The Artist and the Nation: A Reflection of Onwueme’s Mirror for Campus

By:
Dr. Oluwafunminiyi Mabawonku
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye
E-mail: niyimabs@hotmail.com

David Ekanem Udoinwang
University of Ibadan
dudoinwang@yahoo.com

Introduction
Tess Onwueme’s dramatic artistry, social vision and commitment to the cause of human progress leaves a significant and lasting impression on Nigerian and indeed, African literary landscape. Since the pioneering works of Hubert Ogunde and his Concert Party fame through the generational prodigies of the Ene Henshaw’s, J. P. Clark’s, the Ola Rotimi’s, the Femi Osofisan’s, to the sublimely engaging intellectual offerings of Wole Soyinka that epitomized the aesthetic and political ingenuity of Nigerian theatre practitioners and stage economists, successive generations of artists have continued to exert their creative energy towards addressing the artistic and the socio-economic aspirations of the Nigerian society. These playwrights have not only brought their creative endowments and theatrical excellence and investments to bear on the stark realities of our chequered experience as a nation, but the patriots have passionately deployed their creative talents as patriotic duties through “engaging in the Olympics of cultural regeneration whose end result is ameliorative self-development” (Ibitokun 2010: 3). These conglomerates of artists and visionaries, and others in the different genres of creativity and critical engagements, have also in diverse ways created the forum for the cultivation of talents and for exchange of ideas that are developmental and crucial to the pursuit of goals of a purposeful society.

In the theoretical exploration of the goals of literature in such a society like ours that has continued to totter and wobble at old age, Kolawole (2005) averred that our literary involvements should be “located at the interface between history and epistemology, fiction and realism, tradition and modernity, change and alterity…”, and adds that the notion of the ‘death of the author’ in Western theory of literature “which presumes that the author and [auterist] data are insignificant”, to an African literary scholar, stands challenged (7). This is because in this perception, the African artist is the child of history, a history that exudes pains with the memory that cannot be swept under in any
way because we live this experience on daily basis such that this manifest as open sore in every facets of our national life. An example of this is aptly demonstrated in Onwueme’s *Mirror for Campus* and indeed Sofola’s *Song of A Maiden*. James Tsaaior’s (2010) critical overview examines the Nigeria’s social spectrum that constitutes an embodiment of many paradoxes and presents a scenario that is partly being projected in Tess Onwueme’s theatre in *Mirror for Campus* (MFC). In the context of our national circumstance, there have over the years been noticeable gargantuan growth in natural resources and human capital, but at the same time, the manifest endemic poverty garnished with greed, squalor and misery have remained essentially the social impetus of Nigerian reality. The richly endowed nation, the ‘hibernating’ and immobile ‘giant’ has remained economically comatose, beset by a myriad of social problems and leadership ineptness in many critical areas of national life. It is against this social backdrop that Nigerian literature has been shaped and given both aesthetic and social impetuses. In trying to locate Nigerian literature and its artists within this social milieu, Tsaaior again states:

Nigeria’s monumental failure to lead has continued to receive literary and critical attention from its many creative minds. Nigerian writers spanning the generic and generational gamut have reached deeply into their quivers to cast barbed arrows at their nation which inspired great optimism at birth but has chosen to squander her patrimony. Foremost novelist, Chinua Achebe, Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, J. P. Cark-Bekeredemo, Gabriel Okara, among others of the early era, have been most unsparing in their critical dialogue with their nation, never failing to accuse its political elite of an entrenched culture of corruption and malfeasance (ibid. 2010: 11)

Among the radical but objective contemporary Nigerian dramatists and playwrights, Tess Onwueme’s prodigious aura pervades the sphere of creative idea and critical involvements. With her creative fecundity on stage as dramatist, in creative efficiency and outspokenness, and in her sense of commitment to the cause of national regeneration, the Amazon and patriot has deployed the medium of dramatic literature to navigate beyond gender in her exploration of the critical viewpoints about literature and the society. She projects the relevance of the artists in the process of nation building and for the enhancement of human freedom.

Tess Onwueme’s dramatic piece in *Mirror for Campus* metaphorically, generates fruitful debate in the quest for finding the panacea for the amelioration of the present decadence and stagnancy in our
society as she turns the searchlight inward on the academia at the ivory tower as the social bastion and the foundry of ideas of which she is an active and resourceful participant. This strategy translates into a radical departure from the general practice in which the academics at the Ivory Towers had always posed as ‘holier than thou’, immune from the foibles of the outer society, routinely blaming the political elite and every other facets of the society for the attendance avarice, prevalent social malfeasance and economic stagnancy. Onwueme’s postulation in the thematic enactment, the social contexts and the overall temperament articulated through the characterization in the play, postures her as a revolutionary and visioner that is bent on re-awakening first and foremost, members of the academia for more forceful and result-oriented commitment, deep involvement and engaging attention to the dilapidated state of the university system in Nigeria.

The aim of the artist in this discourse therefore, is to engineer a radical shift from the prevalent development paradigm in order to quicken the process of national transformation. Mirror for Campus demonstrates a national conscience and a passion for change – for meaningful change that would rob on the basic needs and aspiration of the society. From the commencement of the play, the playwright sets the dramatic scenario that is conducive for the achievement of the unfolding momentum as an arresting antecedence. In essence, the playwright’s longing and doggedness for making literature relevant to the material existence of the society, and as a tool not just for social change but also for technological revolution in the society is made manifest in the thoughtfulness and craftiness of the creative piece as observed in the strategy of scenic construction. In this regards, Onwueme believes arts should not in any way be seen as an esoteric act that trades on alienating ideas, or the artists to be adjudged as an eccentric and endemic being, pleasing him/herself on fantasies and far at sea from the world of reality. Against this and the gory background of colonial experience with its postcolonial tributes in creative imaginations of many African writers, critics from this historical and social strata have consistently argued that literature that fails to focus on the prevalent social contradictions in postcolonial societies have lost its value and denied itself of any relevance. Asein (1982) states that “it is the responsibility of the literary humanist to seek to highlight not so much the exotic values that are alienated from the collective human experience as those normative values which bear directly on our experiences and help to illuminate the darker recesses of our private domes” (viii).
THE ARTISTS AND THE CONTRASTIVE SYMPHONIES

Tess Onwueme who is essentially an outstanding artist and scholar of the womanist school of thought, in piloting her dramaturgy in the tradition of her forebears, has committed her creativity and talents to the cause of national regeneration, focusing the ways society should meaningfully evolve, articulating directions for engendering new social order and revolutionary change. She is also concerned with the vision of making knowledge to foster national equanimity, justice and better living standards for the teeming majority of the people. In her Mirror for Campus, the play manifests this sensibility and underscores how the dramatist artistically engage the different facets of our society but primarily draws on the realities of her immediate domain as an insider and on this platform, she illuminates the dark places of a nation where priority is misplaced, talents wasted, vision gets often disappointingly blurred, and the viciousness of corruption and sundry malfeasance continue to thrive, encroaching areas that were supposed to play sacred roles and mediate social order. With Mirror for Campus, the playwright justifies the common diction that ‘charity begins at home’ and should not be from abroad! In this, the African playwright is typified as a patriot, humanist and a reformer. Umukoro (2008) again affirms that unlike his European counterparts, ‘the African writer [playwright] cannot afford the luxury of sheer aestheticism devoid of utilitarian value within his immediate socio-cultural and political context”. Umukoro expatiates thus:

In the average African society where nothing hardly ever works where water scarcely runs through the pipes and darkness is generated in place of light, where the roads are in an awful state of disrepair… where food security and the security of lives and property remain a pipe dream and where massive unemployment promotes criminality-the African writer cannot afford to devote valuable creative time and talent to eulogizing the beauty of mere flower (ibid. 2008: 115).

The strategy by which Onwueme designs the play, Mirror for Campus to achieve the dramatic effect and realize the informing creative vision in the enactment is rooted on the opening part of the play. At the beginning of the dramatic piece, the playwright brilliantly maps the social background of the society under focus. With the social outline of the society mapped out, the artist launches deep into the hitherto impenetrable walls of the citadel of excellence and learning, and literally strips its fences of all protective cover-ups. The mirror is therefore metaphorically set at a right angle of focus
to capture the realities of this social ferment. Through this illumination, a close probing is conducted, diagnosis uncovered and the contradictions are exposed. The indicting result attracts scathing reprimand, and the university community as a critical infrastructure of modern state is blamed for failures and for the inability to utilize its resources to better the lots of society several years after its foundation in Nigeria. In articulating the issues surrounding university education in Nigeria, the playwright does not just stop at diagnosing, she stamps her prescriptions with practical and realizable ideas as she is unmistakable in voicing out for paradigm shift from the bland and routine traditions with their orthodoxies which the university system in Nigeria is noted for, but that the human factor in that sector should be re-engineered to be more proactive, recreative and more than any thing else, responsive to the needs of the society. The era of playing lip service should be replaced with tactical and iconic indexes that bear similitude to human genre which the society captures.

Set in the 1980s, which Adeoti (2003) describes as era when the foundation of the present rot was laid, these were the eras of the second republic when the Nigerian government in the characteristic lackluster attempts at checking the steady moral drift, launched the Ethical Revolution campaign. This was followed by the more ferocious War Against Indiscipline (WAI) propagated by the military juntas and the subsequent IMF-induced SFEM with Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), a policy with the proposition that there were no alternatives to the foreign oriented formula for economic recovery, and thus the leaders bowed to this pressure and literally swallowed the death pill of which the nation is yet to recover from to the present moment. Also, the cast which is largely and significantly drawn from among the intellectuals is important as well as strategic in deepening the insight into the cancerous politics and maneuverings which has bedeviled the university community. The opening speech by the character, Sadiku, at the prologue sets the tempo of the play on the right pedestal and prepares the ground for critical engagement of the issues at stake in the play. This speech has the topic ‘RE – GE-NERATION’. This depicts the overtly fragmentation and factionalization of ideas and resources which has redefined and reshaped the vision and ideals of the ivory towers.

It is important to note that the character, Sadiku comes on stage in deep thought, holding a budded plant and studying it. This plant becomes what the character calls ‘the node of our discussion’
(Mirror for Campus, 1). This plant as we can see, and as explained by the character in this scene, is an embodiment of leaves, branches, shoot, and roots and each of the elements is as it were, the biological constituents that makes up the plant, and the role each of these play is vital to the survival of the plant. The summation is illustrated in the anecdotal narration from which it is interpreted that the university is the ‘LEAF of society’. This statement deconstructs the hub around which the issues in the play revolve. This is further supported by the truth that effective metabolism of the plant cannot occur without the sunlight. This is to say that the energy which the sun provides that is critical for the survival of the plant can only be retrieved and processed for the general good of the plant, as an entity, through the LEAVES. On this point therefore, the focus and thrust in the performance is defined. The university is the leaf, the processor of the means that is critical for the growth, survival and sustainability of the entire body of the society. Whether this social role has been carried out by the university is the main issue under interrogation in the dramatic enactment.

From the scenes of conversations and dialogues among the characters, we have come to notice that there is in this society a malignant ailment that is slowly consuming the vitals of the implied society. Having identified the ailments that pervade the society, the characters who are members of an academic community, the scientists and highly intellectually privileged specie of humanity, who are generally assumed to be the healers and experts at problem solving, decides to focus inward. As the characters, Jimmy and Adeze are made to say, ‘…let the iron wall of the ivory tower for once crumble’ and another major character, Ojomo says more:

Our searchlight must pierce through the concrete walls of this enclave that you shield with your academic gowns. Surprise… Surprise…Before your very eyes, I will become professor – professor…

[pg. 19]

The problem at hand is said to affect every strata of society at the individual, national and international levels. At the background is the decadent value system with a craze for foreign tastes, ‘here charity begins abroad’ (MFC, 6), money is preferred to search for knowledge, medical facility and other critical infrastructure are in the state of dilapidation in the society where the university is founded. The language is Naira, no Kobo; no shelter, no food, no bread winner. One name for this malignant is diagnosed to be ‘Lack- of-fundaities, which is described as being symptomatic of a general debility. The malignant is equated with the AIDS scourge which has its chronic inducement
on, in this case, ‘SFEM’ and ‘IMF’. The consequence of this malady permeates the entirety of the social strata, including the academia. It is at this juncture that the need for self-probing commences proper in the play.

The question that is salient at the moment is, ‘in the face of the foreign-prescribed harsh conditionality proposed for the amelioration of the present national predicament, what should the academics do?’ The university don, Ojomo resonates these interrogations and puts it to Sadiku in the form of query:

…CONDITIONALITIES…OF LACKO-FUN-DAITIES.
That’s why we must look inwards. What are our university dons doing to abbreviate this long cacophonic, debilitating syndrome? Doctor this, doctor dat – what are they doctoring? (pg. 24).

The radical University don, Jimmy is created by the playwright to make scathing invectives on the academia putting it out directly and courageously that the present system of disseminating knowledge by the university lacks depth and creativity such that it cannot effect radical change in the quality of life for the society. Jimmy states thus:

Ladies and gentlemen… “2+2 is no longer 4 but death”
Courtesy of Devtoesky. We lack imagination. 2+2=4 is rote memory. Rote memory cannot solve our problem. We continue to trade on beaten tracks. That is why the grass is getting bald and the desert is encroaching on us

( pg. 30).

One after the other, the characters engages the different facets of problem that have become the social realities of our contemporary experience, which the university resources have not been adequately deployed to tackle. The characters are unanimous in questioning the role and relevance of academia in the face of the daunting problems and the existing anomalies and incoherence in the nation that continue to beg for attention. Adeze’s remark encapsulates the demands and importance the citizenry place on the academics and the university system for solving the societal problems. Adeze states that the challenge of the mind is to ‘gather the problems, masticate them, churn them, digest them…’ (pg.31). This is suggestive of a call for more rigorous, vigorous and robust ‘intellectualization’ of knowledge in order to make it more responsive to societal needs.
In this case, the challenge posed by the Dr. Jimmy, who himself is a researcher, proven resourceful scientist and inventor, through his thought-provoking remarks and brilliance, directs the mind to the point of self-inquiry and sober reflection. His thought flow and articulation has the potential to provoke a rethink and innovation needed for the repositioning of the university system and indeed, for social transformation. Such as his remarks seeks to propel deeper inquiry and set the pace for quantum leap from the present trends in intellectual engagement of social phenomenon, he counsels that if the learning system continued in the way it is at the moment, there was not going to be any life touching impact on society. Above all, the present dogmatism and archaism in the conduct of university researches, will lead the yearning society nowhere.

Professor Ojomo and Dr. Jimmy Okudo, the two characters are important for driving home the discourse of social change in the play. Though the two at one time or the other swap roles, they both essentially represent the two ideological divides within the university system towards the ending climax in the play. Prof. Ojomo represents the orthodoxy of contemporary education, the old ideas, and the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, which symbolizes alienation, arrogance and self-centredness. Prof Ojomo in his disposition detests coming in contact with ordinary people: his messenger and his community people, who have come to seek his ‘wise counsel’ and intervention in solving the existing epidemic in the community. They are treated with disdain and ordered out of his office. Professor Ojomo is unnecessarily erratic and temperamental because his educational orientation lacks the requisite intellectual acumen, bereft of efficiency and relevance to meet the needs of his immediate society. However, Dr. Jimmy, on the other hand is creative, optimistic and inquisitive in his research. He is conscious of the need to revolutionize the thinking faculty of the academics and is outstanding in his doggedness and patriotic pursuits of knowledge for national development. His research is result-oriented; he is foresighted and creative in his quests. He is bent on the drive for paradigm shift from the symphony of many contrastive verses of the existing orthodoxy. His statement to Prof. Ojomo sums up the salient points and tunes the mind on to the course of action contemporary academics should chart towards making the university the hub and progenitors of social and technological change for the betterment of the society. Dr. Jimmy has advised Prof. Ojomo that rather than turn his back on the genuine needs of his community, that is, after the latter has turned back his community people that came to seek intervention, he should rather be provoked to more inquisitive commitment to knowledge pursuits, and be challenged to deeper
insights in the research modalities towards addressing the challenges that beset the nation and the citizenry: Dr Jimmy goes further:

No Prof! ...we must think of the way to make our research more relevant to the daily and long term needs of our people. Our task now is to invent instruments, means of harnessing our resources. Nigeria is a very fertile ground for invention and discoveries, and we have virile capable manpower… like you, Prof… and I Prof, it is very simple (pg. 39).

Within the same breath of conversation, Dr. Jimmy proffers a brilliantly profound and useful idea that is developmental, proactive and radical, thus refusing to join the choir of complaining academic who find excuses in every occasion to justify the existing state of low level and insignificant research outcomes in the universities. As long as Dr. Jimmy is concerned the “poor funding” ‘sing song’ being bantered by the academia is not enough excuse to deter researches and invention of technological tool for the transformation of the nation. Dr Jimmy posits that when Galileo experimented with the tower of Pisa he did not have or need millions. What is needed, he insists, is imagination and states that ‘the udders of Nigeria’s breast are bursting to be milked, explored… and to prove it’ (pg. 41). To prove his mettle, sense of commitment and patriotism, Dr Jimmy has spent time in the labs, searching for solution to the technological problems that the nation faces. His inquisitiveness, industry and patriotism have yielded a breakthrough. He has successfully fabricated a machine that will bring about the much needed turn-around, an invention that would be reckoned as panacea for the present stagnancy. The name of the machine he invents is “Nyokometre” fabricated from “enyo”, using local components based on indigenous wisdom and societal needs. This is a clear illustration that the solution to the present national malaise could be sourced from our immediate environment using our local formulas rather looking abroad for the solution to our problems. This is a society that has a craze for anything foreign, no matter how useless such could be! The new invention is therefore called ‘a mirror for self-rediscovery for solving the national malady called ‘Lack-of-undaities’. This machine will be utilized to gain additional value which would serve to translate into ‘Nairaquine’ which has potency as a panacea to our national disaster’ (pg. 43). In the consequence to this, the much talked about War Against Indiscipline (WAI) which the government has prescribed for resolving the myriads of our societal ills would only be won when
the War Against Hunger has first been won. This is the path that Dr. Jimmy, the inventor, tries to chart.

The University system as indicated in the play should rather help to pursue the War Against Lack-of-undaities (WAL) of which this new discovery by Dr Jimmy represents. WAL as an official prescription cannot be won without first winning the war against hunger, starvation, insecurity, inequality and the domination of one group by another as the playwright succinctly suggests. Unfortunately, it soon dawns on the audience that the university intellectuals, so full of themselves, are working in cross-purpose, aggravated by egoistic tendencies, petty jealousy and worse still, truncated by ethnicity and tribalism which is also the bane of the outer society. As a consequence, Dr Jimmy’s creativity, inventiveness and excellence is frustrated by Prof. Ojomo on egoistic grounds. The genius is interdicted, lampooned and made jest of by the powers that be in the confines of the ivory towers.

The Prof Ojomo’s inaugural lecture that was supposed to be a platform for meeting of minds and exploration of ways of bringing the intellectual resources to bear on the welfare and societal needs turns out to be a fanfare, an affair for self-aggrandizement and a farce! The likes of Dr. Jimmy who spend the better part of their lives in the laboratories inquiring for innovation and breakthrough are lampooned, persecuted and frustrated. His invention of the problem-solving machine, instead of being embraced by the cross-section of the academic community, is vilified and the young and vibrant intellectual is brought to ridicule by the powers that be and victimized. The creation of the machine is politicized rather than accessed, improved upon and utilized for the purpose for which it was fabricated; after all, the invention was need-based. The likes of Prof Ojomo are bent on thwarting this invention, and thus, ingenuity is sacrificed on the altar of ethnicity and egoism while the society continues to wallow in underdevelopment. The Prof, in an attempt to silence and frustrate Dr Jimmy, showcases his questionable machine, a pointer to an unnecessary rivalry rather than cooperation brought out ‘Jiebreakometre’, an invention that has no relevance to the yearnings and aspirations of the society; a distortion and caricature of Dr. Jimmy’s creativity. These are the issues prevalent in the inner domes that the playwright brings to public searchlight. The concluding statement is in Sadiku’s mimesis as the play wraps up before the curtain goes down. Sadiku’s last statement that reconnects the opening statement says:
There ladies and gentlemen that is your destiny jammed and interlocked in an internecine embrace...Sparks, Sparks, Sparks...Your sun cable flaming to waste. And a short-circuit?...What happens when the leaves fail to utilize the sun’s rays in the photosynthetic process? The plant withers my friends, it withers. That’s why we’re here my friends. To add 2 and 2 to get not Just 4 but 5, 6, by converting manure and sunlight and talents of Dons to solve problems for you sere friends, the disease of Lackofundaities cannot be cured with mere additions and divisions but multiplications... The solution is between those two: Jiebreakometre or Nyokometre? Can there be a middle ground? (pg. 75).

These are the questions of our time. How could the university harness its resources to engage the socio-economic problems of our nation? Universities of all hues and clout in virtually every corner, yet we invent nothing significant that practically touch the life of the average man/woman nor ameliorate the myriads of problems including poverty, disease, misery, squalor etc. There is dearth of infrastructure, good governance and general endemic criminality in our ways of doing things. By addressing these issues, the artist defines her social vision, illuminates the inner recess of the ivory tower and indicts those saddled with the responsibility to manage that sector. The thrust of the discourse in Mirror for Campus agrees with Asein’s (1995) assertion that “by nature literature is a highly maneuverable art form. He asserts further:

Whether as a product of an individual’s creative imagination or critical intelligence, or a state, literature manifests observable traits and tendencies to the social, political, cultural and physical environment, characteristics of its enabling state

(ibid. 1995:8)

What is central to the thematic concerns of the play is the dialectics of change. It is positive change that has eluded the post-independence Nigeria. The play is clearly a metaphorical indictment of the university system and indeed, our education system generally that has failed to live up to its expectations in terms of research, resourcefulness and relevance for the technological and socio-economic needs of the society. The structure on grounds though seriously dilapidated, remains with
the colonial relics stamped on it in terms of quality and foundational philosophy. The argument between the radical academics Dr Jimmy and the orthodoxy-oriented Prof. Ojomo, reflect the atomistic nature of the academia and explains the failure of the university system to contribute to the technological needs of the nation, because they have failed to harmonize ideas so discovered as a result of self-centredness and lack of patriotic vision.

As an academic, an engaging artist and a committed Nigerian, bred and nurtured in the cultural and social consciousness of her people, Tess Onwueme is sensitive to the diverse ills that plaque the different spheres of her society. By focusing on the academia, there is a perceived sense of scandal that her immediate domain has failed to live to its expectations; has failed to deliver the nation through technological innovations the ways other advanced societies have done. The much talked about poor funding by the academics as being responsible for the present intellectual backwardness and research irrelevance is debunked. The playwright tackles the big-named scientists in the university system who confine themselves to their university domes by skillfully interrogating the veracity of their researches and why such researches have not impacted on the life of the citizens, especially by addressing the problems of poverty, poor statecraft, poor quality of corporate governance, disease, unemployment and social degeneracy. The lack of funds syndrome is therefore dismissed as lack of patriotic consciousness is blamed for the present national predicament. The blame centres around intellectual laziness, petty squabbles and other distractions that retard speculation, truncate creativity and forcefulness. The key actors in the sector are seen as being enmeshed in time wasting tussles as typified in the affairs between Prof Ojomo and Dr Jimmy.

Zulu Sofola (1994) had rightly stated that art in African worldview, especially against the background of colonial reality, is essential developmental. Sofola’s translation of the arts and the artist in Africa society is an affirmation of the fact that literature is given impetus “by the manifestation of the powerful string in the divine essence within the artist in reaction to the disequilibrium created in the universal order by the negative forces that threaten human existence”. She states succinctly in essence that the artist is outside the aesthetic cravings for beauty and the satisfaction of the soul, thus propelled to create out of those aspects of life and social phenomenon that impact on humans living in society for the following reactions:

1. To heal and restore the life of a sick and battered humanity;
2. To create new vision for growth, renewal, regeneration and edification of man for a wholesome life and a better community;
3. To mobilize a collective conscience for a particular desired objective (Sofola 1994:4).

The artistic statement represented in Tess Onwueme’s *Mirror for Campus*, like in most other of her plays, anchor on the continuous search for the way out of the complexities and contradictions that define the character of state and the quality of human living in the mass of African society using Nigeria as the creative platform of focus to reach out to those anomalies that pervade the socio-economic and cultural spheres of society.

**Conclusion**

As a playwright, dramatist, and academics, Tess Akaeke Onwueme is best known for her passionate deployment of the stage arts for the creation of a consciousness that aims to propel woman to the power place of relevance in an all-male-dominated world. She essentially is an astute influence in that conglomerate of “writers who share the gynocentric mode of thought”, and, “who argue against the political arrangements that sustain the power hierarchy in favour of men”, but to the detriment of woman (Adeoti 2008:261). But in *Mirror for Campus* that we have brought under focus here, there is an obviously needful digression from the norm of the actress’ creativity that is pointedly a direct response to a call to the service of the nation in the season of appalling incoherence, which is critical to national progress. The mind, the vision and the conscience of the dramatist concern human progress, and in this case, concerning her nation and her immediate professional domain, the academia; the intellectual class, to the pursuit of the goals of the society can here be perused through the binocular of her artistry.

Tess Onwueme’s drama has been deployed in this case particularly, as in her other creative projections, to accentuate the notion of the arts for social development and as tool for national regeneration. This perception agrees with Seiza Aliu’s (2002: 1) postulation that ‘drama could serve as an enlightenment forum through which social awareness is promoted’. Drama in this sense is seen as a functional phenomenon privileged with the capacity for arousing the consciousness of a people, and for mobilization of the masses in order ‘to effect a change for a better society through collective action’.
Onwueme’s drama in this play is elite-focused; evidently focused on the issues of social regeneration, and her vision here is clearly articulated to propagate as well as accentuate the symbolic and implied mission statement of the university system in Nigeria as the pivot for scientific upliftment and for technological progress of Nigeria, her country. The leadership in the academic community is focused on and engaged at towards provoking intellectual awakening, creativity and patriotism among the membership and the leadership of the critical sector.

In all, Onwueme’s ‘Mirror for Campus’ just like her ‘Ban Empty Barn’ and Sofola’s ‘Song of A Maiden’ aptly demonstrates the symphonies of many contrastive discourses that colours the Nigerian state to evolve as a maladroit nation in disarray!
References


