

Comparative Literature in Nigeria: A Thematic Examination of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*

Folorunso Adebayo

Dept. of European Languages & Integration Studies

University of Lagos

fadebayo@unilag.edu.ng

Abstract

*Comparative literature is the study of a people in prints beyond the author's national boundary with a view to cross-pollinate them for local advantages. Its scope in Nigeria includes the source, the influence, and the affinity to the original text using the tool of adaptation. Its primary interest is in literary importation for socio-political, cultural dialogue and development. This paper discusses comparative literature, intertextuality, and modern drama in Nigeria by drawing a distinction between literary adaptation and translation. It analyses the thematic thrust of Femi "Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*" which paints the picture of leadership failure and corruption among the political elites and leaders in Nigeria during the first phase of political independence in the 90's some of which are still prevailing in the Twenty-first century. It also examines the sociopolitical similarities such as grant, bribery, corruption, and political structural failure in Nigeria and Russia during the period depicted in Nicolai Gogol's "The *Government Inspector*", which also captures the same phenomenon in Nineteenth century Tsar Russia. The paper recommends dramatisation of literary texts for sociopolitical re-orientation in Nigeria's political institutions and its inclusion in the school curriculum at the primary and secondary levels.*

Keywords: *Cultural importation, Intertextuality, Leadership failure, Literary Adaptation, Sociopolitical literature*

1. Introduction

Literature simply means representations of life and everything that goes in and around it. It reflects cultures, civilizations, traditions as well sociopolitical practices of the people. Literature upholds, promotes and preserves human histories and cultural heritages. It includes the authors, the critics, and the literary works, which are better understood through inter-textual and comparative studies. Human beings are products of cultures and traditions

which are sustained, promoted, and preserved through literary works of great authors of the time. Comparing works of authors from the ancient Greeks, Romans, and indeed all over the world, proves the dual and universal nature of man's culture and civilization where languages serve as the arbiter. Comparative literature therefore is the study of literary and artistic works across genres and beyond one's national boundary. It passes the reign of parochial literatures that hitherto reigned in the past centuries. It is a product of intra and inter-textual analysis of common and divergent elements between or among two or more literary cultures and their impacts on the society par time. Adebayo (The Nature 28) sees it as a study of Literature without borders. The field, according to her, transcends other fields such as those in the sciences, sociology, history, and visual arts, just to mention a few. The influence, the affinity and the fidelity of literature from one to the other are determined by comparing literary works across borders. Literary adaptation is the reinterpretation, modification or reformation of earlier existing texts and civilizations in prints. To study and compare such works reveals the source, the influence, and the originality of the new culture in print in relation to the original texts.

2. Comparative Literature in Nigeria: origin and affinity

The term Comparative Literature simply means evaluation and assessment of literary texts both from within and outside the Comparatist's frontiers in relation to its convergences and divergences vis-à-vis the theme, the narrative style, the dramatic thrust and the poetic styles, the characters and the plots structure etc. It is the study of elements common and noticeable among global literatures. Thus, the studies of Goethe's or Balzac's impacts on French and Russian writers respectively belong to Comparative Literature. Guyard (12) sees comparative literature as the exchange of cultural and literary patrimonies. What Voltaire and Montesquieu saw in the waves of seventeenth century England and Iran is the spirit of tolerance and that of political system of power sharing which thereafter was portrayed in their literary undertakings (*Contrat Social* and *Lettres Persanes* respectively) in the age of enlightenment in France.

Comparative Literature took root in England and in Germany around 1880s. Adebayo (The Nature 27) again highlights that it has had a long history in Europe and America and it engaged in various academic battles with other disciplines before it finally became a discipline of its own in the late Nineteenth century. Adebayo (*Comparative Literature* 104) traces its origin in Nigeria to 1980's when it was first introduced in the University of Ife (now Obafemi

Awolowo University), University of Port Harcourt, and University of Ibadan with precursors such as Abiola Irele, Femi Osofisan, Wilfried Feuser, Wole Soyinka, Chukuwudi Maduka, Femi Ojo-Ade, Aduke Adebayo. Timothy Asobele also added to the trend using literary translations and adaptations as tools for universal cultural dialogue when he adapted Emile Zola's *Vérité* (1903) and *Thérèse Raquin* (1871) to the Nigerian stage with the titles *Osannah to Orunmila* (2003) and *Rettella* (2003).

Adebayo (*Comparative Literature* 105) outlines the scope of Comparative Literature in Nigeria as a study of the source, the influence and the affinity to mother texts. A good number of Nigerian playwrights uses literary adaptation as a tool to demonstrate influence and affinity to the original text. She further points to Soyinka as an example who has in many of his works opened up his sensibilities to a wider universe, comparing the gods of the Yoruba pantheon with those of the Greeks, the Romans and the Jews (ibid 103). Like Soyinka, Comparatists in contemporary time always have to do with the great works of great authors to wit: Victor Hugo, Balzac, Moliere, Walter Scott, Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Shakespeare, Camus, Zola, Kafka, Goethe and Brecht etc. The works of Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, J. P. Clark, Bode Sowade, J. O. Abioye and recently Timothy-Asobele among several others are all references to the development of literary adaptations and Comparative Literature in Nigeria. This attests that Comparative Literature thrives on the engagement of universal cultural dialogue.

It is noted that the Russian Literature as represented by Dostoyevsky was greatly influenced by the French Literature iconized by Balzac in the Nineteenth century. The universal nature of man and his polity was viewed from these two distinct societies. Dostoyevsky's work "*Crime and Punishment*" (1866), an adaptation of Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet* (1833) reflects the restlessness of Russian Youths using Raskonnikov, a major character as the archetype of the Russian society. Balzac also portrays the youths' restlessness and their engagement in other social vices as represented by Rastignac in the French society of the époque. The two texts reveal the imperial rule of the time as a fertile ground for youths to engage in crime and other social vices in Russia and in France. Nigerian dramatists and literary comparatists employ adaptations as a source of creating new literary texts. The thematic and ideological affinity, adherence to the plots, the tone, the mode and the language have made the adapted texts to also passed the global literary test and thus belong to the canonic class. The study of these literary works brings out the global cultural and sociopolitical heritages which are similar to

their societies of origin, thus revealing the universality and the duality of human culture.

3. Distinction between Literary Adaptation and Translation

Literary adaptation according to Martinez (269) is as old as man himself. In principle and in practice, it falls within the global practices. It is the art of deliberate re-rendering of an already existing work of art in a new form or genre. This imitation involves the transposition of the work of another creative artist into a different medium within a specific socio-historical and cultural context (Adeoti 8). This literary practice has necessitated the study of similarities and differences between the new and the old literary cultures which gave birth to what Kristeva called intertextuality. Hutcheon (8-9), describes it as a process of reception, through which ‘we experience adaptations as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition and variation’, or in other words, the ways in which we associate the entity or product as both similar to and a departure from the original.

Adaptation and translation both contribute to the studies in comparative literature and the global dialogue of culture. Adaptation according to Vinay and Darbelnet (1958) cited by Baker (6) is a procedure which can be used whenever the context referred to in the original text does not exist in the culture of the target text, thereby necessitating some forms of re-creation. It is not subjected to text fidelity as in translation. While cultural modification or relocation is permitted in adaptation, literary translation celebrates linguistic and thematic fidelity. Owoeye (Adaptation 186) submits that “the existing and the new meet in an artistic marriage to give birth to a literary child imbued with the attributes of both” while Johnson (48) describes adaptation as a simple translation of the precursor texts which could be intersemiotic.

On inter-genre literary adaptation, Adeoti (13) again draws our attention to Wale Ogunyemi’s “*Aare Akogun*” in 1968, which is a film adaptation of *Macbeth* film. In the same vein, the *Othello’s tragic* was adapted by Duro Ladipo in 1970 with the same title “*Aare Akogun*”. He further clarifies literary adaptation as a universal concept when he submits that Roman classical playwrights, Seneca, Plautus and Terence also adapted the works of their Greek predecessors. [...] Moliere, the French Renaissance dramatist, fashioned his comedy, *Les Fourberies de Scapin (The Cheats of Scapin)* after Terence’s *Phormio*. Baker (7) concurs with Adeoti (13) above on the universal nature of literary adaptation. This adaptation of existing text is what Hutcheon (4) calls “a repetition with variations”. Timothy-Asobele (xiv) sees it as a global

dialogue of culture while Contech-Morgan and Olaniyan (53) recapture it as “an intercultural negotiation between the new and the old text.”

Dasylyva (70) distinguishes adaptation from translation in that “translation is a rendering of the original [...] as accurate as possible in the translator’s choice of language without losing its dramatic quality”. Adaptation is simply the re-wording of an existing text with an extension or a reduction of the storyline in the translator’s choice of language with or without distortions. It could be intersemiotic, interlingual and intertextual. A literary adapter transforms an existing text or experience into a new text of its own hermetic value usually from one art medium to another.

4. Literary Adaptation and Modern drama in Nigeria

The romance between literary adaptation and Nigerian modern drama started in the year 1968 when Nigerian playwrights began to adapt existing Western classical texts to achieve their literary targets. The contact between Nigerians and the Western texts, which continues to shape the imagination and creativity of Nigerian writers in literature, drama in particular, is summarized in the position of Irele (69):

In the new literature of Africa expressed in the European languages, the correspondence is a direct one between the themes and preoccupations that have governed the direction of the creative imagination on one hand, and on the other, the distinctive aspects of the modern African experience: [...] that have also determined the lines of articulation of our contemporary literature.

Literary adaptation and drama evolution in Nigeria could also be traced to the traditional theatre called “Alarinjo theatre”. This theatre was developed by the troupes who travel from one place to another around 1950’s entertaining and showcasing their rich cultural patrimony in every milieu they went. This “theatre on the wheel” later formed the hub of the modern Nigerian drama. Gbileka (11) writes on the first Nigerian play, *King Elejigbo and Princess Abeje of Kontangora* written by D.A. Oyedele, first performed in April 22, 1904 by the Egbe Ife drama Group at the Glover Hall before a crowd of more than one thousand people.

Literary adaptation of Western texts to Nigerian contexts, drama in particular gave rise to modern dramatists and playwrights such as Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, Zulu Sofola, Femi Osofisan, Ahmed Yerima and Bode

Sowande. These authors engaged aesthetics in adaptation of Western texts to promote Nigerian literature in general and drama genre in particular. This cultural adaptation first sprang forth in the twentieth Century when Ola Rotimi in 1968 adapted the Sophocle's *Oedipus Rex* of 430 B.C. and the Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* to Nigerian cultural milieu with the title; *The Gods Are Not to Blame*. Esan Oladapo adapted the same work with the title *Teleda L'ase* in 2004. Wole Soyinka's *The Bacchae* of 1973 was adapted from *Le Bacchae* of Euripides of 410 BC and the Zulu Sofola's *The Wizard of Law* in 1975 was an adaptation of Pierre Pathelin's 14 Century *Farce*. Femi Osofisan's *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* (1978) is an adaptation of a Russian writer, Nicolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* of 1836. Molière's *L'avare* of 1668 was adapted to a Yoruba scene by Bode Sowande with the title *Arede Owo* in 1990. Duro Ladipo's *Aare Akogun* in 1970 and Wale Ogunyemi's *Aare Akogun* in 1969 are respectively adapted from Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603) and *Macbeth* (1623). Additionally, *An Inspector Calls* of Ahmed Yerima (2002) is an adaptation of Priestly's *An Inspector Calls* (1945). These adaptations evidently placed our cultural values on the global scene.

5. Theoretical Framework

This work anchors on the theory of Intertextuality which foregrounds the presence of a text in another text in an on-going global dialogue. The term was first associated with French semiotician and critic, Julia Kristeva, in 1976 when she made reference to Bakhtin in her work *The Word, Dialogue and Novel*. She was influenced by Saussurean and Bakhtinian models. Texts, according to this theory, are constructed of already existing discourse and do not present clear and stable meanings but are connected to on-going cultural processes. She describes a word (text) as an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings (Kristeva 36). She postulates that, authors do not create their texts from their own mind, but rather compile them from pre-existing texts. Thus, the text becomes a permutation of other texts.

The theory draws strength from the Post-Modernism theorists' view of the self-insufficiency of a text and its dependency on another text. To these theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes and Michael Riffaterre, the presence of a text in another text in its various forms only explains the dynamics of text and its continuity in an on-going socio-cultural process. Intertextuality, therefore, attempts to unravel this cross-media presence and interaction of texts across the global space. The theory also emphasizes the birth of a new text in place of its author which helps the

researcher to dwell more on the textual analysis. Intertextuality in the present research is the study of relationship between the two plays in term of similarities and divergences when a text is adapted to another milieu.

The practice of adaptation and interpretation from one form of art to another across the globe emphasizes the notions of text projection and text dynamics. In this view, a text is considered an open system as other texts emerge from it as responses from the extra-text environment. Martinez (269) opines that “we can find theories of Intertextuality wherever there has been discourse about texts, from the classic, such as Plato, Aristotle, Horace and Longinus, to Bakhtin, Kristeva and other twentieth-century theorists such as Genette, Barthes, Derida and Riffaterre ...” Mohammad (4) posits that writers are creative, putting together strings of words and ideas to a specific end, and intertextuality is merely a tool of which writers avail themselves to approach a tale.

Balogun (157) explains the relevance of this theory to textual analysis when he identifies its four principles: Reading of a literary text allows an incursion in history; it brings out a resurgent phenomenon that makes culture a place of sudden appearance of forgotten traditions and demonstrate structural disposition of a novel to integrate units of variants in a polyphonic manner; it implies a method with which a reader of a novel perceives a link between the one he is reading and the ones that preceded or succeeded it; it is a concept that an author of a novel draws his experience from “already read” in other works. These tenets capture the need for Intertextuality in a bid to understand the relationship between texts as Barthes (205) opines that cultural codes deployed by any single story will emigrate to other texts and can also be complemented by ancillary art forms; there is no lack of hosts.

A text in this context is in different mediums and means different things to various categories of people and locations. This suggests that, analysis of the relationship among texts as expressed in one cultural code and the interpreted version requires the knowledge of Intertextual theory for better understanding. Graham (1) posits that “texts whether they be literary or non-literary are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call Intertextual”. Whenever the relationship between texts is being discussed, intertextuality is the core of its analysis: thematic, structural, linguistic and stylistic. Rohou (20) sees intertextuality as the presence of an historical culture in a written work. It is a concept in which a narrator cites fragments of other works as he works on “*déjà lu*”. This further establishes that texts are reproductions of existing meaningful experiences, transformed into different mediums of communication through

borrowing, translation or adaptation to another art medium. As the knowledge of the Old Testament and the New Testament is of great importance to a clergy, so is Intertextuality to any meaningful critic of textual analysis.

The application of this theory to the study of Nigerian modern drama in the recent time has shown that African literature was generally influenced by Western texts. This is evident in the works of African dramatists who adapted Western texts to African-Yoruba milieu for cultural purposes, through which the substance of Yoruba cultural heritage was given a visibility among the world literature. According to Oni (269), this cultural heritage can only gain currency when compared with western epistemological thought in line with Soyinka's literary engagements. He emphasizes that, modern Nigerian dramatic presentations are animated by western texts (285).

This theory has been applied to different categories of texts by scholars regardless of the author's status or popularity of the text in question. Adeoti (2010) applied it to the works of Soyinka, Osofisan and Yerima while Afolayan (2012) compared Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* to Hope Eghagha's *Death Not a Redeemer*. The theory helps to identify areas of influence, differences and sociocultural similarities in the selected texts. Also, the reading of original texts reveals thematic and contextual affinities with the adapted texts. It provides a background needed for a meaningful exploration and analysis of the selected texts from the viewpoint of socio-cultural interplay, settings, style, thematic thrust, characterization and plot arrangement. Intertextuality theory also emphasizes the relationship between texts which is the hallmark of this present comparative study.

6. Summary of *The Government Inspector* (1836) and *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* (1978)

6.1. *The Government Inspector* (1836) by Nicola Gogol

It is a classic comedy and a satiric presentation of provincial life in the Nineteenth century Tsar Russia. It depicts the nature of bureaucratic bottleneck in administering the government of Russia. The text exposes the greed, the leadership failure and corruption that characterize the local government officials of the époque. The Mayor, Anton Antonoville heard from his town criers, Bobchinsky and Dobschinsky that the long expected Government Inspector is already in town for a fortnight and he lodges in an Inn. The Mayor in a bid to cover up his administrative errors, when he sees Khlestakov (The mistaken Inspector) offers to pay his Inn bill and takes the Visitor-inspector to his house where he treats him with Presidential delicacies, offers the bribe of

400 rubies. The Mayor offers to marry off his daughter (Marya Anatonovna) to the visitor.

This is an attempt to cover up his atrocities and failures. Khlestakov collects grants and bribes from both the Mayor, other officials, flirts with the Mayor's wife (Anna Andreyevna) and the daughter. The visitor dupes the entire district and finally left with a promise to return and which he never did. This act of impersonation throws the entire District into confusion with the aid of Osip (Khlestakov's boy). The Mayor attempts to deal with any official who speaks against his administration. However, his foolishness was unveiled when the supposed Inspector left a note behind indicating the game of impersonation and corruption he had played on the entire community. As they wandered in their confusion caused by this unimaginable revelation of their foolery, a messenger came and declared the decree of the Tsar (king) from St. Petersburg of the real Government Inspector's arrival and that he needs an immediate attention.

6.2. *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* (1978) by Femi Osofisan

This Nigerian adaptation of Gogol's *The Government Inspector* is not a departure from the older text. It relates closely both in content and in theme. The spectacular thing that is germane in the literary creativity of Osofisan is the introduction of the elements of African performance. The presence of the Ifa priest in their bid to stop the impending visit of the public complaints commissioner from the beginning of the play attests to Osofisan's creative dramatic impetus. Isola plays the role of Khlestakov, a wanderer who became an important official visitor under impersonation. He collected bribes and grants, flirted with Cecilia. The foolishness of the Gogol's Mayor is replicated in Gbonmiayelobiojo when the later engages Baba Fawomi (a Priest) to help cancel the impending visit of Government Official. The foolishness of the entire community plays out at the end. Isola is the prototype and archetypal civil servant of the Nigerian polity whose political ideology is based on graft, deceit, foolery and falsehood.

7. Thematic Examination of *The Government Inspector and Who's Afraid of Solarin?*

The travail of thematic examination and analysis of any literary text is simply the evaluation of its message and its impact in a given milieu par time. The theory of intertextuality concerns itself with the similarities and differences between two or more texts resulting from the practice of literary adaptation. Adaptation as a concept subsumed under the intertextuality theory ruminates

on a text and why an author adapts to suit his milieu. The text under examination as titled; *The Government Inspector* (1836) depicts in humoristic manner the scourge of graft, corruption and leadership failure experienced in the Nineteenth century Tsar of Russia. The level of sociopolitical deterioration in the Twentieth century Nigeria got to its peak at the time when a Nigeria Playwright, Femi Osofisan adapted same text to Nigerian advantage with local content in 1978 with the title *Who's Afraid of Solarin ?*. According to Adeoti (38):

Like Soyinka, Osofisan is discomfited by wasted opportunities to set Africa on a stable course of political and economic development. Indeed, the greed of the ruling elite accounts for the parallels that he draws between the 19th century Russian society depicted in Nicolas Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and post-independence Nigeria in *Who's Afraid of Solarin?*

The theme of a text is the preoccupation of the author. The theme is seen as the spirit-mover of the text. It shows how the author views the society. Sometimes, the message of the author can be polemic. As Léopold Sédar Senghor is known with "La Négritude," so is Emile Zola and the theme of social Justice and Truth. Osofisan is also identified with his revolutionary posture and social justice among the leaders and the led. Olosope (xv) describes Osofisan as a playwright who has clearly emerged as a revolutionary ideologue and the most consciously inter-textual Nigerian playwright in his use of myths and history. Osofisan is a revolutionary playwright who recycles not only Greek tragedies and the French canons but also the Russian masterpieces. He explores, in this play, the Russian society of the Nineteenth century to unveil same vices in Nigerian context with the view of changing the societal perspective as regards corrupt practices in leadership and political arena. Effecting social changes is the bedrock of Osofisan's adaptations. Adeoti (22) rightly says that, analysis of the polity with a view to effecting a change is a fundamental inspiration behind all attempts at adaptation by Osofisan.

a) Leadership Failure: The leadership bureaucracy that the Nineteenth century Russia experienced is similar to what is practiced in the Twentieth century Nigeria. This includes bribery, corruption and greed which become prevalent in the society and among African leaders with a reference to Nigeria. Bureaucratic bottleneck and the corrupt practices in leadership style of never-want-to-leave syndrome made the Mayor and Gbonmiayelobiojo together with

their entourage to oppose to the visitation of the Inspector. While Gogol's character (Mayor) uses bribe and material offers to lure the Inspector into corruption, Gbonmiayelobiojo employs the service of a spiritualist (Baba Fawomi) to stop the visit. The leadership and structural failure has been a common phenomenon among the Nigerian political elites and has remained a scourge to national development from independence.

In Gogol's narrative, both the leader (Mayor) and the led (people) see bribery and corruption as a way of life. In the same vein, some Nigerian leaders would prefer the marabout, using culture and tradition to run their type of democratic leadership. The leadership decadence in Gogol's character, Mayor is revealed when he first offers 400 rubies to Khlestakov (visitor) who in the first instance demands for a bribe of 200 rubies. The Mayor pays the hotel bills of the Visitor, welcomes him to his house with presidential delicacies and offers to marry off his daughter to the Visitor, while the Mayor's wife openly romanced with the visitor. For Osofisan, this satiric resemblance between the Tsar government of Russia and the Nigerian Local Government administration is a literary creation that portrays the Nigeria corrupt political system. Osofisan (27) in *Yungbayungba and the Dance Contest* comments that, the play tried to make relevant to our own local Government system which has just been established, and in which there is a lot of corruption.

The author also portrays the leadership failure of the Local government in this text when Gbonmiayelobiojo and his officials venture into hiring a herbalist Baba Fawomi to help them ward off the impending visit. The use of traditional approach of sacrifice in lieu of leadership values and principles obtainable on the global political scene underlines the corrupt nature of an average contemporary political player in Russia and Nigeria. A public officer in Nigeria does not submit to the law and justice but to subvert it and does all possible to go free. Baba Fawonni demands wine but is offered liquid soap and was offended. This goes further to explain the deceitful nature of the political class of our time (Osofisan 25).

b) Bribery and Corruption: There are many Isola, vagabonds on the street of Nigeria under political parties, military, Para-military, traditional and religious umbrellas, who extort and usurp money and properties from common people. A corrupt society is a fertile ground for sociopolitical rivalry. Gogol exposes these corrupt practices in the Russian Tsar Community of Nineteenth century and the Twentieth century Nigeria is typified by Osofisan. Eruvbetine (45), with amazement clearly points out the extent of corruption in Nigeria. In his words:

Most public officers and institutions as well as many members of staff of high profile private sector establishments meant to render services to Nigeria have syndicated an all-encompassing machinery for extorting money from whoever needs their services.[...] all become so mired in bribery and corruption that it does seem as if our Nigerian constitution has unwritten provision for bribery and corruption.

Timothy-Asobele (130) notes that this theme of bribery and corruption is also viable in the earlier part of the play when Khlestakov demands 200 rubies as loan from the mayor. And the Mayor soliloquizing says: Well, thank God for that! He took it. And we manage to ship him 400 instead of 200. In the same vein, Osofisan sees the corrupt Council officials and politicians in Nigeria, their fraudulent ways, their insincerity, and the diversionary method of spending public funds for personal gains has put them to disrepute regionally and globally.

To say Nigeria is a corrupt society cannot be over emphasized. Many in leadership positions in the country today are school dropouts, half schooled and ex-convicts, sometimes with qualifications and certificates sagas as witnessed in recent general elections.

c) Threat and Deceit: The theme of threat goes round the two plays. Khlestakov threatens the Mayor as well as Isola does to Gbonmiayelobiojo. The Ifa Priest, Baba fawomi also threatens the community for offering toilet soap to Ifa in lieu of palm oil. The Mayor threatens the people to send them to jail when he becomes the Inspector's in-law. Unfortunately, he is duped. Timothy-Asobele (129) explains that:

The Mayor automatically becomes so self-esteemed, believing to become father-in-law to a person, an officer of the equal. He threatens to severely with all who complained about him to the so-called government inspector. He vows to send some off even to Siberia.

8. *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* : A Sociopolitical Literary Creation

Perhaps, the question should be "Who will not be afraid of Solarin?" Dr. Augustus Taiwo known as Tai-Solarin (1922-1994) was a staunch disciplinarian in his days among Nigerian civil servants. He was the Public

Complaints Commissioner for Oyo, Ondo and Ogun States in the Old Western Region, he takes no nonsense. A great social, human rights activist and crusader who wants to see Nigeria survive the infections of system and leadership failure, bribery and corruption. His presence is a threat to any corrupt civil servant of the time; hence, Osofisan's dramatic creation of Solarin's name as the title, by implication, is to pass the message of corruption free society to Nigerians. The play is still relevant in contemporary Nigeria. This explains why it is readapted to a play in Yoruba language by Dotun Ogundeji in 2010 with the title *Yeepa! Solaarin Nbo* and was staged in Lagos as the independence play.

This adaptation goes a long way explaining the creative relevance of Osofisan's literary and theatrical expertise in relation to Nigerian politics as Owoeye (*African Research* 190) rightly puts it that, the theatre of Osofisan is often the melting point of various issues mythical concerns. The totality of his works reveals a deep concern for the effectiveness of the machinery of running society that is intricately linked to its source. Isola, a street boys turns the awaited PCC is a principal satiric tool in the hand of Osofisan in exposing corrupt government officials of the time.

Conclusion

This study has established comparative studies as a viable source of creativity in the contemporary Nigerian literary discourse. The Nigeria-Russian socio-cultural and political similarities of the Nineteenth and the Twenty-first centuries in terms of leadership failure, political impersonation, greed, bribery and corruption were viewed through this intertextual examination of Gogol's and Osofisan's dramaturgies. There is universality of human societies and cultures as it was craftily re-interpreted in Osofisan's work from Gogol's text. It becomes clear that affinity to the pre-existing text with creative deconstruction and appropriation to immediate environment is germane to Comparative literary studies of a Nation. The newly derived text carries its own mark of originality being a comedy of error that shows the ugly nature of the Nigerian society characterized by political greed and leadership failure in the Twentieth century. It suggests a moment of reflections on the need to build a corruption free society where all will enjoy the boom and escape the doom.

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