

Intertextual Adaptation in Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo*

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Abstract

A close reading of intertextual adaptations in African drama shows the relationship between African drama and European plays. With insights from Intertextual and Cultural theories, this study examines the convergence of cultural dynamics and comparatively investigates the themes and characters in Yerima's *Otaelo*, an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello*. There is a relationship between the themes and characters in both plays. This study is significant in its proposition as it places African culture and European culture side by side to bring out the semblance and little differences that exist between both cultures in order to prove that most cultures in the world are homogenous with little heterogeneity and convey the relevance of intertextual adaptation in the African play to the contemporary audience and readers. The use of dramatic techniques in the adapted play provides the tools to effectively communicate the plot and themes to the readers so they can understand the narrative better and become emotionally invested in the characters. Ahmed Yerima, therefore, draws extensively from European text, and this source conduces to the thematic preoccupation of the play *Othello*. In other words, it is anticipated that this has gone a long way in attesting that some cultures are homogenous globally.

Keywords: Intertextual, Adaptation, Modern, Dramaturgy.

Introduction

Intertextual adaptation is the reworking of a narrative into a new format. It always focuses on the recreation of literary works in order to bring out something new. Kristeva (1984) states that any text is the absorption and transformation of another. Therefore, an adaptation is a piece that another has inspired. Solani (2001) affirms that one needs to adapt to the new while retaining the goodness of the old text. The process involves the modification of the ideas and styles of one's predecessor with the intent to creatively reinterpret (Onyeoziri, 2011; Awhefeada, 2010)

Intertextual adaptation is a type of adaptation that involves referencing or incorporating elements from other works into a new work. It creates a relationship between different works and can add depth and meaning to the new work. Intertextual adaptation may incorporate elements from other books, movies, or cultural references to enhance the story or add symbolism. Intertextual adaptation aims to create a new work that is both original and meaningfully connected to other works.

Contemporary African playwrights engage in intertextual adaptation for several reasons. One reason is to pay homage or reference other works, which can create a sense of nostalgia or familiarity for the audience. Another reason is to add depth and meaning to a new work by drawing on themes or ideas from other works. Intertextual adaptation can also update or modernise a classic story, making it more relevant to contemporary audiences. Additionally, intertextual adaptation can be a way to explore different perspectives or variations on a story, allowing for new interpretations and insights. In the African context, intertextuality is especially useful for putting the right perspectives on African culture in opposition to the colonialist literary text and ideas.

African writers do this by placing European and African cultures side by side to bring out the semblance and dissimilarities between both cultures. The projection of African dignity, history, and cultural identity to counter the pre-colonial Eurocentric projection of Africa and its people as barbarous, uncultured, and dangerous (Awhefeada, 2016; Emama, 2024). These playwrights adapt their works by using African settings and characters to capture a closer audience and present relatable themes that benefit contemporary readers. They reverberate Western themes and culture in their plays, thereby revealing that culture is homogenous globally. Coyle (1990) affirms that every text takes root from another text, not just ordinary writing, but other conjoin texts and expressions of culture. Thus, intertextual adaptation reproduces literature in another form.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on adaptation and cultural theories, which are relevant to this essay. The adaptation theory is a critical approach to literature that foregrounds or highlights the continuous interaction of a work that derives its existence from another text owing to an ever-changing environment. The environment here adumbrates or outlines the focal, contextual, and residual input that birthed the adapted text. Eigen & Weigand (2004) affirm that adaptation is revisiting a literary work that has captivated the readers and uses a creative medium of one's choice to express something new. Adaptation, a Darwinian theory, is the act or process of changing in response to the dynamics of the environment to enhance survival. Camila Augusta (2018) explains that remodelling and retelling well-known stories from the past decades has been arduous. According to her, from 2005 to 2014, 61% of high movies released were adapted from prior sources. Adaptations of literary works seem easy, but hardly will one come across reviews that compare the adaptation with the original work on the same basis. This issue of equivalents in plot elements in literary works often leads to superficial and stale conclusions that one of the literary works is better and more interesting than the other.

Sander (2006) corroborates the view that the adaptive method has an unavoidable conservative nature; its aim is not to challenge the canon but to preserve it. She believes that in most cases, there are always cultural changes in terms of setting, characters, and little adjustments to the plot (storyline). Adaptation helps reform and expand literary works, as well as revitalise the canon in order to adapt it to a new context. Sanders also observes that the strategy that makes a text more familiar to the audience is proper modification so that audiences from diverse times, places, and social aspects can quickly identify with the text. It is against this background that Jorgen Bruhn (2013) claims that it is impossible to analyse adaptations without comparative movement between two or more texts. According to him, adaptation should be seen as a "two-edged sword" in which it is impossible for an adaptation to be utterly loyal to the original text or untainted as it reverberates into a new medium. Hutcheon (2006) affirms that adaptations appeal because of the pleasure of repetition with variation. That is, they bring recognition with a lot of amazement and novelty. Therefore, adaptations should be accepted and appreciated because they encourage reading texts. Hutcheon discusses adaptation from two angles: as a product and as a process. As a product, adaptation cannot be faithful to its mater-text; adaptation must differ from mater-text while maintaining the source's idea. Adaptation as a process becomes an act of correcting while striving to give new meaning to a text. In other words, literary adaptations should be liberated or freed from denigrative impressions of infidelity and plagiarism. Also, adaptation should be seen as something other than

an ordinary exchange between literature and movies because they encompass or embrace other concepts like video games, plays, stage plays, e-literature, radio and other media.

Cultural theory can be viewed from different dimensions. Richard Hoggart coined cultural studies in the United Kingdom in the 1960s; he was one of the most active scholars in the early period of British cultural studies. Cultural studies is preoccupied with the dynamics of contemporary culture and its historical foundations. It portrays how culture constantly interacts and changes sets of practices and processes. The aspects studied in this field aid in understanding the complexity of everyday life and the way habits, beliefs and texts are socially patterned values and meaning. Cultural studies see culture as ever-changing and not static, as it will always accept new traditions from different aspects of man's social and political life, which can alter or influence previous traditions or cultures.

Kuhn (1962) posits that cultural paradigms are concepts people use to negotiate their notion of self and relationships with others in their everyday lives. Thus, our cultural existence and paradigms are necessary for every human life. Bhatti and Kimmich (2018) believe in Kuhn's theory; they voice that one has to look into paradigm culture to appreciate a culture that exists in a particular society. This expresses the homogeneity and heterogeneity of culture in every tradition or culture. The adaptation and cultural studies theory is ideal for this research, taking it from Sander and Hoggart's view. Adaptations aid in remodelling and expanding literary works and show how culture constantly changes and relates to other cultures. Sander's contribution to adaptation is that it appeals to the audience and readers because there is pleasure in repetition with change. Kuhn anchors on the opinion that cultural studies develop one's ability to influence his/her social life by developing skills, values and understanding that enable effective participation in contemporary society. It becomes adequate as the study looks at the relevance of intertextual adaptation in some texts and identifies the cultural similarities and dissimilarities between the original and adapted plays. Therefore, In this study, we shall examine the continuous interaction between the selected texts to evaluate the changing environment and cultural spaces that birthed them. The aim is to bring to bear on the adapted work of the aesthetic nuances that are inherent in the intertextual adaptations.

Ahamed Yerima's *Otaelo*

Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo* is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Yerima embraces Igbo's cultural reality, setting, characters, and background in recreating the classic Shakespearian play. Adapting *Othello* to Nigerian content for contemporary audiences and readers was a massive effort by Yerima; *Otaelo* responds to social and cultural realities, humanistic values and religious responsibilities of the matter-text in his play.

Yerima sees Shakespeare's *Othello* as one of the most accessible tragedies and adapts the play under the title *Otaelo*. Yerima in Ogezi Attah (2010) states that the first time he encountered William Shakespeare through his works, he appreciated Shakespeare's intelligence so much that he decided to translate one of his plays, *Othello*, into a Nigerian version. Like Shakespeare's *Othello*, Yerima's cultural themes in *Otaelo* are based on love, jealousy, deception and destruction.

Kott (1965) affirms that Shakespeare need not be brought up to date, as history finds its reflection in modern versions of his play. Thus, Yerima took his raw materials from Shakespeare's play to address the issue of social class stratification in his play, where the upper class have higher power than the lower class. He also addresses the rustic political and socio-cultural Osu caste system in Igbo land, which separates man from his fellow man and makes one receive treatments that are worse than that given to an enslaved person. He addresses these issues under the themes of love, jealousy, deception and destruction.

The Significance of Ahmed Yerima's *Intertextual Adaptation*

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Yerima recreates Shakespeare's *Othello* to dramatise the calamitous consequences of the Osu practice among the Igbo and address cultural and socio-political concerns in Nigeria. Akorede (1993) puts it that the dramatist's relevance is determined by his role's usefulness in portraying his people's cultural and social realities.

Yerima's protagonist, Otaelo, is criminalised by the Umuagu community with the mystical support of Ala (a god) for an offence committed by his mother that ought to be overlooked. Yerima uses his play to question the rationale behind the obsession with the Osu caste system in Igbo land, even in the contemporary era. The playwright condemns issues of static cultural beliefs, poor identity, and ill-treatment meted out to the Osu caste in Igbo society. In one example, we are made to see the ill-treatment given to Otaelo by others:

Otaelo: Oh, old man, unburden my heart with my mother's load of sin.
It was her who killed my father, her husband by mistake when he beat her with me, their unborn child, in her womb. I was not even born yet. It was her order to run from the punishment of death and run to the shrine of Ala for protection. There she became an Osu, and after I was horn, she was still used for

sacrifice to the god she ran to for protection. You brought me up like your son. Why must I always lose everything? Why can I not just be a man?

(Yerima: p. 41)

Members of the Igbo society ostracise an Osu. He is denied friends and companions and can only marry other Osu. Thus, the Osus live in isolation, except among their own small and limited class. In Umuagu, Yerima presents instances of hatred against Osus due to absurd cultural beliefs. The play's protagonist, Otaelo, questions why he is belittled in the society he belongs. This is captured in the following excerpt: "But what did I do that the air I breathe must also remain thick with shame?" (p. 41).

Otaelo gets the response to his queries from Ebuka, his adopted father, that even though he (Otaelo) lives in the same society as the people of Umuagu and breathes the same air, his type (Osu) is regarded as worthless. Yerima frowns at this segregation and opines that everyone has equal rights to existence.

Yerima's *Otaelo* is very relevant to today's readers and audience, as he uses his play to address the problem of segregation and other socio-cultural and political issues common in contemporary Nigerian society. He frowns at Nigeria's fragmentation and polarisation. The politicians have fanned the flames of ethnic hatred and failed to address the country's fundamental social and economic problems affecting both young and old physically and psychologically.

Cultural Similarities between Ahmed Yerima's Otaelo and William Shakespeare's Othello

Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo* is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Othello*. Yerima infused Shakespearian themes of love, class stratification, jealousy, cultural criticism, manipulation and destruction into his play. Yerima reimagines Shakespeare's story within a Nigerian context, exploring similar themes while infusing it with distinctive Nigerian cultural and traditional elements. Yerima's adaptation highlights the impact of tribalism and social prejudice in Nigeria, reflecting the complexities and conflicts of Nigerian society.

Both Yerima's *Otaelo* and Shakespeare's *Othello* portray cultural norms through the expression of love. In *Otaelo*, love is emotionally explored within Nigerian society, highlighting cultural dynamics. Otaelo, in Yerima's play, is a replica of Shakespeare's *Othello*. The protagonists are great warriors, expressing their love for their respective interests. The different ways the protagonists express their love are produced below:

Otaelo: I love you, too, more than life. For in you, I have the freedom of heart. Not because you are a princess but because you control the air that I breathe.

(Yerima: p. 43)

Othello: It gives me wonder, great as my content, to see you here before me. O my soul's joy: If after every tempest come such calms, may the winds blow till they have wakened death, and let the labouring bark climb hills of seas Olympus high, and duck again as low as hell's from heaven! If it were now to die, 'Twere now to be most happy, for I fear my soul hath her

content so absolute that not another comfort like this succeeds
in unknown fate.

(Shakespeare: p. 60)

These open expressions of love by Othello and Otaelo to their belle show genuine affection between the lovers, even though their relationships face societal opposition. In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Othello and Desdemona encounter prejudice as their relationship becomes a target for the scheming Iago. He exploits Othello's insecurities, which are a result of his being of a different race. Iago hates Moor and Othello without any cause. In the following extract, Iago expresses his hatred for Othello. Thus: "...I hate the Moor. My cause against him" (p. 53 – 45).

Similarly, in Yerima's *Otaelo*, Otaelo and Chinyere's relationship face discrimination in a society with rigid cultural norms. Chinyere's friend, Obiageli, expresses her displeasure in the excerpt below when Chinyere tells her she is about to get married to Otaelo, an Osu in the Umuagu Kingdom. Obiageli criticises the idea and exclaims: "Aro! Even the thought of it raises my skin with lumps. Your mother will die first. Ewo! Amadioha, biko!" (p. 23). Both plays delve into the impact of societal interference on relationships.

Yerima's intertextual adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* is evident from the similar title of his play *Otaelo*. Even though the title and the name "Otaelo" are used in the Nigerian context, the two names, Otaelo and Othello, sound similar. However, they are from different cultures.

Shakespeare's *Othello* and Yerima's *Otaelo* are protagonists in their respective plays and share some similarities in their personalities. They are known for being noble and honoured and possess traits of bravery. However, the two protagonists are given to deep anger if offended. In their respective plays, they exhibit intense jealousy, but mainly as a result of being manipulated. In Shakespeare's play, Othello is jealous, suspicious, and willing to take dreadful action. Villainous Iago causes Othello's awful actions; Iago falsifies stories for Othello to believe that Desdemona is a whore. This is illustrated in the extract below:

Othello: Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore!
Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof,
Or, by the worth of mine eternal soul,
Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
Than answer my waked wrath.

Iago: O grace! O heaven, forgive me!
Are you a man? Have you a soul or sense?
God b' wi' you. Take mine office.—O wretched fool,
That liv'st to make thine honesty a vice!—
O monstrous world! Take note, take note, O world:
To be direct and honest is not safe.—
I thank you for this profit, and from hence
I'll love no friend, sith love breeds such offense.

(Shakespeare: p. 88)

Similarly, in Yerima's play *Otaelo*, Otaelo is manipulated by the villainous Agbo, which led to terrible consequences, as seen in the excerpt below:

Agbo: ...No, you are my wonderful wife. Oh, Amadioha, dalu, you provide me the ingredients for the deadly soup. Now, like a spider, I must cast my web. The jigida is my tool, And Otaelo's large heart will be my playground. Now I know the gods are with me. I cannot fail.

(Yerima: p. 51)

Agbo's hate, deception, and actions pushed Otaelo to make drastic decisions against his better judgment. Othello and Otaelo's faults are emotional sensitivity to manipulation, which they fail to see through their antagonists' deceit and fall victim to jealousy. Another similarity between Shakespeare's and Yerima's plays is that the two protagonists are portrayed as outsiders due to their cultural backgrounds. Indications that Othello and Otaelo are seen as outsiders in their communities are captured in the following excerpts: Iago reminds Brabantio, the Venetian senator, that Othello is from a different race, so it is wrong to give his daughter, Desdemona, to him for marriage:

Iago: Zounds, sir, you're robbed. For shame, put on your gown!
Your heart is burst. You have lost half your soul.
Even now, now, very now, an old black ram
Is tupping your white ewe. Arise, arise!
Awake the snorting citizens with the bell,
Or else the devil will make a grandsire of you.
Arise, I say!

(Shakespeare: p. 37)

Obidigbo and Ekekwe oppose Igwe for giving his daughter to an Osu, Otaelo. This is also seen below:

Obidigbo: Indeed, there is madness in the air. What was an Osu doing in the palace, before the Igwe, in the first place?

Ekekwe: Tufiakwa! When a clay effigy wants to shame itself, it demands to be put in the rain. The Igwe dares the gods, and his fall is secured.

(Yerima: p. 18)

Othello is seen as an outsider; in the above excerpt, he is referred to by Iago as "an old black ram" because of his skin colour. Also, the name "Moor," as the Venetians generally call him, depicts Othello's racial identity. Furthermore, "Moor" is so accustomed to the people that even those not Othello's enemies call him "Moor".

In Yerima's play, *Otaelo*, Otaelo is portrayed in Umuagu kingdom as an outsider and a tainted man because of the Osu caste tag on him. The people and the gods have declared that Otaelo is not part of them. This aspect of Othello and Otaelo contributes to their respective plays. Ultimately, they experience tragic downfall due to their imperfections and the manipulation they encounter from their antagonists.

Another similarity between the two plays is Desdemona, Othello's lover, and Chinyere, Otaelo's lover. Notable traits are alike in their characters. In *Othello*, Desdemona is a Venetian woman, and Othello, her lover, is seen as a stranger in Venice because of his racial identity. These cultural disparities contribute to the conflicts within the relationship. Iago's manipulation of Desdemona and Othello

shatters their love, leading to their tragic end. Emilla's expression in the excerpt below concerning Desdemona's death is evidence of manipulation and proof of Desdemona's innocence, that she is not a whore and she does not have another suitor:

Emilla: O thou dull Moor, that handkerchief thou speakest of
 I found by fortune, and did give my husband:
 For often, with a solemn earnestness
 (More than indeed belonged to such a trifle),
 He begged of me to steal it.

(*Shakespeare: p. 128*)

In Osofisan's play, Chinyere is also manipulated. Obiageli, Agbo's wife steals Chinyere's "jigida" (waist bread), which was given to her by Otaelo. In the extract below, Obiageli tells Agbo that she is not happy bringing Chinyere's jigida. Obiageli's sad expression is captured in the extract: "Chinyere will kill me, but I shall bring it" (p.52). Obiageli gave the jigida to her husband, Agbo, who uses it to blackmail Chinyere, that she is a whore and also having sex with Ichiagu, which led to Chinyere's death.

The deaths of Desdemona and Chinyere in both plays show the terrible outcome of jealousy and manipulation. The cultural and political orientation of class stratification is another similarity that traverses in Shakespeare's *Othello* and Yerima's *Otaelo*. This political stratification is based on the characters' level of power, wealth and influence. Tianyuan Li and Vivian Hiu-Ling Tsang (2006) put it that since the creation of man, human beings have craved authority and the gain accompanying it. Throughout history, people are rated and classified according to the power and wealth they acquire.

In Yerima's drama, Igwe, Ochendu and his family, Uloma, Chinyere and Nene belong to the upper class. In contrast, others like Obiageli, Agbo, and Nkechi are part of the lower class. Otaelo's greatness, achievements, and, most significantly, his influence give him an edge over other warriors in the land, and Igwe prefers him. In the following excerpt, Agbo reminds Ogbuefi Ezeugo that an Osu, Otaelo, who is not fit to live among them and belongs to the lowest class, is about to marry the princess of the land, Chinyere: "Hear it, Ogbuefi" (p. 35). The social and political class ideology transports Otaelo from the lower class to the upper class, just like Othello in Shakespeare's play, which he is not qualified to attain as an Osu. Rules and regulations are altered in Umuagu because of Otaelo's greatness. It is forbidden in the land for any member of Umuagu to associate with an "Osu", but Otaelo's achievement makes Igwe go against Umuagu's tradition and give his only daughter, Chinyere, to Otaelo for marriage. In the excerpt below, Igwe declares to Otaelo in the presence of other chiefs that Chinyere will be given to him as a wife in a few days later: "...In three days time, Chinyere shall be given to you" (p. 18). Igwe uplifts and transfers Otaelo from the lower class to the upper class because Otaelo is an eminent warrior.

In *Othello*, Brabantio, the Venetian senator; Desdemona, his daughter; Othello, Roderigo and Cassio are part of the upper class, and others fall under the lower class. Just like Othello is promoted from lower class to upper class by Brabantio, Desdemona's father, because of Othello's achievements. This honour and upliftment compel Iago, who naturally hates the upper class, to design various means to destroy Othello. He uses mischievous and hurtful ways to bring Othello to a tragic end. The

extract below is evidence of Iago's hatred for Othello because Brabantio prefers him: "Rouse him, make after him, poison his delight, proclaim him in the streets, incense her kinsmen, and, though he in a fertile climate dwell, plague him with flies; though that his joy be joy, yet throw such changes of vexation on't as it may lose some colour" (p. 36-37). Iago is bitter against Othello and uses Roderigo to overcome and destroy him.

Cultural Divergence in William Shakespeare's *Othello* and Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo*

William Shakespeare's *Othello* is a renowned original text with English context. *Othello* explores issues of race and ethnicity. The play reflects the racial prejudices of the time, highlighting the challenges and discrimination Othello faces as a Black man in a predominantly White society. Ahmed Yerima's *Otaelo* is a Nigerian adapted play that infused local African culture, tradition and Yoruba language into Nigerian narratives. Yerima's *Otaelo* is preoccupied with the Osu Caste in Igbo culture, also referred to as a social caste system that historically classified specific individuals as "unequal" or "less" in his community because of the tagged divine status on him.

Another dissimilarity is that the language quality in Shakespeare's play sets *Othello* apart from Yerima's *Otaelo*. The language in *Othello* is distinctive and complex. Evidence of the complexity of language in the play is seen in the following excerpt:

Othello: 'Tis true. There's magic in the web of it.
 A Sybil that had numbered in the world
 The sun to course two hundred compasses,
 In her prophetic fury, she sewed the work.
 The worms were hallowed that did breed the silk,
 And it was dyed in mummy, which the skilful
 Conserved of maidens' hearts.
 (Shakespeare: p. 93)

Yerima's *Otaelo* allows simplified English Language seasoned with few Igbo words, which appeals to his audience and readers. An example of Yerima's style of use of simple language in *Otaelo* is illustrated in an excerpt below:

Chinyere: Emehara? Amadioha forbids. *Chukwu ekweana*. I want to marry a man I love. A man who will worship me and care for me, a man whose voice will send my heart beating. A man who will make me happy. A loving man who will marry me for what I am, not because I am a princess or the granddaughter of his grandmother's ... (*Nene pulls her hair*) Ooh, Nene!
 (Yerima: p. 11)

In *Otaelo*, Yerima incorporates African cultural perspectives and experiences by changing the elements of Shakespeare's play. Yerima makes the message in *Otaelo* more relevant to the Nigerian context. The playwright changes Shakespeare's theme of racial identity to the social caste system, "Osu Caste", addressing issues and challenges that affect the Igbo people in Eastern Nigeria.

Thus, there is a slight divergence between Shakespeare's *Othello* and Yerima's *Otaelo*. The adaptation of *Othello* allows Yerima to bridge English and African cultures,

making the stories resonate more deeply with the contemporary audience and reflecting the complexities of culture in Nigerian society.

Dramatic Techniques Used in the Adapted Play

Yerima's use of dramatic techniques in *Otaelo* brings reality to the stage. The techniques enhance the storytelling, develop characters, and emotionally impact the audience and readers.

Flashback Dramatic Technique

The flashback technique is used by Yerima when there is a need for an explanation for an incident that occurred in the past that makes Otaelo be declared an "Osu" in Umuagu land. In the expression below, Otaelo reveals the story of his birth that puts him in the class of "Osu":

"Oh, old man, unburden my heart with my mother's load of sin. It was her who killed my father, her husband by mistake when he beat her with me, their unborn child, in her womb. I was not even born yet. It was her order to run from the punishment of death and run to the shrine of Ala for protection. There she became an Osu, and after I was born, she was still used for sacrifice to the god she ran to for protection. You brought me up like your son. Why must I always lose everything? Why can I not just be a man?" (p. 41)

Otaelo, the protagonist, is known to the audience and readers as an "Osu" from the beginning of the play. However, the rationale behind his being classified as "Osu" is unknown to them until Yerima uses a flashback to disclose the origin of Otaelo's repugnant name, which makes him segregated from the members of the society; this Osu emblem is also what takes him to his tragic end.

Dramatic Irony

The dramatic irony used in *Otaelo* reveals more information to the audience and readers than to the characters in the play. The irony in the drama centres mainly on Agbo and Otaelo; their actions acquaint the intentions, but the victims are ignorant of what is happening or coming around them. Agbo keeps on gulling his victims; this is appalling as the audience and readers consider that Otaelo and Chinyere's genuine affection is being destroyed by deceptive and empty sweet words Agbo professes, especially to Otaelo. Otaelo, on the other hand, ironically continues to praise his greatest enemy, Agbo, who wants him to be destroyed. Instances of dramatic irony used in the play are expressed below:

Otaelo: Haa, my good friend, Ogbuefi Agbo. I thank you for the gifts.

Agbo: Brave warrior of the people, I was just on my way to meet you.
But the matter is grave, and I must talk to you alone.

(p. 55)

In the first excerpt, Otaelo calls Agbo "my friend", but ironically, he is Otaelo's greatest enemy. This cordial relationship between Otaelo and Agbo continues in the extract below:

Otaelo: I was with my good friend, Agbo. (p. 61)

Otaelo's antagonist is unknown to him, and he is friendly with a man, Agbo, who has an evil plot to overthrow him and wishes to kill him and take his position. Agbo displays jealousy and envy against Otaelo; this is seen in the following excerpt:

“Both, my lord. I killed more men than Otaelo. I am the head of the army, if anyone is to be made the Igwe of Abaniekpo, it should have been me” (p. 35)

Otaelo is unaware of Agbo's jealousy and wickedness towards him. Agbo intelligently presents his “ironic love” to Otaelo in a deceptive manner because he does not want Otaelo to be aware of his jealousy and hatred, and he wants Otaelo to lose everything he has and loves.

Another irony that Yerima presents in *Otaelo* is "verbal irony", which is an extension of sarcasm. Agbo does not want Otaelo to be aware of his jealousy and his plans to destroy him; he continues to falsely inform Otaelo of those who hate him or those who are jealous of him. Ironically, Otaelo genuinely believes that Agbo is his good friend. In the following excerpts, Agbo ironically and deceptively presents Ichiagu to be Otaelo's enemy:

Agbo: Permit me, great warrior; how close is the young man Ichiagu to you?

Otaelo: Until the last battle, he was my soldier-at-arms.

Agbo: Lately, he has taken to talking indiscriminately. He feels used and dumped by you, and has vowed to retaliate.

Otaelo: How?

Agbo: In a way more painful and shameful. I shudder to think about it.
(p. 56)

Agbo manipulates Ichiagu to carry out his villainous plans on Otaelo; Agbo uses him as his immediate discussion of hatred for Otaelo because Agbo sees Ichiagu as someone who can be easily wangled to get what he wants. Agbo, meeting Otaelo, ironically presents Ichiagu to be Otaelo's enemy.

Language Techniques

Ahmed Yerima used simple sentence structure and straightforward diction in English when writing his play. Also, a few Igbo words and phrases are introduced directly in the text without translation. The use of code-mixing in the play, English and Igbo languages, makes the audience and readers quickly identify the setting of the play, *Othello*. Simple English language expressions that are mixed with Igbo words and phrases are shown below:

Uloma: *Ewoo! Iha bu aro!* You have killed me! My husband has killed me!

Nene: How could you have allowed this to happen, Son? *Aro eme na obodo o!*

(p. 28)

The above code-mixing is used when Uloma and Igwe's mother, Nene, discourage Igwe from giving his daughter to an "Osu", Otaelo because it is an abomination in the land. Yerima uses informal Igbo in English to express and evoke the characters' emotions, such as anger and humour, to his audience and readers. Here, English is not enough for Ekekwe to express his anger, but he mixes it with the Igbo language to show his indifference to Igwe giving his daughter to an Osu. This is reproduced in the following excerpt: "Tufiakwa! When a clay effigy wants to shame itself, it demands to be put in the rain. The Igwe dares the gods, and his fall is secured" (p. 18). The native Igbo language plays an emotive role in *Otaelo*; using only formal English would have been impossible.

Conclusion

The adaptation and translation of *Othello* in Yerima's *Otaelo* has brought a fresh insight into African culture to the contemporary audience and readers. This study further observed that there are cultural similarities and tiny dissimilarities between African culture and European culture. Also, the two playwrights have documented their interest in culture; this shows how culture is valued globally. The study establishes that any text is an intertext, which means that text has a connection with another text and no text exists outside interpretation. Thus, old texts are transformed and adapted into a new form. Therefore, intertextuality leads readers to a rich reading experience, which invites new interpretations as it brings another perspective, content and idea into a new text.

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