

The Defense of Culture in Ama Ata Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here*: The Use of Orality as a Textual Strategy

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In her book *African Novels and the Question of Orality*, Eileen Julien bitterly attacks the notion that there is anything particularly African about orality or anything essentially oral about African culture. The "oral form," she contends, "is not the concrete literary simulacrum of African essence but is, rather, a manifestation of social consciousness, vision, and possibility allowed by particular moments and niches in African sociocultural life."¹ Despite her doubts about the wisdom of associating orality with Africa, Julien does acknowledge that the manifestation of oral forms in the work of African writers is common, but rarely discussed. Indeed, her book is, to date, the most detailed discussion of the major oral forms employed by such important African writers as Camara Laye, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, and Sembene Ousmane. It is likely to remain the definitive study in the field for a long time.

Oral forms hold a special appeal for African writers, and Julien identifies a number of reasons why: "The art of speaking is highly developed and esteemed in Africa for the very material reasons the voice has been and continues to be the more available medium of expression, that people spend a good deal of time with one another, talking, debating, entertaining. For these very reasons, there is also respect for speech and for writing as communicative social acts" (24). But because Julien would both sniff at the idea of associating the oral with Africa, while simultaneously acknowledging the fact that "there is a continuity in African verbal arts. . . . The artists are creatures of culture, their traditions are in them and inform their works" (25), she engages in too much special pleading, betraying a defensiveness or protectionism toward Africa and the oral which is as objectionable as the Eurocentric prejudices that she attacks. If we are genuinely convinced that the oral is not an insignia of inferiority, we will hardly feel the need to conceal the fact that the African way of life is dominated by its oral culture.

One undeniable truth is that orality still serves as a badge of authenticity in the work of a number of African writers. But this tradition, which was first cogently elaborated in Chinua Achebe's famous words about his primary literary goal being to help his society "regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement,"² has been radicalized by younger writers, including Ayi Kwei Armah and Ngugi, among others. What these younger writers all have in common is an agenda that goes beyond Achebe's intention to lead his people to a recognition that African societies "frequently had a philoso-

¹ Eileen Julien, *African Novels and the Question of Orality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992) 155. Subsequent references are to this edition and will appear in the text.

² Chinua Achebe, "The Novelist as Teacher," in his *Morning Yet On Creation Day Essay* (London: Heinemann, 1975) 42-45.

phy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all, they had dignity³ toward using oral forms as instruments for self-interrogation and as catalysts for revolutionary change in society. Ama Ata Aidoo, the only woman fiction writer of substance to come out of Ghana so far, reveals especially in her 1970 book of short stories, *No Sweetness Here*, that she was contemporaneous with Armah and Ousmane (and many years ahead of Ngugi) in using oral strategies in fiction both to subject her people to self-scrutiny and to suggest the means that could lead them to freedom.

Ironically, this all-important aspect of Aidoo's work has received scant attention. She is, for instance, omitted entirely in Julien's study. And despite the early attention Dapo Adulugba drew to the didactic element in *No Sweetness Here*—a feature borrowed from oral tradition—by remarking that Aidoo exhibits "the involved, sympathetic eye of a critical patriot,"⁴ criticism of the oral quality in Aidoo's work has been deflected to her 1979 novel, *Our Sister Killjoy*, which, in fact, relies less on oral forms than do her short stories.⁵ And yet, as Craig Tapping has conceded, "to hear Aidoo read from this novel [*Our Sister Killjoy*], her short stories, plays, or poetry is to recognize that . . . Aidoo graphs the voice of an excited story teller, marking intonations and emphases through the learned technical conventions of open or free verse and its denoted terminals."⁶ Nonetheless, the transposed oral form, on the one hand, and an actual oral event, on the other, are, of course, two entirely different activities. Cynthia Ward makes this distinction clear with a fine example: "The value of the oral tale to the oral culture lies not entirely in the tale itself but, perhaps more significantly, in the discussion it generates after it is told, discussion that allows each participant to respond, whether by taking the center, presenting another illustrative fiction, or displaying his or her individual style."⁷ The oral performance is a live event that encourages communal participation, with gestures, mimicry, and body movement as its vital aspects. The difficulty in attempting to capture in print the key elements of performance is what makes Cynthia Ward remark, "What is lost in . . . transcription—where spoken words are lifted from their immediate social context and deposited on a page, which tolerates no immediate response—is precisely the oral."⁸

But what about the different ways in which people in oral and literate cultures interpret phenomena? Ward opines that while there are differences, the idea popularized by Jack Goody and Ian Watt⁹ about the presumed simplicity of cognition in oral culture, relative to literate culture, is a myth. She believes that in writ-

³ Chinua Achebe, "The Role of the Writer in a New Nation," *Nigeria Magazine* 81 (1964): 157-60.

⁴ Ama Ata Aidoo, *No Sweetness Here* (London: Longman, 1970) 15. Subsequent references are to this edition and will appear in the text.

⁵ See Craig Tapping, "Voices Off: Models of Orality in African Literature and Literary Criticism," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 21.3 (1990): 73-86; Kwaku Larbi Korang, "Ama Ata Aidoo's Voyage Out: Mapping the Coordinates of Modernity and African Selfhood in *Our Sister Killjoy*," *Kunapipi* 14.3 (1992): 50-61; Arlene Elder, "Ama Ata Aidoo and the Oral Tradition: A Paradox of Forum and Substance," in *Women in African Literature Today*, ed. E. Durosimi Jones et al. (London: James Currey and Trenton, 1987) 109-18.

⁶ Tapping 81-82.

⁷ Cynthia Ward, "What They Told Buchi Emecheta: Oral Subjectivity and the Joys of 'Otherhood,'" *PMLA* 105.1 (Jan. 1990): 83-97.

⁸ Ward 88.

⁹ Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, ed., J. Goody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) 27-68.

ing cultures "discourse takes on its dictatorial 'discursive universe'"; so here, unlike what obtains in oral cultures, "words become objects with genealogies, subject to use in the service of establishing power and affirming an oppressive status quo." However, Ward goes on to observe how "even in writing, the oral antiaesthetic makes a space for itself as writers who . . . insist on life outside the text take up the pen only to find that by writing they abrogate their own rights over direct semantic ratification."¹⁰ Although her argument is obviously overstated, due, understandably, to the perennial frustration researchers experience in capturing the oral material in cold print, Ward succeeds in exploring the oral as manifested in the work of the Nigerian woman writer Buchi Emecheta. My paper hopes to accomplish a similar task in the work of Aidoo, Ghana's foremost woman writer.

Aidoo's *No Sweetness Here* is, like Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood*,¹¹ a defense of both culture and womanhood. It is a defense of culture in that it deals with the acculturation problems of Africans, portraying an idealistic view of the threatened values; feminist in that it deals most sympathetically with the experience—the longings, agonies, frustrations, and pain—of being a woman in a male-dominated society. Furthermore, Aidoo means in her stories to achieve a textual representation that draws on the aesthetics of orality.

From the outset of the collection's opening story, "Everything Counts," the narrative voice adopts the framework of village gossip. The story's central focus is the disturbing culture of imitation gripping African societies, and it is narrated by a sophisticated protagonist, Sissie, who has been abroad and can place the sudden change in fine perspective. When Sissie returns home after her studies abroad, she discovers the disease rocking the nation. The nation is wallowing in such decadence that, "from the air-stewardesses to the grade-three typist in the offices, every girl simply wore a wig . . . blatantly, aggressively, crudely" (3). The girls make their hair look like that of white girls, with "flowing curls falling on their shoulders" (3), and women whom Sissie remembers as having smooth black skin have had it bleached, creating "funny patch works of faces and necks" and giving the impression that "a terrible plague was sweeping through the land" (3-4).

The crass materialism afflicting Ghanaians is further revealed in the questions that Sissie is bombard with at home about the kind of car she is bringing home from overseas. There is no way she can make her family understand that "cars and fridges are ropes with which we are hanging ourselves" (6). Through the narrator's perplexed, angry tone, Aidoo decries the culture of colonial mimicry and imitation—the notion that the authenticity of a colonized person rests on the degree of his or her assimilation of imperial values or standards of conduct. The dynamics of performance are evident throughout the story in dramatic exclamations and repetitions, and in the acerbic language, all of which are designed to draw an involved response from the reader: "The wig. Ah, the wig. They say it is made of artificial fibre. Others swear that if it is not gipsy hair, then it is Chinese. Extremists are sure they are made from the hairs of dead white folk—this one gave nightmares, for she had read somewhere, a long time ago, about Germans making lampshades out of Jewish people's skins" (1). As in the oral tale, exaggeration,

¹⁰ Ward 88.

¹¹ Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (New York: Braziller, 1976).

macabre humor, and speculative symbolism are other key devices employed to expose the national folly.

Aidoo infuses the wig with a new meaning, using it to symbolize the inferiority complex that makes Africans scramble for "second-hand clothes from America," and recruit Europeans who are "second-rate experts" that give "first-class dangerous advice" and "uselessly fifth-rate opinions" (1). Accordingly, she employs the wig as an instrument to condemn the loss of initiative and self-confidence among her people.

Kwaku Korang identifies Aidoo's central concern in *Our Sister Killjoy* (a text he places within what he calls "the rubric of a pan-African literary nationalism") as being the challenging of "the myths that singularize history as the story of Europe and its dependent others."¹² He has also indirectly summarized her preoccupations in *No Sweetness Here*: "Aidoo's novel undoes and reverses those structures that, in Fanon's words, enslave the black person to 'the white man's artefacts.' The novel's counterfactual truth is that 'the expansion of Western civilization in modern times' constitutes a juggernaut phenomenon which chokes all life and even eliminates whole races of people in its path of growth."¹³ By taking full advantage of the immediacy of impact inherent in the short story form, *No Sweetness Here* teaches even more memorable lessons about the necessity of self-reliance. In other stories like "In the Cutting of a Drink," "The Message," "No Sweetness Here," "Two Sisters," and "For Whom Things Did Not Change," in particular, Aidoo shows an intimate understanding of the plight of ordinary people who are brought down, as it were, by forces larger than themselves. She demonstrates immense skill in the use of various oral narrative strategies in unfolding her themes. Although the stories may embody several different issues, they are all united by a common thread—the moral and traditional wisdom that Aidoo effectively weaves into her original tales.

"In the Cutting of a Drink," for example, presents a chilling story of human degradation that could have easily degenerated into banality but for the impressive control Aidoo has over her material. Thus, despite her deep emotional involvement, Aidoo avoids sentimentality in the story. A young man from the country goes to the city in search of his sister, who has dropped out of school and escaped into this unknown world, and his quest leads him to a drinking place—one of the city's numerous centers of degraded life—where he meets her. She has become a prostitute and the knowledge, when it comes, stabs him like a knife.

At the climax of the story, Aidoo inserts an ironic element into the situation: although the young man takes a drink to cope with his incomprehension, anger, inner turmoil, and dejection, he suddenly finds himself plunging into alcoholism, which leads him down into another deeper level of dereliction, that of womanizing. By employing Ewe proverbs, rhetorical questions, exaggeration, storytelling, and other devices of oral expression, Aidoo uses the narrator to expose the insane social whirl that devours all who go to the city: "Ei! my little sister, are you asking me a question? Oh! you want to know whether I found Mansa? I do not

¹² Korang 52.

¹³ Korang 52.

know. . . . Our uncles have asked me to tell everything that happened there, and you too! I am cooking the whole meal for you, why do you want to lick the ladle now? Yes, I went to dance with her. I kept looking at her so much I think I was all the time stepping on her feet. I say, she was as black as you and I, but her hair was very long and fell on her shoulders like that of a white woman. I did not touch it but I saw it was very soft. Her lips with that red paint looked like a fresh wound. Yes, I danced with her. When the music ended, I went back to where I was sitting. I do not know what she told her companions about me, but I heard them laugh"(35-36).

In "In the Cutting of a Drink" there is much food for thought. Although the story would be a disaster if judged by the laws of realistic fiction, it makes moving reading on an allegorical level. The way the attempt at a rescue mission leads the rescuer to become a participant in the debasement of the life he wishes to redeem enables Aidoo to make the point that it is the city which is evil. Similarly, Mansa's original defilement did not happen because of any inherent weaknesses which might be attributable to her personality. Aidoo depicts the city as a tragic landscape that devours all, revealing an admirably sympathetic understanding of the dilemma of her characters, whom she presents as victims of their situation rather than beings depraved by nature. In her stories, Aidoo might seem determined to show how the West was instrumental in bringing about the erosion of Africa's traditions, but her stories derive their major appeal from showing vestiges of the threatened heritage, of how Africans hold tenaciously to their cultural values. We can trace the progress of the strong commitment that Aidoo makes to the traditions of her culture by examining the story entitled "The Message."

"The Message" comes first among the stories in that its style is perfect for the topic. The story is a delightful piece which shows inventiveness, skill, intelligence, sensitivity, and craftsmanship. In this haunting story the granddaughter of an old woman named Nana Amfoa undergoes a Cesarean operation. When the news reaches Amfoa's village from Cape Coast, a mood of despondency grips her and quickly spills over to her neighbors. She then travels to Cape Coast and the hospital, where it seems at first that the old woman will meet insurmountable obstacles when the duty nurse requests her to wait for visiting hours before she can see the patient. However, Amfoa is eventually taken to the ward where she meets her granddaughter in good health—with her newborn twins. She is overwhelmed by joy, a happiness that is as limitless as was her initial despondency.

What makes "The Message" particularly interesting is the way Aidoo handles dialogue, vernacular rhetoric, and interjections in such a manner that the reader can hear the way the Ewes talk and converse. In the distinctive tone of daily exchanges there is nothing stilted or affected or contrived. We are transported back to a village where we confront intimate, honest, and involved participation of the people in each other's daily lives. By making the way the Ewes talk and think an integral aspect of the story's effect, Aidoo records vividly the way a whole village reacts with horror to the plight of one of their members. By contrasting the villagers' communal participation in each other's problems with the individualism of city dwellers, Aidoo starkly highlights the superiority of African traditions. The lorry driver whose comments first give the old woman insight into the township codes serves as a crucial bridge between tradition and modernity, while belonging

to neither. Although he may appear rude and insensitive—like the Messengers and Interpreters in Achebe's novels of preindependence Africa—he is an ambiguous figure whose immense influence and power derive from the cunningness with which he exploits the two worlds by playing them against each other.

F. Odun Balogun, a Nigerian scholar who has carried out extensive studies of the African short story, with particular emphasis on language usage, says that African short stories compare favorably with those written by non-African authors. In fact, claims Balogun, "From the angle of language usage, not too many African stories in English can be faulted."¹⁴ He might as well have added Aidoo to his list of the successful short-story writers of Africa, for in her ability to use language—particular idioms, turns of phrase, and proverbs—to not only convey the feel of Ewe culture, but also reveal the personality traits of her characters, Aidoo shows a deep knowledge of the possibilities of language.

I have remarked earlier that the impact of all Aidoo's stories derives from her keen awareness that a story is not made interesting merely by its subject, but more importantly by its style, by how it is narrated. And although Odun Balogun in the essay cited above reasons that even a story with a thin theme can be redeemed by a good mastery of language, Aidoo's pieces like the title story "No Sweetness Here" and "Two Sisters" show that the best results are obtained from an intelligent balance of subject and style.

The theme of "No Sweetness Here" is the hardship African women encounter in polygamous households. This is in itself a subject of substantial interest but Aidoo adds pep to it by her choice of narrator: a teacher in a village school who knows her subject well, is objective, and is sensitive to suffering. She begins by recreating the daily routine of life in a typical village—the cycle of work and rest that typifies the life of ordinary women. Such a figure is Mami Ama, the central character of the story; a woman who has reasons to be happy but is not. Though she and her husband have been physically married for a long time, they have long been spiritually divorced. The object of abuse by her husband and his extended family and of the ridicule of her friends, Mami Ama's story frames the lives of many ordinary women who are victims of male brutality.

In the narrative design of the story, Aidoo is sensitive to the oral tradition of her culture, and the narrator's words capture well the rhythms of Ewe speech. She builds up Mami Ama's character charmingly—always dutiful, cheerful, hard-working; in short, doing all her best to get on in life. Ultimately, Aidoo designs Mami's story as a protest against women's lot. Now an orphan, Mami gives everything to her marriage so as to secure happiness, but she gains nothing. When the divorce takes place, she will be separated from her only son, who will automatically be given to his father for custody. To reflect how the child means everything in her whole life, Mami calls him "my husband, my brother, my father, my all-in-all" (63).

¹⁴ Odun F. Balogun, "Linguistic Characteristics of the African Short Story," in *The Question of Language in African Literature Today*, eds. E. Durosimi Jones, Eustace Palmer, and M. Jones (London: James Currey, 1991) 51-60.

Aidoo confirms the crucial interest she takes in her Ewe expressive heritage through the dramatic effect she strives for. In "No Sweetness Here" the sense of performance is heightened. The story builds up to a very emotionally charged level. An instance is the scene of reunion between Mami and her son, Kwesi. When Kwesi returns from school we sense the filial bond, the love and affectionate care of a good mother. Even though, as we learn, Kwesi does not help his mother as other children do by bringing home firewood, water, or working on the farm, Mami is uncomplaining. A crucial irony that enhances the dramatic impact of the story is that the divorce happens on a festival day, so on the fated day when Kwesi will be separated for good from his mother, he is happily playing football, innocent of what is happening.

The divorce scene, which presents one of the most unkind and most brutalizing treatments of womanhood in the whole of African fiction, affords Aidoo an opportunity to launch an open attack on some of the injustices embedded in traditional African culture. To the monologue of the narrator—we seem to get most of the information from the narrator's reflections on Mami's plight—Aidoo adds dialogue, capitalizing effectively on its possibilities for both psychological penetration and dramatic representation. The reader witnesses the members of Mami's husband's family gang up with their son to humiliate a woman he once loved. The maltreatment that Mami receives is indeed pathetic; at the moment of separation she is branded foul names, abused, and then asked to refund her husband the dowry he paid on her. All her labors to feed and clothe her son, and to cater for his education without her husband's support, come to nothing—they take him away from her. The breakup involves two families, two communities that once were bonded by love. So hatred and animosity have replaced love and fellow feeling. The untimely death of Kwesi (from a snake bite) might belie a narrative design that reflects the author's desperation—a sort of an extreme and exaggerated reaction of pain to the injustices women suffer when polygamous marriages fail—but, in general, Aidoo's telling of this story embodies one of the attributes of the African writers who borrow from oral tradition: while acknowledging "the power and charm of the African oral tradition [she] will have none of that social stratification that the tales put forward."¹⁵

Isidore Okpewho, who makes the statement quoted above in the specific context of Ayi Kwei Armah's novels, has a long experience in exploring the nature of the transition from orality to writing. His view of the social philosophy which underpins traditional African societies therefore serves as a timely corrective to the romanticized notions held by Western critics such as Cynthia Ward, who believes that traditional African societies were essentially egalitarian in outlook, and that it is modern developments which introduced the social stratification that the modern African writers inevitably defend in their novels, poems, and plays. In Ama Ata Aidoo's stories the return to roots is not conducted in the fashion of Black writers who show blind loyalty to their roots, since she openly denounces some of the patriarchal abuses associated with tradition; but her main concern is to expose the moral confusion afflicting the new nations as a consequence of the clash between African and Western cultures. For example, by paying great atten-

¹⁵ Isidore Okpewho, "Myth and Modern Fiction: Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons*," *African Literature Today* 13 (1983): 1-23.

tion to the frivolity, self-degradation, and corruption associated with the urban culture in stories like "Two Sisters," she holds the new set of values bequeathed to Africans by the colonial venture entirely responsible for the continent's postindependence social malaise.

Through the career of Mercy, the protagonist of "Two Sisters," Aidoo makes her most trenchant commentaries on the moral problems visited on Africa by the new dispensation brought about by modernity. After her mother dies, Mercy leaves to stay with her older sister. Though Mercy was sent to school, she does not pass her examinations and so ends up a typist in the civil service. Then, urged on by her elder sister, Mercy quickly degenerates into prostitution. The story depicts the temptations that open to a life of relative luxury and ease in this society, where one can come by sudden wealth without having to worry about anybody asking from where and how such wealth came.

At the beginning, Mercy's yearnings for self-improvement are summarized as follows: "As she shakes out the typewriter cloak and covers the machine with it, the thought of the bus she has to hurry to catch goes through her like a pain. It is her luck, she thinks. Everything is just her luck. Why, if she had one of those graduates for a boy-friend, wouldn't he come and take her home every evening? And she knows that a girl does not herself have to be a graduate to get one of those boys" (87). Thus Aidoo opens Mercy's story with the insinuation that she began her yearning for cars as a necessity for her to perform at her place of work. Like every good storyteller does, Aidoo raises the reader's curiosity about what the turn of events in Mercy's life will be. Also, by moving to the terrain of psychological realism, and reporting Mercy's experiences through her own consciousness, daydreams, and reveries, the writer then lends great credibility to them, the authenticity deriving from the reader's belief that he or she is witnessing events that are uppermost in the protagonist's mind.

At the background of Mercy's predicament is an insensitive establishment, a government civil service that fails to provide for the welfare of all its citizens. However, the author loses no time in revealing how, under such a rule of social traditions in which Mercy finds herself, her initiation into self-degradation can only be delayed for a short period of time because of the materialistic expectations of family members who put silent pressure on her to become a woman of significance.

Interestingly, the immediate stimulus that precipitates Mercy's moral degeneracy comes from her older sister, Connie, who actually means her younger sister well. Through the two sisters' relationship, the story explores the problems of living decently within a decadent social setup. This tension is effectively dramatized through the protective attitude of Connie, who at the surface gives the impression of a pleasant, friendly, jovial, and easygoing person but who, deep down, is torn apart by middle-class aspirations and pretensions. Indeed, the message that resonates throughout the story is that if Connie were not so blinded by false aspirations, she would discover that her insidious materialism is responsible for her sister's confusion.

The weight of the paternalistic pressures exerted by Connie is so great that Mercy constantly expresses a wish to escape. The following exchange between the two sisters offers a clue: "Mercy, what is the matter? What have I done? What have I done? Why have you come home so angry?" Mercy broke into tears. 'Oh I am sorry. I am sorry, Sissie. It's just that I am sick of everything. The office, living with you and your husband. I want a husband of my own, children. I want . . . I want . . .'" (89). By exposing Mercy's life dream as being the ordinary quest to be fulfilled as a woman, Aidoo contrasts her nobility with her elder sister's base-ness. Whereas Mercy is a decent girl who wants to be faithful to James, her boyfriend, Connie discourages her getting emotionally involved with men, and suggests she consider material benefits uppermost. Following Connie's philosophy that she can "love several men at the same time" (91), her marriage falls apart, giving the writer the material with which to present marriage as an untidy affair because of the extramarital sexual escapades the couple indulges in. It is therefore credible that it is Connie who initiates her younger sister into a life of moral laxity, whereby Mercy dumps James because of his poverty and begins to go out with Mensar—Author, a member of parliament—at fifty years of age an old man—so that Connie can get an "electric motor for her sewing machine" (95).

In presenting these events with a satiric searchlight that exposes starkly the stupidity of those who barter away genuine values for the things that bring momentary gratification, Aidoo reveals her true significance as a writer. As the authorial commentary makes clear, the moral lesson to learn from the likes of Mercy—now embarked on a suicidal course—is immense: "Dear little child came back from the playground with her toe bruised. Shall we just blow cold air from our mouth on it or put on a salve? Nothing matters really. Just see that she does not feel unattended. And the old sea roars on. This is a calm sea, generally. Too calm in fact, this Gulf of Guinea. The natives sacrifice to him on Tuesdays and once a year celebrate him. They might save their chickens, their eggs and their yams. And as for the feast once a year, he doesn't pay much attention to it either. They are always celebrating one thing or another and they surely don't need him for an excuse to celebrate one more day. He has seen things happen along these beaches. Different things. Contradictory things. Or just repetitions of old patterns" (95-96). All the stories in *No Sweetness Here* are conceived in these reconstructive terms as an attempt to restore decency through the inculcation of traditional moral standards. The "old sea" in the above passage refers to life; ultimately, Aidoo's message is that the quality of our life is determined by what we make of our privileges and disadvantages on earth.

Unlike many an alienated Western-educated African, Aidoo takes a deep interest in her roots. Her achievement in the act of simulated oral performance that I have discussed in this essay confirms that the strategies and morals embedded in traditional oral literature can contribute meaningfully toward the redirection of all the shared patterns of cultural habits that govern contemporary African societies.