains why Tunde Kelani, at every opportunity, reinvents lost culture in most of his works. As a filmmaker and cultural producer, he has taken the liberty to constantly concern himself with the disappearance of a particular element of cultural aesthetics, values, worldviews, and *asaibile* (traditional culture). It is a fact that the auteur is inspiringly and constantly egged on by a tendency of passion and sense of urgency to stick out his neck for a culture which he believes is constantly in a state of inimical threat. In his various attempts at painstakingly preserving culture, the only way such preservation can be done is to portray it on screen.

## Conclusion

This article pursued an argument on the inextricable link between African dance and African film a rather much un-researched area both in the field of film and dance. Good enough attention has been drawn to the contributions of Hubert Ogunde to cultural productions in Nigeria through the cinematographic conventions of Tunde Kelani, and through the explication of the art of dance in his adaptation of Ogunde's Yoruba *Ronu*, Yoruba *E Ronu*. The study affirmed that dance functions among other arts forms as a means of historical documentation of human activities and as mirror of society. It also performs political functions, social engineering, for educational purposes of teaching morals, documenting historical events, and particularly, complements the very functions of the various oral literatures. Hubert Ogunde's works have in the present times become texts of legacies left behind. They were produced by the art doyen for contemporary artists to reconsider for subversive intensions of which adaptation is critical.

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