

When African Drums Turn Talkative, Who Can Silence the Drums: Music as an Extension of Postcolonial Identity in the Works of Osonye Tess Onwueme

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Abstract

This study's objective is to investigate the uses of music, and, to a lesser, extent, spectacle, as extensions of postcolonial racial and gender identity in the works of African playwright Osonye Tess Onwueme. So interwoven are the elements of music and spectacle into Onwueme's text that the acts are not broken into scenes, but movements. Aristotelian theory states that music is both a form of imitation and an image of character. Working from the perspective that music is a mirror of one's character, this paper explores the ways in which Onwueme uses music and spectacle as extensions of the characters' personal and collective identities. Onwueme embraces the traditional elements of ritual and music, interwoven throughout both African and African American tradition. In the process, she negotiates both race and gender to address the search for identity, an ever-present theme in both African and African Diaspora drama.

