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From ethno-aesthetics to inter-textuality: A socio linguistic approach to the interpretation of performance contexts in the criticism of oral literature

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Abstract

Since the introduction of such terms as “intra-textuality” and “Poeclectics” by Mario Petrucci in 2000/2001 respectively, which terms seem to operate in contrast to “inter-textuality” in creative or performance contexts, perspectives on performance have become rather complex particularly as these terms are operational in several disciplines of Folklore, Sociology, Communication, linguistics, Literature etc; each discipline seemingly laying a tenuous emphasis on a specific mode of application and desired goals. The application of these terms in the interpretation of performance contexts seems to mark shifts in the perception or progress towards a better or more rewarding understanding of how language operates in social contexts particularly in creative performances and their attendant enhancement techniques in Oral Literature. However, the diversity and plurality of application of the terms in different fields has sometimes tended to obscure or create complex meanings in the respective fields and instances of application rather than enhance further explication of the discipline. As a result of this diversity, We have chosen to examine the interplay of the terms ‘inter-textuality” and “ethno-aesthetics” in the interpretation of performance contexts in an attempt to observe how these terms can explicate the criticism of oral literature particularly within the background of Bakor oral performance models. The result is this paper which tries to posit that in Bakor as in most other African performance contexts, “inter-textuality” and “ethno-aesthetics” seem to be major determinants of the creative impulse among artists in different communities.

Keywords: Performance context, Inter-textuality, inter-discourse, Ethno-aesthetics, intra-textuality, Creativity, Communal Experience, Bakor Society, Socio-linguistics.

1. Introduction

Isidore Okpewho (1992) argued that in the attempt to find a befitting critical approach for the criticism and analysis of oral literature, critics should pay more attention to what he described as “the interpretive approach,” which analyses not just the content of tales but also the context of performance, the circumstances of the performer and the relationship between the performer and the audience. The approach emphasizes narrative intricacies and is more plausible for two main reasons. First, it places the burden of interpretation of oral material on a proper perception of the performance context and the interplay between audience and artist. This makes it expedient for the researcher to fully appreciate the intricate interaction between artist and audience in a performance context which actualizes an oral narrative. Secondly, the approach is also plausible as it highlights the significance of ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic influences on the artist which determine the proper approach for adoption towards the criticism of an oral narrative in a given context or milieu. These influences determine the critical standards prescribed by the community that creates the literature and perpetuated by the bards who sustain the art. In the adoption of the interpretive approach, therefore, the researcher must realize that certain critical paradigms become expedient and incumbent on his consciousness. It means the researcher must be aware that Oral literature, like all other forms of literary activity is a communicative act that is prone to several theories and applications aimed at enhancing its explication or interpretability in several diverse contexts and situations. This explains the numerous concepts that come to play in the criticism of not only oral but written literature as well. It therefore behooves critics to look at which critical model best explicates a particular kind of literary activity and at what time or place. This exigency led to the coinage of the term “inter-textuality” by **Julia Kristeva** in 1967 and spurred **Richard Bauman** (2004) to emphasize its relevance as a communicative theory

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particularly in literary creativity. Inter-textuality is therefore defined simply as “the relational orientation of a text to other texts.” Expounding on the concept, **Bauman** (2004) explains that as a literary theory, inter-textuality implies that “texts share certain aspects of their meanings when they become de-contextualized from one context and re-contextualized into another.” **Mikhail Bakhtin** (1986) on his part posits that

- Each production of a text is not a solo production by a single author but rather each act of textual production presupposes antecedent texts and anticipates prospective ones

From Bakhtin’s point of view, therefore,

- The text lives only by coming into contact with another text (with context). Only at this point of contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue (p. 62)

Bakhtin’s assertion centers on the fact that the new context and its attendant milieu imbue the text with a new meaning which meaning is further clarified in connection with its previous milieu. This relationship calls to mind T. S. Elliot’s postulation on *tradition* and *individual talent* in which he argues that a writer does not create in isolation of other writers and tradition but exists within a tradition established by and for a community of writers sharing a vision and a mission in a given context and time. The oral artist works within a tradition and community of composers who share a narrative repertoire which defines and influences his performances and which operates as an inter-textual influence on the artist’s consciousness. It is precisely this supposed inter-textual influence on the oral artist within the context of performance and its apparent relationship with Ethno-aesthetic and ethno-historical influences that has triggered this exploration of their interplay in the attempt to arrive at a more rewarding critical model in the criticism of Oral literature. Since Oral literature depends on the performance context for its actualization, we’ve tried to see how this interplay between inter-textuality and Ethno-aesthetics enlivens the performance context and enhances a better perspective of Oral narratives.

In this regard, Chukwuma Azuonye’s (2008) *very pertinent and appreciable work on the epic tradition among the ohafia, igbo* has been very illuminating. Azuonye has established what he calls “the principles of the Igbo Oral epic” which studies the Ethno-aesthetic and Ethno-historical basis of Oral criticism in a traditional context (see Chukwuma Azuonye 1983, 1990 a&b, 2002, 2008). We’ve therefore adopted these principles as being largely applicable to the Bakor Oral performance milieu in Cross River State also in Nigeria. The point of departure however, is the inclination to examine instead how these ethno-aesthetic principles enhance inter-textuality in Bakor performance context but perhaps it is pertinent first to examine the relevance of inter-textuality in the poetics of performance.

Inter-textuality and the poetics of performance

As defined by Bakhtin and explicated by several literary and communication Scholars among whom are G. Allen (2012), J. Porter (1986), T. A. Schmitz (2008), S Wortham (2005)

and R. Bauman (2004), inter-textuality is relevant to Oral literature studies particularly in its applicability to performance contexts. Its application to Oral performance contexts aids the explication of the numerous misinterpretations usually associated with Oral texts consequent upon or arising from over reliance on text and content analysis to the glaring exclusion of context, language, social identity and performer/audience interaction. Albert Lord (1960, 1995) therefore observes that

- Text and context are inseparable. Without a sympathetic knowledge of context, the text may be misunderstood yet it is not sufficient to study performance and contextuality without an understanding of the tradition underlying them.

Lord’s statement aptly relates the concepts of ethno-history, ethno-aesthetics and inter-textuality as they are applicable to the performance context. To explicate this relationship, one may ask the pertinent question, what is a text in Oral Literature? Or, does a text or tale really exist as an independent entity in a performance context? It is obvious that in oral literature, the text has no independent existence except in the consciousness of the artist so in concrete terms Oral literature has no independent text or tale “see Finnegan (1970).” The text or tale only comes alive during performance so what do analysts of texts and content outside performance really base their analysis on. This fact has, therefore, shifted interest from text and content to context and its attendant ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic influences on performers. This is also where inter-textuality manifests in the artists borrowings. The importance of the performance context for tale actualization and meaning has also necessitated socio-linguistic emphasis on data from performance contexts as invaluable in observing the role of language in the production of cultural meaning. It also emphasizes the recognition that the creation of a text or tale in oral literature is really a function of an alignment between previous knowledge of tales or texts, or better still, an alignment between previous knowledge of performance contexts of the artist and the existing contemporary demands of the audience to whom the artist is responsible. These dictate the taste and judge the final product of this moment of interaction-in-performance as relevant to and therefore acceptable or alien-to and hence unacceptable to the society’s aspirations. The full realization of this is therefore an inter-textual function. The functionality of a particular tale within a given community depends largely on the artist’s ability to expand his and the audiences’ consciousness beyond their immediate needs and demands to related aspirations as well as other society’s narrative repertoires through the apt introduction and utilization of variants of tales that bear relevance to the immediate society’s experiences. This is effectively enhanced through inter-textual knowledge and resilience of the artist. Ethno-linguistic and communication scholars like Bauman and Bakhtin have therefore asserted that

- In the domain of oral poetics, inter-textuality has been a defining focus since the latter part of the 17th century, when Oral tradition became a key element in marking

the juncture between pre-modern and modern epochs in the evaluation of language and culture (Bauman 2004)

Inter-textuality at this point concerned itself with what was described by Bauman and Briggs (2003) as essentially

- A formative influence on textual criticism... inscribed into the scholarly tradition of folklore and anthropology... [Where] the texts are conceived essentially as cultural objects: durable, repeatable, classifiable, linked to other texts by relationships of descent both (textual and national) and generic similarity.

Today, however, inter-textuality has gone beyond mere textual analysis for continuity and inter-relatedness to encompass the entire communicative process in both Oral and written discourse and plays a major role in performance studies in oral literature. Mario Petrucci (2000/2001) therefore asserts that

- From fable to historical fact, inter-textuality has been for me—as for many contemporary writers—a potent driving force behind my creativity, an ongoing interest running deeper than the pleasures and subversions of, say, pastiche, parody or travesty...I now see it as parallel applications for “performance” works as well as into and beyond other textual genres.

Thus, inter-textuality now has a pervasive influence on all forms of literary activity. In performance contexts, inter-textuality could be said to determine influences and choices on the narrator’s part that help to key a pleasant performance as well as determine the detailed ethno-graphic foregrounding of the performance. Performance contexts therefore presuppose that the performer or artist has an audience and that there exists a socio-linguistic relationship between the two within acceptable patterns of behavior dictated by the ethno-aesthetic environment. The implication here is that criticism of oral literature can better be explicated through inter-textual, ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic influences on the narrator.

Dominique Maingueneau (2005 p21) has therefore argued that “the most relevant unit of analysis [in verbal discourse] is not the discourse itself, but a space for exchanges between several discourses conveniently chosen.” This he refers to as “the primacy of inter-discourse” which supposes that every verbal utterance is, in-fact, dialogical in the sense that it derives from previous knowledge of a subject or discourse. It presupposes also that verbal utterances are only relevant as responses to earlier or already made utterances in an immediate or earlier situation.

Inter-textuality in oral discourse would therefore imply a knowledge of the relationship that each performer establishes in a particular performance and context with other performances and contexts that exist around it. This will aid our understanding of how a performer produces his narratives in an in-performance context as well as the process of critical analysis of the performances.

2. Ethno-aesthetics and the poetics of performance

In a performance context, what readily comes to mind is twofold

- a. The socio-linguistic environment as well as the role tradition plays in shaping the artist’s consciousness. and
- b. The centrality of the performance context as the experiential moment or avenue for the externalization of the ethno-aesthetic and ethno-historical potential of the Oral narrative repertory of a given community.

The performance context, therefore, not only provides the ethno-aesthetic standards for the criticism of oral literature, it also provides valuable tools for the critical analysis of salient features of Oral narratives often missed in textual or content oriented analysis of tales. To this end, Chukwuma Azuonye (1994) identified four basic principles necessary and vital for the enunciation of critical standards in the analysis of Oral material within performance contexts. They include:

- i. FUNCTIONALITY
- ii. AUTHENTICITY
- iii. VARIATION
- iv. CLARITY

Azuonye’s taxonomy equates functionality with ethno-historical or cultural relevance of material, authenticity with faithful reflection of societal experiences, variation with stylistic patterning or formal and structural arrangement of narrative items, and clarity with the aesthetic, artistic and pleasant presentation of narrative material by the artist during performance to enhance effective appreciation within their context of production. If Azuonye categorized his principles in order of their chronological relevance and order of importance to the performance context in Ohafia, a re-arrangement is proposed from the perspective of Bakor performance context as follows

1. VARIATION
2. CLARITY
3. AUTHENTICITY
4. FUNCTIONALITY

In Bakor parlance, functionality comes last and this arrangement reflects the order of importance of these principles in Bakor narrative repertory simply for the fact that the effectiveness of the principles of authenticity and functionality is vastly dependent on variation and clarity without which they lack proper explication and their relevance is obscured. However, as Azuonye rightly observed, the principles of functionality and authenticity depend for their clarification on variation in narrativity which is the soul of performance as an event in Oral discourse. Azuonye (1994) therefore posits that

- The principles of functionality and authenticity are largely concerned with the content and context of the epics; but they seem to depend on the other two principles – the more stylistically and formalistically oriented principles of variation and clarity – for their fullest realization in various performance events. The principle of variation demands not only pleasing variety of tale repertoire, structural patterns, and styles of vocalization, but variety in the range of heroes whose exploits are recounted and the need for balanced representation of the various sub-ethnic formations in

the community, in keeping with the well-known republican and egalitarian ethos of the larger Igbo culture.

In recognition of this and in relation to Bakor narrative repertoire and taxonomic standards we've chosen to combine variation and clarity and renamed them "inter-textuality" while functionality and authenticity have been combined and renamed "ethno-aesthetics". In this arrangement, "inter-textuality" approximates to the extent or depth of the artists resilience and or flexibility in the combination of creative skill with a knowledge of existing narrative repertoires or styles to produce something unique and pleasurable, while, "ethno-aesthetics" refers to the artist's knowledge of his culture and tradition plus his resilience in adaptation to communal requirements and/or variations to which his performances must approximate or answer. These, are styled, the principles of inter-textuality and ethno-aesthetics which can sustain what Okpewho describes as "the interpretive approach. Azuonye's (1990a) application of the four principles of ethno-aesthetics which have been reduced to two is therefore very rewarding, commendable and educative. All his studies on the Ohafia, Igbo epic tradition reveal a high degree of research scholarship which all scholars in this discipline should emulate rather than end up with content and textual analysis of tales that hold no water and no future for the discipline of Oral literature. Azuonye, however, tried to attribute changes or variations in tale rendition on the one hand and the sameness of representation on the other to what he calls a "paradox" in the determination of what he has described as "the "heroic essence" that ethno-aesthetics seems to view as sameness in a wide variety of texts constructed differently in a wide variety of contexts."

This is what precisely constitutes inter-textuality within which an artist's performance context is enlivened and actualized by seemingly external texts but which texts exist in the consciousness of the artist and influence the new or contemporary performance milieu to come alive during the creative interaction between him and his audience. Bakhtin has aptly described this moment in a quotation earlier referred to namely that "each production of a text is not a solo production by a single author but rather, each act of textual production presupposes antecedent texts and anticipates prospective ones." That is why each performance context in oral literature is a potential avenue for the creation of another text, therefore, the moment of performance or creation is unique because at that moment, "the tale only lives by coming into contact with another text (with context.) Only at this point of contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior joining a given text to a dialogue." This moment is the dialogic moment in Oral performances and is very vital because here the text exists only in the consciousness of the artist and during performance, with its attendant interactive dialogue, "a light flashes" joining all known or witnessed performance styles to aid the creation of a unique style and text for his audience as a reflection of their collective experiences. This is the moment when the artist actualizes his vast knowledge of ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic resources in interplay with inter-textual resources available to him to build up his

performance. Criticism of Oral literature cannot but begin from this moment of interaction-in-performance. Outside this performance context, what we have is not the essence but the imitation of that essence. Analyses of texts outside performance context with attendant inter-textual and ethno-aesthetic influences are but a shadow of the essence of criticism in Oral literature.

For this reason, Chukwuma Azuonye (1994) presents the Ohafia epic bard, Kaalu Igirigiri as having responded to the criticism of his epic performances by expanding his repertoire and allowing other stylistic devices to enrich his consciousness and broaden the appeal and ethno-aesthetic content of his performances. His current performances would, no doubt, be enriched by this inter-textual expansion achieved in his response to the criticism by Ogba Kaalu, his literary counterpart. Azuonye had this to say about Kaalu Igirigiri which borders on Kaalu's inter-textual responsiveness as an artist

- In 1971, when I first recorded the performances of Kaalu Igirigiri, he seemed from his showing and comments to be a devoted purist. He scrupulously avoided all the so-called "extraneous elements. "The texts performed by him were prim, compressed and telegraphic in style.

However, in 1976 and 1977, five or six years later, Azuonye returns to conduct further recordings of the same artist and has this to say about him

- ... When I went back to the field to record his performances, I noticed that his style had changed radically and that the kind of clarifying details advocated by Ogba Kaalu in his criticism had set in. He [Igirigiri] had become an incipient novelist, striving to achieve clarity, no longer through the purist avoidance of details but through thematic expansions, the introduction of dialogue, digressions and ethno-historical foregrounding.

Two reasons can be adduced for this perceived change. First is that Igirigiri's first outing with Azuonye may have been influenced by his consciousness of being recorded which may also have impaired his natural performance style and led to his striving to keep strictly to known texts ad pure style. For this reason, we emphasize contextual recording which situates the artist in his natural environment. Second, Kaalu Igirigiri may simply have responded to criticism and opened up his performance style to adaptations and embellishment which is the soul of Orality. The position here is that whichever way we choose to read him, Kaalu Igirigiri is surely a very resilient artist, an adaptive performer open to inter-textual influences and ready to learn and apply new techniques that enhance the aesthetics of Oral delivery evident in embellishment and thematic expansion within the performance context. This is the attraction of oral performances as their fluidity allows for manipulation of narrative material for the enhancement of beauty while explicating meaning. Richard Bauman (2004) recognizes this attribute of Oral performances when in his introduction to his invaluable book *A World of Others Words* he asserts that inter-textuality and ethno-aesthetics

- Established the foundational orientations of the study of Oral poetics towards the genetic relationships among “variants” and “versions” and the durability of the “Oral Tradition” constituted by the inter-textual relationships that link these cognate texts

A.R. Radcliff Brown’s or structuralists emphasis on tale versions or variations in rendition resorted to by artists during performances can best be explained or appreciated from the background of inter-textual influences on the artist in performance. Also through inter-textuality and ethno-aesthetics, the narrator establishes a relationship between his performed or performing text and other texts in the communal repertoire of his milieu with which he builds up and accomplishes his performances as a reflection of the cultural values of his society. Finally, through these, the artist establishes a relationship that bonds his text or performances to antecedent stories or texts and performances that help to establish an interactional relationship between him and his audience borne out in his apt manipulation of narrative resources available to him in an in-performance context. These resources include, apart from the environment and its images, those resources that are personal to the artist e.g. voice, gesture, mime, parallelisms, song and dance and other visual accoutrements that help to key a performance.

3. Performance as an Inter-Textual Discourse Mode

In an article titled “The Word as Event in Oral Discourse: The Meaning and Importance of Story-Telling Performance Contexts in Bakor Community,” (Ganyi: 2014) he discussed the centrality of performance as a mode of discourse in oral literature and as the moment when there is established a tripartite relationship between the performer, the audience and the text which interactive relationship enhances dialogue. The performance context also creates an opportunity for oral discourse within which the word becomes an active event in the attempt by the artist to conscientize the audience into a knowledge of and critical assessment of their culture and ethno-aesthetic demands within it or simply in the attempt to concretize experience. Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman (1990) observed this when they stated that

- The performance forms of a society tend to be among the most markedly entextualized, generally regimented, memorable, and repeatable forms of discourse in its communicative economy,[and so] tend to be among the most consciously traditionalized in a community’s communicative repertoire, which is to say that they are understood and constructed as part of an extended succession of intertextually linked recontextualizations.

To Bauman, therefore, performance entails what he refers to as “interperformance,” which is a foregrounding of performance or in Bauman’s own words “the dynamics of performance in the production of intertextuality” (Bauman 2004). In this perspective, the performance context becomes an admixture of several ingredients in the consciousness of the artist and all of these operate beyond the immediate confines of the performance milieu or immediate environment, yet the entire performance opens up to what

both Okpewho and Bauman have respectively described as “the interpretive and evaluative” models in the criticism of oral literature and communication (Okpewho: 1992; Bauman: 2004). The so-called extraneous ingredients are simply inter-textual influences ie the ethnography and ethos of the artist’s community which build up his consciousness about their communal experiences. These influences notwithstanding, the specific ways by which each performer keys his performance depends on his artistic skill, the stylistic devices available to him and the ethno-historical experiences that determine the ethno-aesthetic principles that govern literary production and appreciation within his immediate environment. In performance therefore, the performer assumes responsibility to an audience for doing and repeating their communal culture and his performances must be acceptable as a reflection of that communal ethos (Dell Hymes: 1975). The performer’s duty to his audience or community is to creatively display how artistic beauty is accomplished in the communication of cultural values above and beyond the value of communication as a medium for the impartation of message and ideas. Performance thus becomes a discursive and interactive procedure that is open to interpretive and evaluative scrutiny by the audience or the receivers of the performance product in terms of its artistic and aesthetic value before and above its functional value. In this respect, inter-textuality aids and enhances the process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization within the context of performance and in which figurative expressions and other archaic forms of language enhance pleasant presentation of narrative material. Here, as earlier noted, the judgment of appropriateness and effectiveness of a performer’s display of artistic skills depends on an interpretive process of evaluation which necessitates recourse to an inter-textual interplay between the present and past performances that provide standards for the assessment of the performance. In this process, every performer is, as such, accountable to his past performances and those of others operating within the same or related ethno-aesthetic milieux. This means that inter-textual and ethno-aesthetic considerations largely determine the relevance or otherwise of a performance to a particular cultural context which is why Bauman (2004) again concludes that

- Insofar as evaluation opens the way to engagement with an appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression and the performer’s virtuosity, performance is an invitation to the enhancement of experience.

To Charles Bazerman, therefore, inter-textuality as it affects oral discourse is very important because it highlights the relationship that each text or performance context establishes with other texts that exist around the milieu of the artist’s performances. This affords us the opportunity to understand how writers, in written texts or performing artists in oral performances conceive their characters and their roles in society as well as how writers and performers position themselves within this interplay of multiple texts and contexts.

4. Intertextuality and the bakor narrative tradition

In Bakor narrative tradition, as articulated in my publications (see Ganyi 1987, 2012, 2013 a&b and 2014) performance implies ability to lard or expand a performance with details and other embellishments that can help to clearly foreground narrative events. In a 2012 paper, Ganyi clearly stated that

- The artist's manipulation of the tale and its hero-protagonist is dependent upon the role he perceives in society since the manipulation must be appropriate to the social context required and accepted by the community. The artist interprets his tradition by recounting it while the audiences are judges who evaluate the literary process and experience. The complexity of the hero-protagonist is therefore part and parcel of this experience known to the community and forming the totality of the Bakor ethical, literary and cosmic viewpoint.

The restructuring or reconstitution of that experience, therefore, involves recourse to an inter-textual knowledge within the tradition which manifests in the complexity of the hero-protagonist. The protagonist's complexity also reflects Bakor ethical values and the various facets of Bakor cultural life. The only formal limitation to inter-textual recourse will be the tradition itself which moderates the artist's virtuosity as he must keep within the ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic demands of artistic production of the community in the attempt to recreate their societal experiences. But even these are subject to temporal and spatial changes as society progresses giving the artist the leeway to impose on his audience if he possesses what Mario Petrucci has described as profound "intra-textual knowledge." The artist, while drawing on tradition, also reshapes it for posterity through portrayal of the many faces and phases of the hero-protagonist's progress as an embodiment of the Bakor society's cultural ethos or code of conduct. The demands of inter-textuality therefore aid the sharpening of the Bakor artist's resilience and enhance the acquisition of high artistic skills so that through artful control of performance contexts, the artist is able to appropriately reflect societal values through the multi-faceted hero-protagonist's exploits. This way the artist strives to attain ultimate perfection in the creation of a fictional society for human emulation. It also emphasized, in that write-up, that since the Bakor epic or folktale hero-protagonist is really a composite reflection of societal values, he cannot play a consistent role or remain static. His metamorphosis is, therefore, as a result of the artist's shifting feelings towards the role the protagonist is identified with and which role he has to fulfill in different performance contexts which is enhanced through inter-textual knowledge of narrative tradition on the part of the artist (see F.Garber: 1969). Also, since the Bakor epic hero is deliberately created to reflect and represent the conscience of the people, his proper depiction depends on inter-textual skills of the artist which enhance variation to allow the consciousness of the artist to exercise his resilience at borrowings and reconstruction so that the hero-protagonist becomes a personification or model of Bakor contemporary societal values on whom is invested the Bakor people's admiration and sympathy as well as their hatred and derision. The Bakor artist also requires profound intra-textual and

inter-textual knowledge in his depiction of the complex nature of humanity which he aptly articulates in the ever changing societal values which necessitate constant revision of narratives aesthetically and functionally.

Another important point of note about the Bakor hero-protagonist is his composite or archetypal existence which equates him with humanity's idiosyncrasies. This means he is perceived of from several perspectives making artists adopt diverse narrative styles in the depiction of his traits as dictated by the ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic demands of the community of his creation. For this reason, intra and inter-textual knowledge becomes pertinent as the hero-protagonist undergoes transformation across borders leading Jonathan Gottschall (2003) to assert that "the details of heroes' faces may change as they investigator crosses geographical, ethnic, cultural and chronological borders." The artist must therefore resort to inter-textual knowledge to determine the best stylistic resources to adopt in the depiction of the hero-protagonist in a particular milieu. This is precisely why it is felt that Kaalu Igirigiri in Azuonye's recordings should be seen as distinct in his own creation of his epic hero and the style he adopts for the depiction of the personality of that hero, unique and personal to him. This is not to preclude the possibilities of inter-textual influences on him as a resilient artist that he surely is. After all, Roma Chatterji asserts that

- The hero or more generally, protagonist is first and foremost a symbolic representation of the person who is experiencing the story..., thus, the relevance of the hero to the individual [and the society] relies a great deal on how much similarity there is between the two.

The point here is that the diversity we perceive in individual artistic creativity of an artist can, in fact, be an unconscious or even conscious response to other people's styles but which style he is at liberty to modify or reject if the chosen style cannot carry the full burden of his perception of the necessity of his communal or personal vision and the aesthetics of literary creativity within his community. It is posited that "there is unity in diversity," which, perhaps, explains why Kaalu Igirigiri decided to display his awareness of the diversity of styles by responding to the criticism posed by Ogba Kaalu, his contemporary in artistic production. Inter-textuality implies choices; choices of that which best suits what idea or concept to be expressed and how best you can express it. Richard Bauman (2004) therefore posits that

- The alignment of performance to past performances demands calibration of the inter-textual relationship between them. Taking responsibility for correct doing may impel a performer to close replication of past performances in an enactment of traditional authority, while distancing of a performance from established precedent may foreground the distinctiveness of present exigencies.

This goes to buttress the earlier assertion that Kaalu Igirigiri's resort to pure style in Azuonye's first recording was simply necessitated by the distinct exigency of recording within which he (Igirigiri) found himself. But distinctiveness can be judged as attractive and relevant only in relation to

others and their performances or the audience and the society who possess the same stock of narrative techniques or critical standards as the artist and so understand how and why his manipulations aid the clarification and beautify the narratives within the society. Milman Parry (1928) therefore argues that

- The literature of every country and every time is understood as it ought to be only by the author and his contemporaries. Between him and them, there exists a common stock of experience which enables the author to mention an object or to express an idea with the certainty that his audience will imagine the same object or will grasp the subtleties of his idea.

We are, therefore, more inclined to believe that Kaalu Igirigiri distanced himself from established precedents of embellishment simply as a mark of distinction and soon afterwards makes us realize that he can be part and parcel of it just for purposes of uniqueness and not for lack of knowledge of prevalent narrative styles within his milieu of operation. Alternatively, the exigency of recording may have made him believe, perhaps erroneously, that padding a tale may not be to the taste and appreciation of this very academic and business like recorder in the person of Chukwuma Azuonye

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, perhaps Ian Gregson's (1996) point about writer's "otherness" will help to explicate the relationship between inter-textuality and ethno-aesthetics in the criticism of oral literature from an in-performance contextual point of view. Gregson posits that

- What is involved in this insistence on polyphony, however, is not mere pluralism. It is not a question of bland tolerance of difference but of a profound sense that the self has no meaning except in inter-relation with others, and that the lived experience of the self can only be expressed through determined efforts to evoke the otherness with which the self continually interacts.

Inter-textuality enhances this expression of the relationship between the self and the others even though in traditional oral performance contexts, the artist does not always and may not even express his sole individuality lest he be found wanting as a representative of his society or not relevant to their aspirations. The artist usually adheres to ethno-historical and ethno-aesthetic antecedents of creativity within his immediate context of performance from which he derives images and a creative impulse. He relies also on his audiences critical interjections and is vastly influenced by the communal lore and performance styles on which he depends during performances to express or recreate communal experiences. These amount to inter-textual influences on in-performance situations but one makes this assertion fully aware of Mario Petrucci's (2001) postulation concerning contrasts to inter-textuality in which he argues for a reconsideration of the term "inter-textuality" in the light of what he considers as the "inadequacy" of the term in all contexts. Petrucci submits that

- I simply propose that adopting an intra-textual contrast to inter-textuality may prove useful and that "the inter-

textuality of all text" is a hypothesis deserving of scrutiny, particularly at the fundamental levels of textual generation and pre-textual motivation.

After all, at the performance level, when and where texts are generated, the artist's own creative and artistic skills and personal stylistic resources help to build upon the text apart from knowledge of communal or historical antecedents. Against this background, Petrucci again suggests a continuum on which can be placed for judgment the terms intra-textuality, implicit inter-textuality and explicit inter-textuality, to provide us a means of assessing the degree of inter-textuality in a given text. He posits that

- The continuum itself consequently becomes a new site of inter-textual discuss centred on the text. Pedagogically, this is most useful, not only in raising issues concerning how one "maps out" inter-textuality in the first place, but also in generating dialogue over what is meant by any proposed inter/intra-textual qualities of the text. One of my main reasons for proposing the intra-textual regime has been that it opens up this kind of discuss while immediately offering a finer structure for the more "implicit" extremes of inter-textuality.

Petrucci's position raises very pertinent questions in relation to the criticism of Oral literature as to which is more applicable or useful in performance contexts; inter-textual or intra-textual influences on the artist during in-performance analysis of oral material. In Petrucci's view, though inter-textuality seems to be more pervasive now in all spheres of literary activity, the time has come for us to strongly consider alternatives like intra-textuality, implicit inter-textuality and explicit inter-textuality as terms that easily come to play in creative and critical contexts but which terms have often been ignored in preference for inter-textuality. As an alternative, instead of a total rejection of inter-textuality, in the analysis of performance contexts where inter-textuality is perceived to be pervasive, a critic can still look out for the degree of implicit or explicit inter-textuality to which the performer is more inclined. Petrucci's observation requires deeper attention particularly in the furtherance of studies on the intricacies of the performance context in the criticism and development of Oral literature. This is also because though an artist may depend largely on inter-textual influences during performance, intra-textual resources generated by the artist and his creative capacity in an in-performance context may, in fact, play a more pervasive influence in textual creation than the inter-textual influences. The complexity of these inter relationships requires more in-depth field research for better explication.

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