

## Aesthetic of Oral Art and Bilingual Creativity in Niyi Osundare's Poetry

*Okunowo, Yomi, PhD & Oloko M. Jamiu, PhD*

### Abstract

*Rhetorically textualizing semiotics of oral tradition and nuances of languages in contact (Yoruba and English in this case) is common in African literature. More interestingly, Osundare, essentially, makes this tradition to serve his poetic craft, ideologically commenting on matters of environment and humanity's welfare in all ramifications. In essence, using mainly selections from Village Voices (1984), The Eye of the Earth (1980) Moonsongs (1998), Songs of the Market Place (1983), Midlife (1993), The Word is an Egg (1999), we investigate the ways in which oral forms such as songs, music, dance, oral tradition, myths, symbols and images are stylistically redeployed in Osundare's poetry. The discussion also focuses on how Yoruba-English interplay artistry is used by the poet to project these oral forms and serve as tools of rhetorical imaginative expression. This literary creativity breeds interesting stylistic strategies of Osundare, imbuing his imagination with a unique bilingual expressiveness in interplay with resources of oral tradition in expressing the political, economic and sociocultural life of the Nigerian society.*

*Keywords:* aesthetic, bilingual creativity, culture, oral forms

### Introduction

Niyi Osundare is a renowned African poet who displays sterling skills in creatively deploying English and Yoruba languages to describe and express the socio-economic, sociopolitical as well as sociocultural worldview of his people. His poems are also associated with events and the environment. Osundare's poetic works, in many instances, are within the frames of his Yoruba culture and language as his poetic expressions are embedded with experiences and meanings drawn from his sociocultural background. One significant point to note is that the numerous texts produced in English by Nigerian writers and their effects on the Nigerian populace confirm the fact that writers such as Osundare have demonstrated their bilingual creativity and communicative competence.

Osundare's adamant rejection of a corrupt political system resulting in economic depression, class segregation, social injustice and the oppression of the downtrodden masses is firmly established in his poetry. As a social crusader, he is concerned about the reconstruction of the Nigerian political and economic

systems for the purpose of bringing about a peaceful society and a level playing ground for all.

Commenting on Osundare's revolutionary agenda and the aesthetic nature of his poetry, Ogundele in his review of Niyi Osundare as a trickster writes:

Poetry of New Orality, the literary movement started in Nigeria in early 1980s, was motivated as much by the felt need for a new national political order by the search for a new kind of poetic. As such it had two main components: an exclusive focus on contemporary social-political situations refracted through the abstract, secular myths of Marxism; and second, a variety of demotic modes and styles designed to communicate instantly and affectively. One of the practical dimensions of the movement's aesthetics, which in fact embodied its spirit, was the revival of public poetry performances in the manner of, well, the "old orality." In time, these performances became festival occasions and political events rolled into one. (2011: p.1).

Niyi Osundare, Ogundele remarked, is one of the earlier and major voices of this movement. He noted that Osundare's involvement in performance poetry is an attempt to fulfill his social responsibility of connecting with his people as his people-oriented poetry is fulfilled through performance. The orality character and performance structures of his poetry explain why in many of his poems he employs techniques and resources from African oral tradition.

Osundare represents a generation of African writers and the new Nigerian poetic tradition who take delight in mass public participation in their poetry. Described as the "people's poet" (Na" Allah, 2003), Osundare employs and reinvents familiar sociocultural memes to project the sociocultural worldview of his people. Osundare's poetry is an infusion of cultural process in an artistic manner. The rich cultural heritage of the Yoruba race is treated as of great value in most of his works. Osundare makes conscious efforts to preserve Yoruba speech culture even in foreign language. He is a poet who thinks, feels and imagines things in Yoruba and yet expresses them in English. Okunowo (2012:10) says, "Osundare's poetry seamlessly co-hosts Yoruba and English, with an obvious Yoruba semiotic structure that communicates across boundaries." Thus, we examine in this paper the unique characteristics that make the description of Osundare as "a Yoruba poet who writes in English."

### **Theoretical Basis and Methodology**

Osundare's oeuvre, we argue, is a signpost for regenerating oral tradition into its "modernity." Osundare, as noted by Okunowo (2010, p.377) uses the semiotics of oral tradition to commend and condemn in its signification of "human rela-

tions, human doings and the environment.” Oral tradition is a “used pieces of texts,” and when harvested into modern literature, it provides new cultural experience and framework of meaning and message to be understood in the form the new texts, like we have in Osundare’s poetry. In this sense, Osundare (2002) agrees that it is “a new aesthetic [...] A new sense of cultural authenticity [...] a reevaluation of folklore and the oral tradition, and appropriation of its salient stylistic strategies” (65). Thus, the uses of tales, proverbs, cultural memes, orality-incited metaphors, fables count as veritable identity of African imagination. However, the challenge of reworking these resources creatively, beyond cosmetic presence remains a rhetorical drudgery, and this is where Osundare excels. Bodunde (2003, p.274) noted that “With Osundare, the relation with orature is informed by the more demanding purpose of constructing coherent modes to express new ideas and vision” In particular, of being able to render Yoruba semiotics of oral tradition in English expression for the consumption of the global audience, Osundare’s works have enjoyed translations into other languages (German, French, for example) and won many national and international awards (ANA, Commonwealth Poetry Prize, the Noma Award, and the Fonlon/Nichols award). Osundare’s passion stems from, taking his words, from the fact that “no major poet has ever achieved greatness without some intimate knowledge of the oral sources of poetry: Pushkin, Chaucer, Shakespeare [...] Okot p’Bitek, Soyinka Calk Bekederemo [etc ...] poets who value the primal, oral sources of their art, and whose style and sensibility are closely shaped by those sources” (Raji-Oyelade, 2003, p.240).

Osundare has always ruminated about expressing Yoruba “thought” in English, how to mediate between the two languages in contact, where features of bilingualism come to the fore of creativity in literature. This thinking problematizes what Osundare designs creatively to express his Yoruba-world view. This is because when two languages interact in terms of expressing one idiom in the other, a versatile writer, like Osundare will be dealing with such issues like translation, “transcreation,” text manipulation, text incorporation, codes mixing and switching because of the exigencies of aesthetic meaning for global communication. For example, Osundare can be taken to be engaging in a different kind of translation, following Adejare (1998, p. 32) because the “bilingual writer” “has two linguistic systems and two world structures which can be brought together through translation (and Transcreation) by the reality of literary text creation.” And indeed, the poet has always maintained that he thinks first in Yoruba and uses rhetoric and idiom of Yoruba in his poetic communication Ogoanah (2003).

For our discussion, we can only select poems from the volumes earlier mentioned. The outcomes from these poems are generally representative of what

partly characterize Osundare's aesthetic of oral artistry and bilingual creativity. Given this matrix, as we have in the following discussion can add to the ever growing documentation of Osundare's literary idiolect as a world-renown poet.

### Literature Review

The issue of harvesting oral tradition into the making of modern literature has long been observed as a common practice in African Literature (see for example: Okumu, 1992; Anyidoho, 1981; Iyasere, 1978; Oyler, 2002; Wunmi, 2002; Owomoyela, 2007; Nwachukwu-Agbala, 1997), and as Iyasere (1975, p.107) puts it "The modern African writer is to his indigenous oral tradition as a snail is to its shell. Even in a foreign habitat, a snail never leaves its shell behind." Putting the service of oral tradition to work for modern African literature relies on the strengths and power of that tradition because as Scheub (1985, P.1) noted "The African oral tradition distills the essences of human experiences, shaping them into rememberable, readily retrievable images of broad applicability with an extraordinary potential for eliciting emotional responses." How this strength and how these resources of oral tradition are reworked into the new text of modern African literature, beyond their beyond their being exhibited as cultural artifacts, to make meaning differentiates and characterizes both the individual writer and the cultural object- African literature. Ruma's (2007) "African Literature and Orality: A Reading of Ngugi wa Thiang'o's *Wizard of the Crow*" and Trinya's (2015) "Oral Tradition and Contemporary African Fiction: New Wine in Newer Bottles" are handy examples of this phenomenon in African literature.

In Osundare criticism, critics have examined uses and aesthetic of oral tradition as tropes of meaning and communication in the poet's imagination (See for example: Na'Allah, 2003; Angus, 1992; Bamikunle, 1988; Dare, 1989; Okunowo, 2012; Bamikunle, 1995.) Central to all these critical examinations is the conclusion that orature has been used both as a means of interacting with his people, drawing lessons and philosophizing on sociopolitical and economic behaviour to talk to humanity. Poems such as "Omoleti," "Africa's Memory," poems from *Midlife*, *Village Voices* and *Waiting Laughters* provide clear idiosyncrasies of oral tradition in Osundare's poetry. Indeed there is hardly a poem without a touch of traditional oral patterns and semiotic of meaning in Osundare poetic corpus. Therefore there is hardly any writeup about Osundare's poetics without a dive into the poet's deployment of oral forms and meaning (See for example: Garuba, 2003; Na'Allah, 2003; Okunowo, 2010; Okunowo, 2018 Bodunde, 2003). Additionally, beyond how oral tradition means in Osundare, as espoused by some of the critics cited, the literature has found that Osundare deploys oral resources in two major ways: Osundare interplays the idiom of oral tradition with English as an hybrid product that expresses meaning for all and sundry as we have in

“Africa's Memory” (Horses of Memory p.43), poems from *Village Voices* (1984) and *A Nib in the Pond* (1983). The second pattern is where Osundare harvest the rhythmical mode of oral poetry for the purpose of the musicality common in his poetry, Osundare commonly sings his poetry in public gathering (see poems from *Midlife*, (1993) for example), see also Essien, (2018).

The focus of this article, therefore, discussing aesthetic splendour, bilingualism as trope, and context of poetic performance from the stylistic standpoint of the poet is an addition to the value that characterizes Osundare literary idiolect. Secondly, the paper suggests that hardly any mode of oral genre or text escapes Osundare's poetic corpus, ranging from proverbs, tales, memes, lyrical patterns, including bilingual nuances, problematizing languages/cultures contact in African literature.

### Oral Forms and the Aesthetic of Splendour

Aesthetic mediation, myths, dirges and songs dominate Osundare's poetry as transferred forms which he imaginatively used to comment on contemporary social issues in his society. These forms perform similar functions within the oral culture from which they are transferred. Additionally, the oral forms perform the same roles in the social purpose they are made to serve within the written tradition and the new culture into which they are relocated.

Niyi Osundare is a serious poet who deeply engages with social issues and the natural gift of nature. This explains why most of his poems focus on socio-economic, sociopolitical, and sociocultural issues as well as the fate of the land and its natural resources. The sources of these thematic focus are his concerns with the fate of the people, particularly with the fate of ordinary folk, and the creation of human happiness generally and the protection of the environment. Most of these are portrayed in imagery, metaphor and other forms of figurative language as well as techniques from oral tradition. However, the use of local images, symbols and resources from oral tradition are more prominent in poetry that expresses sociocultural message. A striking example is *The Dialogue of the Drum*, where Gbèdu, bàtá, adún, omele are all symbols of Yorba culture because they are not ordinary musical instrument:

I hail from the line of drummers  
And understand perfectly  
the language of leather  
Bata which speaks with two elegant mouths  
Omele which carries a high-pitched face  
And Gangan which wasped its waste...

I have thrilled royal steps  
 With gbedu majestic accents..  
*A Dialogue of the Drum, p.6*

In this poem, *bata*, which is a metaphor of ritual music has a metaphysical significance in Yoruba culture. To dance to bàtá ritual music, one of the rules that the dancer must strictly adhere to is not having bàtá (shoes) on. It is the traditional belief of the Yoruba people that bata drum is made of a special kind of skin. There are some myths and mysticism about the process of the drum's production. It is the Yoruba belief that if a person dances to bata music with his or her shoes on, it will result in tragedy.

Osundare creative choice includes the use of dialogue which takes fresh turning traditional stylistic devices of symbols, images, proverbs, myths as well as the evocative language of the drum. This is evident in this poem in the way and manner he engages the eight different drums (bàtá, gáangan, gbèdu, ibembe, egiri, ogbele, omole and adán). These drums have both spiritual and entertainment significance. As gbèdu and adán are ritualistic musical instruments, others provide musical entertainment which the audience response to in dance, movements and gestures. This indicates another level of dialogue between the drummers and the dancers. The presence of all these drums in this poetic performance is indicative of a variety of dances that are foregrounded in the artistic experience.

The use of local images and symbols of oral tradition also feature prominently in *The Eye of The Earth*. In this volume, there is a great reflection of nature and culture in which relevant and fascinating images from the native environment of Osundare are employed as vehicles for communicating and enriching his sociocultural message. The poems in this collection are characterized by a density of local images that enriched the sociocultural world view of the poet. For instance, in *Forest echoes*, such local images include elulu (a kind of bird which hoots at regular hour of the day); agbegilodo (timber lorry); patonmo (a plant with small leaves which fold up when touched; also called touch-me-not).

In *Forest Echoes*, “oke ubo abusoro” and “oro” are two immediately noticeable symbols as shown in the following lines:

This is Oke Ubo Abusoro  
 The distant forest which shames the lazy leg  
 Where the oro tree hawks lofty fruit...

*Forest Echoes, TE, p. 5*

Here, “Oke Ubo Abusoro” is a sacred place where cultural and historical events take place. “Oro” is a traditional worship in Yoruba land. It is a traditional festival and a purely cultic oral performance among the Yoruba people.

The use of symbol as a vehicle for revealing the sociocultural reality of Osundare's home area, Ikere, is found in *The Rock Rose to Meet Me* where the rock is used as a symbol of Yoruba tradition and culture. In this poem, Osundare projects “the rocks” and “Olosunta” as symbols of tradition and culture. Olosunta is presented by the poet as an entity that is bestowed with supernatural power and gift of nature. Hence, Olosunta/the rocks are symbols of “god” and “gold.” Olosunta is a huge imposing rock in Osundare's home village of Ikere that is worshipped yearly during the popular Olosunta festival. The rock represents the entire community and the social-cultural system of the people.

The poet presents the rock as a metaphor of supernatural force that the people worship. This massive stone in the poet's native town of Ikere is presented as a powerful fetish priest advancing towards the poet/devotee. The rock is also presented as a benevolent and protector of his devotee as it assumes the role of a supernatural god, who is a determiner of man's fate. This shows the link between the supernatural world and the world of the living. In Yoruba cosmology, man at the centre of the universe must pay necessary homage to the cosmic forces above him for the stabilization and effective functioning of his universe. This invariably involves rituals, sacrifices, conceptualization and symbolization of beliefs.

The fact that the poet still recognizes nature's divinity is provided through the persona as we are informed of his removal from his rural culture through formal education and his attempt to return like a prodigal son to his native terrain and its imposing rocks. The poet as a child has now fully grown up into adulthood. Unfortunately however, he has lost his childhood traditional and cultural identity owing to the destruction of the beautiful things of life that the nature held for him as a child. The persona also laments the lost of the agrarian life style of the people as well as their traditional agrarian skills with the attendant effects of dependence on imported food resulting in the impoverishment of the community and by extension, the country. Thus, we see the persona calling on the people to stop the destruction of nature and the restoration of its values and divinity. Here, the persona laments that the abundant God-given resources hidden in the earth has led to its being over-exploited and wasted by self-cantered individuals who are only interested in the gold and not the god. Hence, he condemns in strong terms the destruction of the earth for material well-being and yearns for a natural environment in order to reawaken wonder and joy.

The refrain of “Òdàrà ma gba ti won lo” at the end of each stanza in “Word

catch fire” with stylistic device of dropping the initial name, “Èsù” (“Èsù” Òdàrà) in *The Word is an Egg* is a metaphor that symbolizes the god of liminality, which is the element standing and mediating between stages of transition, between gods and man, between ancestors and the living, paving the way for humans. In this context of the poem Èsù is a combatant, recruited to fight the oppressor Emperor, kings in palaces, insecurity and poverty:

Words catch fire  
 Words catch fire on the Emperor’s lip  
 Truth explodes  
 Dream disintegrate into twinkling ashes  
 There is asurfeit of chains in the imperial furnace  
 The gag is grim; gallows groan from moon to noon  
 Òdàrà ma gba ti won lo

“Èsù” is one of the sources of Yoruba oral poetic traditions powerful god in Yoruba cosmology. He is a deity who can create disorder and is very unpredictable. This is why he is regarded as Yoruba trickster god and master of mischief. He is the god of daring and the master of disguise who wears two different gaps of hermeneutic ambivalence and multiplicity of meanings. Èsù is Orunmila’s indispensable companion and spokesperson. Orunmila who is regarded as god of divinity speaks through Ifa oracular poetry (Ogundele, 2011, p. 23). “Èsù” is one of the sources of poetry. In Yoruba poetics, He is believed to be the ground and facilitator of poetry such as visionary poetry, ritualistic poetry etc. In fact, the origin of the language of poetry was attributed to Èsù and which has to be renewed by the poet (Ogundele 2011, p.25). Osundare’s mythic imagination has its wellsprings in the Yoruba worldview embodied in Èsù’s character and personality.

Among the Yoruba deities, Èsù possesses the extra ordinary power and energy; that energy is made visible in his flamboyant ritual dance. John Wascott, (quoted in Pelton, 1980: 131-132), described the dance performances of Èsù as creating an image of a spirited, jocular and abandoned deity. In his description, there is much wide side-stepping, high kicks, and sudden and violent contradictions in Èsù’s dance.

Èsù is also described by Whitte (1994:18) as the essence of vitality and dynamism as he is capable of being everywhere at the same time, travelling with dazzling speed. All these descriptions reflect in Osundare’s mythic presentation of Èsù as a deity that is given a significant recognition in Yoruba cosmology. Thus his being called upon “[Èsù] Odara maa gba te le won, Odara” to keep watch on the doer of evils for justice to be done.



## Bilingual creativity

This section focuses on how Yoruba and English are used by the poet to project these oral forms and serve as tools of rhetorical imaginative expression. As earlier mentioned, the assertion that the use of local images, symbols and resources from oral tradition are more prominent in poetry that expresses sociocultural message is confirmed in *Moonsongs*, which marks the beginning of transformation of Osundare's poetry from political to cultural poetry (Ogundele, 2011:3). Osundare's poetic works, in many instances, are within the frames of his Yoruba culture and language as his poetic expressions are embedded with experiences and meanings drawn from his sociocultural background. Osundare is a poet who thinks in Yoruba and expresses his message in English. Despite writing his poetry in a second language, he is still able to blend this with his indigenous language of Yoruba which enables him to spice his poetry with home-grown terms and create new expressions that are peculiarly domesticated to capture specific aspects of Nigerian culture and ways of life. We see him demonstrating this in many of his poems. A striking example is the following lines in *Village voices*:

My friend asked for clothes  
I fleeced the loom of bales  
He spread out in *Sanyan*  
*Alabangada* adorns his head

In this extract, Osundare flavours this poem with native terms and Yoruba expressions through the medium of code-mixing and code-switching. He further displays his creative skill by translating these lexical items and expressions as footnotes in such poems. In the footnotes of the poem, *Sanyan* was translated as an expensive hand-woven cloth while *Alabangada* was translated as a kind of cap.

In *Harvest Call*, the following homeground terms and expressions are dominant in the poem:

This is *Iyanfoworogi*....  
efuru provoked mouthful clamour...  
And this is *Oke Eniju*....  
(Finally) *Ogbese Odo*...  
Where are they gone,  
*aroso, geregede, otili, pakala*...

Efuru is a Yoruba name for a type of yam which is regarded as the king of yams. Aroso, geregede, otili, pakala are types of local beans. Iyanfoworogi, Oke Eniju

and Ogbese Odo are all farm settlements where crops are grown and foods are produced in abundant.

Niyi Osundare's bilingual creativity contributes significantly in generating meanings which make his poetry accessible to his readers. This is clearly demonstrated in *Moonsongs* (phase 1) as can be seen in the following lines of the poem:

Pere o pere yojo l'orun  
 Agbamuere ...  
 Spread the sky like a generous mat  
 Tell dozing rivers to stir their tongues  
 Unhinge the the hills  
 Unwind the winds  
 The moon and I will sing tonight  
 Kiriji kiriji pepelupe...  
*Moonsongs I*, p.42

Osundare employs the moon as his source of inspiration in the opening of this poem, which is the first section of the volume. In *Moonsong 1*, Osundare demonstrates his bilingual creativity in which the opening of the poem starts with a folksong and later moves into an emotional invocatory song to the moon, interspersed with a refrain from the starting folksong. The entire poem is a mix of English and Yoruba Languages. "The moon" in phase XXII" is projected as a metaphor that engages in different activities in the society. The moon, on the one hand, is an object that symbolizes illumination and, on the other, it stands for the right kind of vision desired by the poet.

### The Performative Context

Osundare demonstrates his creative approach in the way and manner he imbues his poetry with vibrant performative context of oral poetry which imaginatively coordinates a variety of traditional art forms in a communally participatory experience. Osundare is a wonderful performance poet who takes the involvement of oral traditions as a priority in his poetry. In fact, it is practically impossible to suspend singing, dancing, beating of drums, playing flutes, or goje when his poetry is being performed. In *Village Voices* for instance, the song is the medium he used for biting satirical statements against the corrupt Nigerian politicians and for raising social consciousness. Commenting on this unique style of Osundare, Biodun Jeyifo describes his poetry as "a distinct revolution within the poetic revolution" (1997: p.135).

Osundare's performance notes often show his commitment to his people's cultural requirements and indicate his desire for the performer to follow his recommended notes. His intentions for using performance notes in his poetry include the mood expected for the performance; particular situation addressed in the poem, occasion addressed by the poem and his philosophical beliefs. It is therefore important for a performer to respect the poet's note if the full impact intended for the performer is to be fully realized. It is by doing this that the performer respects African cultural and aesthetic requirements during every performance. Hence, the Yoruba art theory becomes very relevant in this situation:

A kii wo bàtá  
bawon jo bàtá  
One does not wear shoes  
To dance to bàtá drumming

This adage shows that expectations are clearly laid out in Yoruba poetics for the artistic responsibility of the Yoruba poet. In *A Dialogue of the Drum*, parallelism occurs in *bata* (Yoruba musical instrument) and *bàtá* (shoes) which adds colour to the poetic rendition of the adage. In Yoruba culture, you must remove your shoes while dancing to bàtá music. This shows the metaphysical significance attached to *bàtá* as a ritualistic musical instrument.

Osundare as a modern poet further demonstrates his departure from mystic past by making his poetry get fulfilled through songs and performance. This he demonstrates in *Moonsongs*, (1988) first as a specialist who is well rooted in the people's culture and at a second level he involves the people in the cultural activities of the community. Osundare's upbringing as a peasant and his skill in oral performance give him the opportunity to exhibit a strong connection with his people (Na' Allah, 2003). Drawing on his foundation in oral traditions, he stages his poems in *Moonsongs* as communal performance. In this volume, he employs the "moon" as a metaphor, and makes the communal and participatory element very prominent in the poetry, thereby establishing harmonious social culture. This type of culture is achieved in the traditional social settings because everybody believes that he is his brother's keeper. This is why in *Moonsongs*, everybody is allowed to participate as the poetry is accompanied with songs, dancing drumming, fluting and choruses. For instance the poem in *phase 1* is performed to the accompaniment of lively *woro* drumming:

Pere o pereyoju l'orun,  
Agbamurere...  
Aseseyo osu oda bi egbin

Agbamurere..  
 Ka kosu kobi kalo mu saya  
 Agbamurere  
 Ka to de be o ti bojo lo  
 Agbamurere  
 Kiriji kiriji pepelupe  
 Agbamurere ...

The subject matter of the poem is a call on nature to be part of the communal singing and dancing activities as the moon and persona are about to perform.

Another instance of communal and participatory element feature in *Moosongs* (1988) also accompanied with drumming and singing. The members of the audience are also part of the performance.

The moon this night, is a rugged master  
*Teregungu maja gungun tere*  
 With withering smiles and snarls of crimson echoes  
*Teregungu maja gungun tere*  
 His forehead is a universe of scorpions  
*Teregungu maja gungun tere...*  
 The moon, this night, is taller than the sky  
*Teregungu maja gungun tere...*

The poem starts with drums throbbing and the yelling of happy voices of the audience. Later, drums become reluctant, slow and hesitant.

Contemporary African poetry such as Osundare often involves audience participation in his poetry. Like the modern African dramatist, he explores African tradition of total theatre where songs, mime, drumming, dance, and dialogue are synthesised on stage. The performative aspect of Osundare's poetry indicates that he has deeper roots and strong commitment in keeping these roots alive which continue to nourish his creativity.

## Conclusion

In this study, we have presented Osundare as a poet who charges his indigenous tradition with dynamic rhetoric of his revolutionary brands on issues relating to politics, rights of the poor and the oppressed, and the preservation of the earth's natural resources. Osundare's choices of people oriented poetry, his lack of confessional poetry, his attention to craft and adoption of African tra-

dition of total theatre assigned him an identity and gives poetic strength to his poetic corpus.

Osundare creative diligence is further exhibited in the way he interweaves strands of the native lore with his own modern voices. Hence, in his creative use of materials from oral tradition, he relies on their aesthetic codes to re-write history and fashion a unique artistic format that is distinctly African. This literary creativity of imbuing his poems with a unique bilingual expressiveness and resources from African oral tradition situates his works in the political, economic and sociocultural life of the Nigerian society.

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