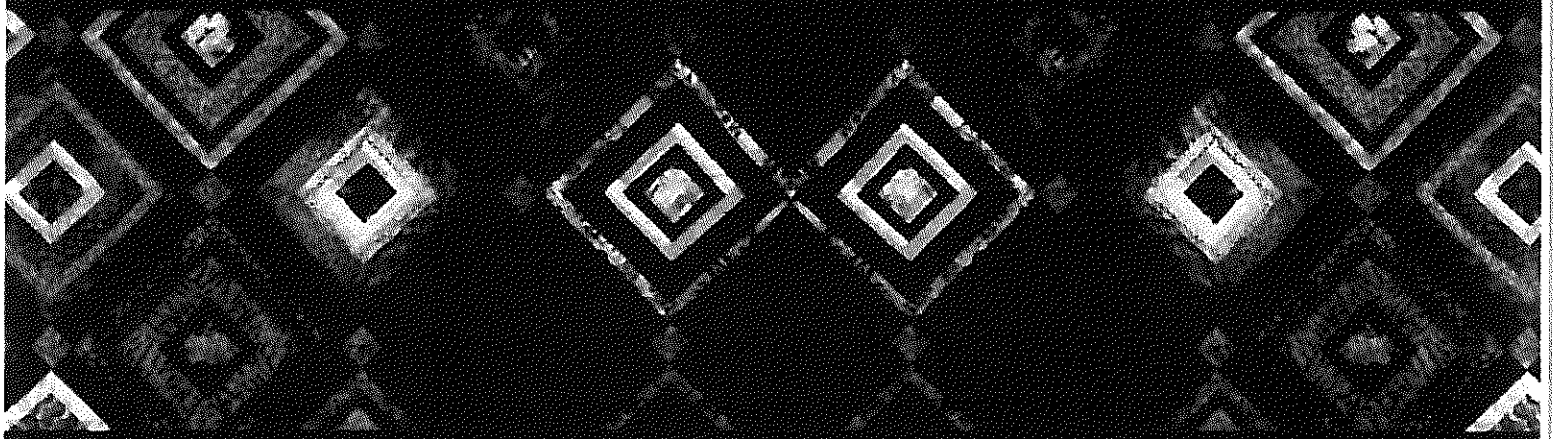
Vol. 1 No. 1

WATPAJO



WEST AFRICAN THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS JOURNAL

June 2011

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(WATPAJO)

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WATPAJO, is a journal published biennially in June and December by Dorcamos Tops Publishers Ltd for the Performing Arts Department, University of Ilorin, Nigeria and Department of Theatre Studies, University of Cape Coast, Ghana. All views or conclusions are those of the authors of the articles and not necessarily those of the editorial staff the Universities or the Publishers.

Editorial Office: Mail contributions and books for review to: Editor, West Africa Theatre and Performing Arts Journal, c/o Department of Performing Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

Subscriptions: Address all subscription and business correspondence to the Journal Manager, Dorcamos Tops Publishers Ltd, No 1 Ayo Street, Greenland Estate, Olokonla, Ajah, Lagos

Notice of non receipt of an issue must be sent within four weeks after the due date for receipt of the issue. Please notify the Press of any change in address; the Post Office does not forward third-class mail. Information on bulk order discounts is available from the journals Manager at Dorcamos Tops Publishers Ltd.

Individual subscription: Africa Countries $25 (except Nigeria-₦2,550 & Ghana-¢30); Other Countries-$38/£25 /€28
Institutional subscription: Africa Countries $38 (except Nigeria ₦4,500, & Ghana-¢45); Other Countries-$65/£42/€49
Postage within Africa: Nigeria- ₦1,500; Ghana-¢20;Other Countries $14.00
Postage outside Africa: $18.50

For Nigerian Residents add 5% sales tax

Periodicals postage paid at Lagos Mainland and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: send address changes to West Africa Theatre and Performing Arts Journal, Dorcamos Tops Publishers Ltd, Journals Division, No 1 Ayo Street, Greenland Estate, Olokonla, Ajah, Lagos.

Cover Concept: Oyenike Eseagwu

Cover Design: Nnamdi Nwachukwu Henry

Type Setting: Adesqueen Graphics

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Editorial Policy

- Articles on any aspect of Theatre and Performing Arts in West Africa may be submitted for consideration. Articles must be original, properly researched and must not have been submitted for publication elsewhere.
- Articles for WAPAJO should be 5000 words at least, and technical reports should have a minimum of 2500 words. All articles should be between 10 and 20 pages on A4; double space lines and single space quotations including endnotes. Articles should be presented in standard references MLA/APA format. Articles with incomplete referencing will be rejected.
- Article should contain an abstract of not more than two hundred and fifty words. Title of paper, authors name and address, e-mail address and telephone numbers must be on a separate cover page.
- Submission (Microsoft Word document) via email is preferred.
- WATPAJO is published bi- annually in June and December. Papers for June must be received by December and those for December must be received by June.
- Contributors are responsible for obtaining permission and paying cost to produce any materials, including illustrations, for which they do not hold the copyright.
- Contributors whose papers are accepted will be communicated concerning financial obligations which must be met before publication is done.

Preface

The West African Theatre and Performing Arts Journal (a.k.a WATPAJO), which is the first Journal of Theatre and Performing Arts in Africa, was conceived and birthed by Professor E.O Kofoworola during his sabbatical leave at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana. By its creation, the journal has provided the long awaited platform for critical discourse of theatre and performing arts in the West African sub region.

WATPAJO explores Theatre and Performing Arts with the aim of re-defining the culture and folklore of the people of West Africa. The conceptual framework of the journal hopes to advance the metaphoric ramification of theatre to re-orientate the peoples of West Africa and Africa in general, towards knowledge , progress and development.

As a product from academic interaction between resourceful and fertile minds, I am delighted to note that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of Ilorin, Nigeria and the University of Cape Coast, Ghana continues to yield good fruits for the benefit of mankind. This journal is the third publication emanating from the collaborative efforts. It is my sincere hope that this laudable initiative of the Performing Arts Department, University of Ilorin and Theatre Studies Department of the University of Cape Coast will serve as a model for other faculties and departments in both universities.

I observed that the articles contained in this maiden edition of the journal were reviewed by recognised authorities in the field of theatre and performing arts, with an array of accomplished academics from across the world on the editorial board. I therefore wish to congratulate all those whose articles had been selected for publication.

Finally, while wishing the editorial board good success and Godspeed, I sincerely hope that this journal will continually be a veritable reference point for scholars and students of theatre and performing arts in Africa and the world at large.

Professor Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede
Vice-chancellor
University of Ilorin
Ilorin
Nigeria.

Editorial Notes

The West African Theatre and Performing Arts Journal (WATPAJO) seeks to provide a platform for discourse by, for and from scholars. Scholars whose papers have been selected for this maiden edition having passed the grueling test of academic reviews can therefore be proud of their own intellectual and professional performance. Being a journal whose audiences is expected to include theatre, film and performing arts practitioners: the producers, actors, managers, critics, theoreticians, performers, playwrights, scenic and set designers, costumes and make-up practitioners, stage-hands and of course the larger audience made up of the general public. It is our hope that this maiden edition of Watpajo will meet the high expectations of professionals and academics in the field of theatre and performing arts especially in Africa.

The significance of this maiden WATPAJO edition lay in the contributors engagement with the field through their articles and interviews in an enchantingly warm friendly and yet deeply critical manner. This maiden edition is therefore a pout pourrii of dialogues of criticism, conceptual analysis, artistic reviews and the various notes and references connected with their messages, which ranges through several topical subjects. This edition of Watpajo is composed of eight papers and two interviews. Interestingly, this edition also unintentionally though achieves a gender balance in the number of articles selected for publication; it contains five contribution each from both male and female academics. Amazingly both interviews published in this edition are written by females. In addition, the journal's maiden edition spotlights contributions from three continents; Europe, North America and Africa, and of this we indeed are very proud.

The first paper in this edition by Victor Yankah employs the plays of Martin Owusu, Efua Sutherland and Yaw Asare to examine the traditional Ghanaian Ananse concept as a paradigm of identity and to justify the metaphoric factor in the characterization of Ananse. He broadens this paradigm beyond the traditional domain to capture it's representation during the colonial and post-colonial era. Uche Nwaozuzu's paper is critical of the application of Marxist or socialist ideology to the dramaturgy of both Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan. Nwaozuzu's deconstructive analytical approach provides the readers with an insight into what he describes as "the nature of social responsibility and personal vision." Nwaozuzu's counter discourse highlights the contradictions in the social mission of the heroic characters in these plays. He draws the readers' attention to their split personalities as a kind of dramaturgical flaw even though they fit well into the social context of dramatic discourse.

Both Fasasi Adebunmi and Solomon Ikibe's articles are quite instructive,

educative and explorative. Ikibe describes Muslims' vocal music for concerts as a challenge to 21st century musicologists". Using the experiment of the orchestration of Islamic music for a concert by the Performing Arts Department, University of Ilorin, Ilorin-Nigeria as an encouraging springboard; he is of the opinion that the positive result of such experimentation will outweigh the challenges posed by such proposal. Fasasi on the other hand asserts that basic education is a fundamental instrument for national development and theatre is indispensable to the achievement of basic education in Nigeria. Theatre, he asserts, could be used as an effective teaching method at the three segments of educational systems: primary, secondary and tertiary levels. He advocates the use of theatre as a form of teaching methodology for basic education.

Bemoaning the sketchy attention given to the teaching of Technical Theatre in Theatre Arts departments of Nigerian Universities, Ernest Agoba reviews the experiment of three designers at the National Theatre at Ignamu-Lagos who worked on the production of the plays of Wole Soyinka, Elechi Amadi and Ahmed Yerimah. Fundamentally Agoba is concerned with the efforts of these three designers, having been dissatisfied with the standard and quality of the scenic features in earlier presentations, to review them. Agoba's criticism reflects the poor grasp of the significance of the three dimensional factor in theatrical presentation by Nigerian theatre practitioners, and therefore advocates for a correlation of form and concept in theatre production.

"Dance in Communication Art" by Mnena Abuku explores the linguistic definitions of dance in the Tiv language and provides an analytical survey of Tiv dance as based on the Ivom dance. It provides a composite analysis of other Tiv dance forms such as Inyon, Sunda, Gbangi, Kuza, Ingyough etc. Abuku's analysis suggest that Tiv dance cannot be classified strictly on account of functions since a multiplicity of functions; social criticism, historic documentation, political comment, ritual and hypnotism can be attached to certain Tiv dances providing interesting areas of further studies of Tiv dances.

Faustina Brew's contribution is more of an educational report on a research conducted by her. The research was based on Evelyn Anfus play titled, Edibles and Disposables. Brew's research was aimed at unravelling the assertions of theatre practitioners, scholars and critics about the impact of theatre on the audience. It was meant to ascertain through empirical data collection, the degree of impact Anfu's play had on the audience that watched it for four nights at Amu theatre of the University of Educaiton at Winneba, Ghana in 2009.Brew's audience research is a significant development in theatre education, which deserves all encouragements in order to avoid the pit-falls of academic and professional assertions which are not

based on or supported by provable empirical data.

Oludolapo Ojediran's article titled; Gender Talk or Powerless female: Efua T. Sutherland's *Edufa* and the *Marriage of Anansewa* as paradigm" strategically focuses on sensitive gender issues. She adopts Judith Butler's theoretical framework that, 'gender is performative' and utilizing it focuses on the playwrights characterization of the female characters in the plays. She suggests that the powerlessness of the female character was the imposition of the African culture, customs, traditions and values granted as instructive insights into the Herculean task faced by the women in their quest for liberation.

The two recorded interviews by Tiziana Morosetti and Becky Becker; of Ama-Ata Aidoo and Tess Onwueme respectively provide exciting testimonies of women's contributions to the development of theatre, not only in West Africa but the world at large. The two interviews reveal the emancipation of women in the academic and professional fields and their endowments for leadership.

We cannot exhaust our thanks and appreciation to all our consultants, reviewers and members of the editorial board. We appreciate the Vice Chancellors of University of Ilorin, Ilorin-Nigeria and University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast Ghana as well as the Head of the Performing Arts Department and Head of Theatre and Film Studies of the two universities respectively for their supports.

Finally, we congratulate all contributors for quality and standard.

Ziky O. Kofoworola
Professor of Drama & Theatre Arts
Editor

Content Page

Ananse as a Paradigm of Identity in Ghanaian Drama

Victor Kwabena Yankah Ph.D

Abstract

In Ghanaian folktale tradition, the figure of the ubiquitous Ananse is predominant. Although Ananse is also found in some African-American and Caribbean folktales (a confirmation of the fact that the dislocation of Africans from the mainland to the New World has not obliterated their culture in their adopted home), he is unmistakably Ghanaian. In the drama of playwrights like Martin Owusu, Efua Sutherland and Yaw Asare, Ananse is seen as an everyman figure recognized by society as a metaphor for self-criticism. This paper examines the presentation of Ananse in Martin Owusu's The Story Ananse Told, Efua Sutherland's The Marriage of Anansewa and Yaw Asare's Ananse in the Land of Idiots. It discusses the thesis that in these plays Ananse becomes a paradigm for articulating identity traditional, colonial and postcolonial of the Ghanaian.

Immediately after independence, Ghanaian writers sought novel ways to represent the new Ghanaian personality. Theatrical experimentations by Efua Sutherland and Joe deGraft, two of the earliest post-independence dramatists, led to the evolution of a unique performance style that clearly incorporates Ghanaian folktale traditions. The desire to discover a distinctive Ghanaian voice in drama may have been fostered by the liberation ideology that permeated the society at the time. The philosopher, Franz Fanon (2007, p.253) captures the thinking behind colonialist activity thus: "Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it." Generally, after independence, there was a desire to eschew any such colonial tendencies, and, though the English language continued to be employed, literature and other aspects of cultural expression were re-orientated towards developing an anti-colonial doctrine. Adéèko (2007, p. 237) has hinted that when different geographical and political entities "share a common language in the articulation of their literatures, the expressed cultural, ethnic and national differences establish their individual identities". Although the post-colonial writer employed the language of his colonial master, his singularity in the expression of his culture in these

works, and his resort to folklore provided a basis for differentiation.

In examining works that employ folkloric elements, however, it may be useful to be flexible but circumspect in the relating of such works to an apparently non-contiguous concept like identity, which sometimes provokes arguments about the self and the other (see for instance, Edward Said, 1989 and Kenneth Pike, 1967). Very significant for a discussion about identity, though, is the view expressed by Mineke Schipper (1993, p.42) that "a renewed interest in inter-cultural research is leading to a more extensive study of the theories people have about themselves, about the formulations they employ to express themselves in language, and about the metaphors that are commonly linked to their socio-cultural and gender contexts". Marisa Zavalloni (1983, p. 206) says collective identity is:

> a cultural product that embodies all that has been recorded as history, institution, fiction, work of art and knowledge. The socio-cultural environment, of which collective identities are an essential part, may be seen as the sedimented product of centuries of interactive cycles, molded through psychological processes that can be considered as fixed parameters which reproduce and sometimes subvert its order.

The discussion in this paper is founded on this concept of cultural identity. The paper adopts the perspective that cultural identity is dynamic, evolving epistemologically through an encounter with external forces, and, that the socio-cultural contexts that Schipper identifies have been tampered over time.

Ananse in Modern Ghanaian Drama

Efua Sutherland's experimentation with Ananse as a major dramatic figure in *The Marriage of Anansewa* became the precursor of other "Ananses", notable among them Martin Owusu's *The Story Ananse Told* and Yaw Asare's *Ananse in the Land of Idiots.* The ubiquitous uniqueness of Ananse in these plays compels a symbolic reading of this character, and this presentation posits Ananse in a historical and evolutionary continuum. The three plays discussed below present a pre-colonial, a colonizing and a post-colonial Ananse.

Who is Ananse? And why is he such an important character in these dramas? Ananse is the Akan name for a spider. In Ewe, the spider is referred to as *yiyi* and in Dagare, it is *badare.* In all the societies that speak these languages the spider is a popular character in their folktales. Ananse is thus a cultural creation. Sutherland describes him in the foreword to *The Marriage of Anansewa* in the following terms:

> Ananse appears to represent a kind of Everyman, artistically exaggerated and distorted to serve society as a medium for self-examination ... That Ananse is artistically a medium for society to criticize itself can be seen in the expression 'exterminate Ananse and the society will be ruined'".

Ananse mirrors in his behavior, "fundamental human passions, ambitions and follies, as revealed in contemporary situations". In Martin Owusu's *The Story Ananse Told* the character Ananse claims that "All stories myths and legends belong to me". By this claim Ananse arrogates to himself, the people's very origin, embodied in their myths and legends. Ananse, by his very popularity becomes the obvious choice of dramatists in their attempts at a theatrical representation of a folk hero.

The question that immediately arises is if as the title of this paper claims, Ananse is a paradigm of identity in the dramas, whose identity does he represent? Fredric Jameson (....) has hinted that genres tend to carry inherent ideological tendencies that greatly influence the kinds of statements that can be made within those genres. The intra-generic dialogic situations that emerge from the dramatic representations of Ananse compel ideological considerations. Thus, it is possible to undertake a typology, from a reading of these plays, of a pre-colonial, a colonizing and a post colonial Ananse, represented as Ananse the storyteller in *The Story Ananse Told;* as Ananse the voyager in *Ananse in the Land of Idiots* and as George Kweku Ananse in *The Marriage of Anansewa.* This triadic typology is adopted in the analysis in this paper.

The Story Ananse Told

In *The Story Ananse Told,* we are first presented with a world of hunters, monsters and pristine forests. This world may represent the unexplored

precolonial world of the African. Ananse is seen as a protean character telling the story from outside, and then getting involved at certain precise moments in the play. The story is about Osugyani the Hunter. Each time he returns from his hunt he finds his home tidied and a meal ready. The mysterious housekeeper turns out to be the head of an antelope hanging in his room which turns into a woman whenever Hunter is away. When Hunter catches her, she explains that she used to be a beautiful princess but was turned into an antelope by the river god because she refused to marry him. She would only turn back into a woman if a hunter killed her, and then she would marry her slayer. After exacting a promise from Hunter not to ever reveal her identity, she marries him and turns him into a king. Again, Hunter is made to promise three things as king: never to play a drum hanging in his palace, never to love another woman and never to cough while sitting on his throne. Ananse enters the story and deceives Hunter to play the drum. This summons the monster king who takes Hunter away. The Queen attempts to bring him back immediately, but is unable to find her magic cow tail. She sends Okyeame out of the palace to find the cow tail. She however finds it in the palace and brings the king back. Ananse is sent after Okyeame, but, rather than ask him to return because the cow tail has been found, he convinces him to find the cow tail in the home of the monster king. The monster king blackmails Okyeame into leading them to the palace. They turn themselves into human beings, with the monster princess as a beautiful princess. Back in the palace, the King is enchanted by the princess, and just as he is proposing to her, the queen comes in. The hunter sits on the throne, coughing in pretence. In anger, the Queen threatens to return him to his poor hunter state, and the hunter retorts by revealing the queen's true identity. The king is returned to his poor Hunter state and sent back to his cottage. He is eventually devoured by the monsters. At the beginning of the play, Ananse introduces himself thus: (p. 31)

> I am Okontompo Kweku Ananse
> For a million years I have lived on this earth
> .....
> The old who are dying and young at Birth
> Know Ananse from head to foot.

Ananse thus identifies himself as ageless, and that he is recognized by all manner of people in the society. As he says, all myths and legends belong

to him. His stories are the stories of the people, who see their strengths, failings and foibles reflected in him. The story he tells in this play is about the greed of a man who inhabits a rustic world, and who is unable to cope with change when it comes to him.

Ananse in this play moves in and out of the story. He tells us at the beginning that his world is "a world of fantasy supernatural./ Do not take any incident to be natural." However, the fact that Ananse himself is such an elusive character compels a rethinking of his advice. The following questions emerge: why is he warning us? Are we to take him by his word, considering the fact that anytime he enters the play as a character, he sends the other characters in the wrong direction? When Ananse first enters the story as a character, the King hints at his sly nature.

> KING: What are you doing here?
> ANANSE: Why? I'm a citizen.
> KING: How can that be? You are telling the story.
> ANANSE: Yes. I came because I do not want to be forgotten by the audience.
> KING: Kweku, I know you. You are going to upset things for me.
> ANANSE: Not I. This time I leave you entirely to your fate.

Ananse's final words in this extract, reassuring though they sound, are a subterfuge; they are meant in actual fact, to court the confidence of the King in order to facilitate his deception. He deceives the king to play the drum, thereby inviting the monster. He also sends Okyeame to the home of the monsters when he is supposed to ask him to return. Everyone who took Ananse seriously in the play has ended up paying a high price for it. So can we take his advice?

The features of a precolonial African terrain are evident in this play. These features are not dissimilar to those of precolonial England of magic, superstition and barbarism reflected in the legends of King Arthur and his Knights. Ananse's story portrays similar situations, but goes on to further amplify the underpinnings of such barbarism and superstition which are fundamental to all human societies. Thus the world of Ananse's story may be one that has not been tampered by colonialism, but it is also one that reflects common human passions and weakness like love, ambition and greed, which have played a major part in shaping the history of the world. Indeed, the world Ananse presents may be one of make-believe, but the aspirations, and weaknesses of the Hunter are real ones which we are all liable to.

Ananse in The Land of Idiots

In Ananse in the land of Idiots Ananse does not represent the Ghanaian or the African; rather he assumes the identity of the colonizer. This particular contestation of Ananse posits the character in the role of the 'other' rather than 'us'. Here, the 'other' embodies the colonizer. This construction of Ananse assumes credence in the light of Schipper's (1992. 40) assertion that:

> Extensive studies, collections, documentaries and exhibitions revealed how the West's "primitives" had been constructed in the Western imagination, but all these efforts ironically, did little more than draw increased attention to the Western perspective. Relatively little was said about the way in which Others imagined themselves and their Others. (p. 40)

Obviously, the first "Others" here refers to the colonized, perceived as "primitives", while "their others" implies those who colonized them. Ananse in the Land of Idiots thus conceptualizes Ananse in the role of "their Others", and attempts to present the ways in which the colonizer imagined the colonized.

In the play, Ananse deliberately sets out to a land called Dim-nyim-lira, the Land of idiots. There, by virtue of his superior technological knowhow represented as the art of kente weaving, he swindles the king, Dossey into parting with part of his empire and his beautiful daughter.

On arrival in the land of idiots, Ananse demeans the culture of the people by calling their dance an idiotic one, and then eating up a sacrifice meant for the gods. For doing the latter he is arraigned before the king. Ananse turns the situation in his favour by overwhelming the people with his claims to a superior knowledge in kente weaving. King Dossey tasks him with weaving kente cloths for his daughter and her groom, the ferocious Pootagyiri, for their wedding. Ananse requests that the princess and Pootagyiri visit him at different times to take their measurements. Ananse ends up seducing the Princess, and, with promises of the secret of honey-making, he cajoles the "watchful" Akpala into a scheme that helps him eliminate Pootagyiri, and then impersonates him at the wedding, marrying the princess and gaining an empire. King Dossey and his people get wind of Ananse's treachery through Odudu, the most idiotic of the idiots whose love for the Ananse's honey led him to enquire whether he has left.

In this play, we have all the features of the colonial enterprise represented. Ananse becomes the colonizer who sets off to a land of idiots; a land of less intelligent people. He has a number of items, representing the

"shipload" of goods with which the colonizer lured the colonized: in this case, it is his bundle, a gourd of honey, and a perforated gourd with which to cheat the people. Like a typical colonizer, he worms his way into the favour of the king, against the warning of the chief priest who, after the king has refused to heed his warning, maintains a muted presence in the play until after Ananse's treachery is discovered. Ananse possesses the advanced technological knowhow with which he impresses the people of Dim-Nyim Lira in the art of superior textile weaving. Finally, Ananse employs subterfuge to rob Pootagyiri, the rightful heir to Boyile Island, of his inheritance. Ananse is calculative in his schemes; he is able to determine how long it will take for Dossey and his people to attack him, by which time he will have prepared to rebuff them.

Apart from Ananse, the play resonates with other metaphors of the colonial state. Odudu, the idiot represents the typical colonial subject who is so fascinated with the material goods the colonizer brings that he develops a blind subservience to him. At the end of the play, however, it is his lust for these material trappings that leads to the discovery of Ananse's deception. Another symbolic character is the Chief Priest. She represents the voice of reason and common sense. She could stand for the intelligentsia, writers, philosophers or any such persons in a colonial state, whose advice is not heeded. That she is the only character who speaks poetry in the play is an important reinforcement of this perception, for, if we consider poetry as an elevated and specialized use of language as we are accustomed to in some Elizabethan dramatic discourse, then she is the only character who is imbued with such specialized skills.

The Marriage of Anansewa

Efua Sutherland's George Kweku Ananse in The Marriage of Anansewa is a post-colonial subject who is so preoccupied with survival that he exploits tradition to fulfill his selfish schemes. Ananse sends pictures of his daughter Anansewa to four chiefs with the hope that presents will pour in from them. Indeed, the chiefs begin to "oil the wheels of tradition" and Ananse suddenly becomes a wealthy man. Unfortunately, all three chiefs decide to come and wed Ananse on the same day. Caught in his own scheme, Ananse adopts an unconventional and socially unacceptable means to extricate himself from this sticky situation. He convinces his daughter to pretend to be dead. One after the other the messengers of the chiefs arrive and express the reasons for which their masters wanted to marry Anansewa. In the end, it is evident that it is only Chief-who-is-chief who genuinely wanted to marry Anansewa because he loved her. In fact, he sends a coffin and everything needed to give Anansewa a befitting burial. Ananse pours libation, calling Anansewa to wake up if she really loved Chief-who-is-

chief. She does wake up and marries Chief-who-is-chief.

In this play, Ananse is a post-colonial African who, faced with the problem of survival in the contemporary economic dispensation falls back on tradition. Ananse has a modern "Christian" name George. His daughter, Anansewa attends EP secretarial school, and is very good at typing. Ananse instructs her thus:

> My daughter, it isn't well at home, therefore sit down, open up the machine I bought for your training, and let the tips of your fingers give some service from the training for which I am paying.

Ananse also inhabits a modern metropolis, uses refrigerators, electric fans and other modern gadgets, as the following speech reveals:

> Ananse: If only things would stay a little longer ... [He sits in a garden chair, blowing his cheeks from the heat.] Fellow, don't you realize how hot it is in the garden today? Bring me some ice-cream from the 'fridge. [PROPERTY MAN serves him.] Go on, you! Can't you sympathise with a man when you can see him getting hot under the collar? Fetch the electric fan out here to blow some breeze around me.

In fact, Ananse may have advanced beyond his era, for when Anansewa is about to get married, he invites Christina Yamoah from the "Institute for Prospective Brides" to prepare her for her nuptial. The concept of an institute of this kind at the time this play was written would appear ludicrous, and to date, it may not be possible to find such an institute in modern Ghana. Sutherland probably introduced it not only for comic effect, but also to portray the extent to which the postcolonial subject has imbibes and continues to adopt concepts derived from the culture of his past master.

But in Ananse we also see the dilemma of the post-colonial subject who resorts to custom and tradition only in situations where he is certain about the material gains he would derive from them. He knows the custom very well, as Storyteller muses "It is clear that he knows the customs more than well. Notice how he has them at his finger tips, spinning them out, weaving them into a design to suit his purposes". However, Ananse misapplies the customs by promising his daughter to several suitors in the first place. He also asks that she be "out-doored" belatedly, and his mother, Aya remarks that

> I can't understand my son Ananse at all. Why does he want

> an "out-dooring" ceremony for Anansewa all of a sudden? You school people say you have thrown these things aside. But to wait until five years after the girl has become a woman and say 'outdoor her'! That's not good custom-keeping in anybody's world.

In addition the unconventional method he employs to select a suitor for his daughter may be socially unacceptable, however, on one level, it demonstrates the dilemma of the post-colonial subject who, faced with the compelling need for affluence in a modern world, on the one hand, and maintaining his dignity within his traditional set up, on the other, opts to sacrifice the latter on the altar of modernity. On another level, Ananse's action could be a suggestion that the postcolonial subject may have confused his cultural values.

Conclusion

Issues of identity have often been the preoccupation of writers from all cultures, and in Africa, the movement that was most conspicuous in its assertion of the African identity was the "negritude" movement of the 1960s, led by Leopold Senghor and Aimé Césaire. (See Senghor, 1970 and Abiola, 1977). In a way, many discussions of identity have been held within the ambit of the Socratic dictum of "man, know thyself". Other emergent perspectives that have often been espoused include the individual in contradistinction from others, as well as the "us versus them" concept which in its turn has generated the notion of otherness as discussed by Schipper (1991).

This presentation has examined the portrayal of Ananse, the folk literary figure who has featured as the main character in a number of Ghanaian plays. In these plays Ananse assumes different identities. In Martin Owusu's The Story Ananse Told, Africa is presented in its pristine times, unadulterated by external influences. Ananse is the characteristic ambivalent figure who weaves in and out of the mystical world of the story, establishing his link with that past, and the present reality in which he is seen as ageless. The inhabitants of this landscape, however, are not without the usual human passions of love, ambition and betrayal. Yaw Asare's Ananse in the Land of Idiots presents Ananse as a colonizer; he is the representation of the colonial enterprise in Africa. In The Marriage of Anansewa, Sutherland portrays Ananse as a postcolonial subject who by virtue of his colonial experience has become a confused amalgam of colonial material acquisitive culture and African cultural values. It might be useful to end on a final note regarding the link between Ananse's materiality, and the national psyche, clinched by Anyidoho (2000, p. 11) in the following terms: "In a fundamental sense, Ananse's aspirations for material prosperity must be seen as a metaphor of

the nation's constant struggle for survival in a modern world where the means of production are often beyond the reach of the poor. ... one of the commissions of set up in Ghana ... to investigate politicians and other public figures submitted a report in which members of the commission seemed to have come to the conclusion that the tendency to misuse public office for personal gain may in fact have something to do with the dominant presence of Kweku Ananse in Ghanaian folklore.

The conclusion of the commission regarding the tenuous link between perceived public corruption in Ghana and the ubiquitous presence of Ananse in Ghanaian folklore is apparently conjectural. Nonetheless, it establishes the fact that Ananse is a formidable symbol of identity in Ghana, as Anyidoho (2000, p. 3) appears to acknowledge in his identification of cultural symbols of Ghana: the sankofa bird, Ananse the spiderman, the primal drum and the slave fort or castle.

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Perceptual Complementarity and Alternate Readings: Deconstructing The Heroes of Radical Nigerian Drama

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Abstract

This paper provides us a comparative analysis of two important Nigerian playwrights of the radical genre. It is based on the premise that the radical characters in the plays of Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan; leading lights in Nigerian populist theatre, are stereotypes cast in the mould of split personalities. They exhibit traits and ideals that often call to question the nature of social responsibility and personal vision. Their actions also highlight the individual and social dimensions of social duty and power in a society riddled with poverty, corruption and inequality. Their attempts to rediscover self and redefine these disparate visions lead them to embark on actions whose outcome often question the validity of the methods adopted. The paper employs the deconstructive critical parameter to investigate the various tokens of dramaturgy employed by these two playwrights to orchestrate their themes of social dysfunction and revolution. It concludes that the heroes of Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan are fitting types found in the struggle for the control of political power and natural resources that has occasioned much debate and violence in the Nigerian polity.

Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan rank among the most productive playwrights in the Nigerian dramatic plateaux whose works have generated much critical discourse. As dramatists who wrote when the Marxist/Socialist reductionist philosophy was very prominent, most of their plays chant and celebrate the ideologues and slogans associated with the Marxist School. This thematic preoccupation led to the emergence of critical works on the playwrights that articulated their dramas as significant examples of revolutionary theatre. As a result, very little effort was made to investigate the more penetrating issues of characterization, dramatic symbolism, thematic metaphors and textual meaning, independent of the playwright's intentions.

This paper is based on the premise that the radical characters in the plays of Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan are stereotypes cast in the mould of split personalities who exhibit tendencies that often call to question the nature of social responsibility and personal vision. Their actions also highlight the individual and social dimensions of social duty and power in a society riddled with poverty, ignorance, violence and

inequality. Their attempts to rediscover self and redefine these disparate visions lead them to embark on actions whose outcome often question the validity of the methods adopted. They are perceived as iconoclastic in action and thought, though their motive appears to spring from an innate and intuitive quest for self-survival. These theoretical views will be approached by examining the heroes of the plays, as personages driven to become deviants by vicarious circumstances, which are personal and social in character. Their choice of action however, it would appear, is informed more by personal need than by social indices. The plays chosen for analysis are *The Night Before* (1979), *Farewell To Babylon* (1979), and *Flamingo* (1986) by Sowande. Femi Osofisan's plays to be examined are *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980) *Morountodun* (1982) and *Red is the Freedom Road* (1982). The choice of these plays is predicated on the fact that they are representative of the playwrights' dramatic efforts. They are plays written at the height of the socio-economic crisis occasioned by the end of the "oil boom" in Nigeria hence, they tackle issues such as military incursions into civil politics, economic recession, educational crisis and general socio-economic dislocation. Chronologically the plays are chosen to show the progressive development of these writers.

Deconstruction perhaps offers us one of the best theoretical and critical lubricity to tackle the above concern. The nature of previous studies on Sowande and Osofisan which tended to point at opposing forces striving for socio-political hegemony presents us with appropriate setting to apply the binary model of deconstruction in the critical analysis of the plays under study. Unlike most critical criteria, it goes beyond the known, the conventional or shared artistic truth to highlight contradictions and areas of departure. These contradictions and departures led Elinor Fuchs to advocate for an investigation into patterns rather than the conventional character in the study of characterization and meaning in dramatic literature (35-36). One of the recurrent features of deconstruction according to Jacques Derrida is the occurrence of 'undecidables'. By this he means the existence of features of construction, which radically unsettle a text, making a final decision as to its meaning impossible. In explicating this feature, he talks about the elements of differance and difference (143).We find more critical support for the deconstructive critical parameter in the views expressed by Christina Howells who observes that it pays scrupulous attention to marginalia and to footnotes, in the expectation that what has been relegated to the margin may prove paradoxically central to a less parochial understanding of the text (2).These marginalia include language symbols, environment, hypothetical stage directions, exclusions and oppositions of the moment and of the previous moment through which the present one is constructed. It is this design which we feel commands much visibility in the

plays under study that we term perceptual complementarity. The opposing forces in the plays complement each other within the crucible of the tension generated by their diverse provenance and persona.

In the 1980s and early 90s, revolutionary aesthetics of the sort championed by Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan was still in ascendancy. Hence much of the critical polemics and reviews generated by their works revolved around this scholarly fad. These early works influenced the critical and thematic trajectory of much of the studies that came after them. Scholars who have espoused the Marxist and structural views include Robert Frazer (936) and James Gibbs (166) who wrote on the issue of class struggle in the drama of Osofisan and Sowande, dwelling more on the inevitability of the triumph of the oppressed led by the radical. Chidi Amuta classifies their plays as "dramatic literature that is politically committed on certain ideological predilection that is class-partisan and sees socio-political salvation mainly in terms of revolutionary transformation" (167) While agreeing with Amuta on the visible contradictions in Osofisan's plays, one finds it hard not to see the recurrent feature of stereotypes in characterization. The devoted, oppressed radical against the decadent, vile and odious establishment is a too familiar character in the revolutionary plays of Sowande and Osofisan.

A critical work such as Olu Obafemi's "Revolutionary Aesthetics in Recent Nigerian Theatre", observes that Sowande and Osofisan are playwrights committed to "...raise mass awareness to a positive revolutionary alternative to social decadence" (118-119). By the same token Jumai Ewu and Tunde Lakoju (167), Saint Gbilekaa (74-116), Tess Onwueme (30-45), Udenta Udenta (94) Enna, Dauda Musa and Victor A. Anyagu (85-87) re-echo these well-known radical views on Sowande and Osofisan. Despite the avalanche of critical works on Sowande and Osofisan celebrating materialist philosophy, there are quite a few voices that have not toed this popular critical line. Oyin Ogunba warns on the over reliance on Marxist criticism in the study of African literature. As he puts it, "Marxism is a creed that promises more than it can deliver" (5). In dismissing the Marxist criteria often applied to Sowande and Osofisan, Dapo Adelugba argues," The Marxist theory has a certain kind of blind spot... not every work theoretically setting out to transform society ends up transforming it in a kind of total way that the Marxist would like" (64). Emeka Nwabueze also observes the simplistic manner in which revolution is prescribed in these works (23) while David Kerr sees Sowande and Osofisan as "...self-conscious dramatists pandering to a proletarian illusion" (123).The aim of this paper is to suggest an alternate reading of these plays by arguing that the Marxist orientation and delineation given to the characters of Sowande and Osofisan exposes them as heroes driven by personal fears to promise more

than they can deliver to the masses.

An important aspect of Sowande and Osofisan's dramaturgy often discussed is the relationship and place of the hero in the collective struggle to which he aspires and urges his compatriots to. It is in this regard that Charles Uji observes that Sowande sees his heroes despite their individualism as characters charting a course of collective action (5-6). Chris Dunton seems to agree with Uji but differs with him on the dynamics of the individual within the collective effort in these plays (60). Despite pointing out this fact Dunton's analysis leaves us with no systematic design for tackling the individual-collective feature identified in plays of Sowande and Osofisan. This study speculates on a triangular construct of individualism-collectivism-individualism, in unmasking the ambiguity of character and plot in the plays of both playwrights. In presenting this cyclic theory, it is hoped that the missing strand of meaning that resides in characterization which Uji and Dunton grappled with unsuccessfully will perhaps be better understood.

Scholars like Uji and Dunton who see collectivism in the individual characters of Bode Sowande, it would appear, are confronted with the split image of the hero who confuses his need for personal redemption with a collective one. This "individualism in collectivism" is best illustrated in the thesis of this paper. It is the path, which the hero sometimes unknowingly takes in the process of self-assertion. It is this hero's dilemma that forms the spine of most of their plays. The critical construct of individual-collective-individual prescribed by this study finds added validity in Wole Soyinka's comment on the psyche of the hero. He writes,"...the real unvoiced fears, will the protagonist survive the confrontation with forces that exist within the dangerous area of transformation?" (here we mean the transformation of the radical from individual to the collective and back) (42). It is this socio-psychic dimension of characterization in the plays of Sowande and Osofisan that most critics have perhaps found tasking to articulate in their haste to derive materialist meaning in the lives of the heroes of the plays. This feature creates ambiguous plots and indeterminate characters in the works of these playwrights. Perhaps it is this ambiguity that led Biodun Jeyifo to wonder "Why after a more or less entertaining evening of a performance of some ...Osofisan's plays the audience often asks, what is he saying? What does he propose as the way out" (32). We shall begin our analysis with Bode Sowande.

Three personages present us with perfect specimen for a deconstructive reading of Sowande's *The Night Before*. These are Onita, Moniran and Nibidi. The three can collectively be taken as the main characters in this play. At the beginning they dream of a peaceful and fulfilling career after school. Despite the imperfections inherent in the polity, these friends are content to

join that polity and be part of the strata that would engender positive social change. The point at which they imbibe violence and non-conformist philosophy as veritable tools of social change appears to be just after their second year in the university. One can therefore, state that the political reverses, which they suffered as students in the university, contributed markedly towards a shift in ideology and disposition. Despite their deviant inclinations their ambition remained the same. Having tried politically and failed within the terrain of the university campus, it would appear that the fear of a greater failure presented by the complex and highly materialist society forced them to change the manner of confronting their fears and attaining their ambitions after graduation.

In trying to deconstruct the radicals of *The Night Before,* Moniran strikes us more like an indeterminate radical who compromises his personal principles in an attempt to find a middle ground between Nibidi's conformist vision and Onita's radicalism. This middle ground lacks profundity and foresight. It casts Moniran in the mould of an unstable and ambiguous character. At the same time however, it also presents him as more pragmatic than the other two characters. This pragmatism is however cancelled out in *Farewell to Babylon* when it dawns on him that in the battle for social values and structures no true radical can belong to the two sides. You either belong to the establishment or dine with the deviants. Moniran's disposition in the *The Night Before* makes him neither a true radical nor a conformist. He is indeterminate and ambiguous. Nibidi makes no pretentious claims to radicalism. However, he serves the important function of standing as the binary opposition to Onita and Moniran. He presents us with the standard to which to subject the validity of Onita and Moniran's claims to radicalism. The tension within this design affords us critical hindsight to conclude that there are no tangible or profound features that distinguish Moniran, Onita and Nibidi either as radicals or as conformists. The characters share the same past and are nurtured by the same personal fears, disappointment and ambition. The only tangible difference lies in their manner of confronting these challenges. The above conclusions counter the regular and linear reading of radicalism in this play and suggest an alternate approach. This alternate approach does not "produce meaning but rather reflects it" (Howells,76).

In *Farewell to Babylon,* Moniran and Kaago dream of the same social ideal, a stable and prosperous polity. While Moniran feels that the present system needs to be changed to attain his goal, Kaago contends that forces opposed to the system are the main clogs in the wheels of peace and social justice. The ambiguity however, is that although Moniran and Kaago work for the same system and share the same vision, scholars are wont to see Moniran as the only positive hero or radical while Kaago is dismissed as a

reactionary.

In another sphere of interpretation, while Onita attempts to achieve his ideal society from the outside, Moniran strives to attain his from the inside. These three characters- Moniran, Onita, Kaago are all striving for one thing; social change. The question then is, why single out the man striving from the outside as the only positive hero? Why classify him as the only radical, ignoring the more practical pragmatic dispositions of Moniran and Kaago. It is our view here that these characters cancel each other. The tension generated in their vision and interpretation of society and change is essentially the same. Hence one can argue that neither is socially opposed to the other, neither is a radical nor a deviant. They represent archetypal forms of human relation and tension. Moniran could be classified as a radical because he secretly works for the end of a regime which he considers evil. Kaago on the other hand working for the regime stands as an agent of oppression because he does not chart the normal path of dissent. Kaago's tactics, perceived as violent and brutal, is not very dissimilar with Monirans'. In fact Moniran sets the pace for the violence and the suffering seen in the play when he relentlessly persuades his fiancée Jolomi to infiltrate the rebellious farmers' territory.

Onita sees Moniran's attempt to change the system from the inside as a mirage. He would rather wish that Moniran joins him as a dissident. The motivation for this choice of course, is also speculative as we tried to show earlier that Onita's choice was predicated more by self-discovery and attainment than by social responsibility. By the same token, in abandoning the radicalism of his student days to wear the mask of an underground revolutionary, Moniran merely recreates the predicament, into which Onita found himself in *The Night Before.* Onita fails to achieve his dream till death. Though he remained resolute, it dawned on him later that those personal fears and desires that haunted him from his days as a university student were unattainable with the means he adopted. He dies in cell, killed by a deranged cellmate. Moniran who thought he had achieved his life long ambition at the end of this play soon discovers to his chagrin that it was all a charade. This disappointment crystallizes and forms the main spine of Flamingo.

In *Flamingo,* Moniran's vision remained the same. The personal fears and ambitions that ruled him in The Night Before remain with him and propel him to choose another method to attain them. The persistent effort to realize these personal objectives soon translate into an abiding pride in Moniran. He sees the failure of the revolution, which he spearheaded with Kasa as a personal failure. Teriba his associate tells us this much (30). Moniran's battle with self is total. Unlike Onita, he adopts a form of radicalism that borders on escapism. By abandoning his struggle from the inside to retire to a remote village to grow vegetables he strikes us as a character yet to emerge from the

cocoons of an idealistic radicalism. He appears to be afraid to experiment with the type of bold radicalism that Onita expounded, opting instead for a more covert form of dissension. His determination to avoid the fate that befell Onita, it appears, prompts him to adopt this method.

Like the radical, Kasa's personal fears and not social responsibility motivate him into action. In electing to continue with the status quo he merely expresses his determination to achieve personal goals: Political power and perpetuation. In keeping tabs on Moniran he seeks to tackle his personal fears. His choice of violence is not too dissimilar to Moniran's in Farewell to Babylon and it stands in opposition to Moniran's present disposition of reclusive activist. Yulli the student activist who visits Moniran in the village points this out to him. He tries to cajole Moniran to reaffirm his faith in the apparatus of violence as a legitimate weapon of change as advanced by the latter while he was still head of state security. In reply to the Youngman's bridleless exuberance, Moniran cautions him on the futility of the machinery of force and violence.

Both the radical and the establishment in Flamingo inhabit a clime of fulfilled and unfulfilled ambitions. What differentiates the radical from the establishment in this play is the control and monopoly of the power of coercion and violence. As we tried to show, Moniran the radical employed these methods in *Farewell to Babylon* when he had the power of coercion. When we subject his actions to the 'decentering' ideals of (a Lack of ontological or semiotic unity) (Derrida, 76) design, these characters complement and oppose each other. They do not yield easily to a leaner understanding and are better served by a dispassionate application of a deconstructive interpretation.

Osofisan's *Morountodun* gives us a graphic image of the radical in Titubi, the rich girl, who decides to change the unjust society fostered by the activities of people like her mother. Unlike the plays of Sowande, Morountodun presents us with a bifocal radical. The term is used in the sense that Titubi started off as an enforcer of the status quo before evolving into a radical. Although the playwright created another radical character in Marshal, his role as a commander of the farmers' militia is merely incidental to the process of artistic tension and change in the plot of the play. Instead of an iconoclast, he is more of brute and brawn fuelled by the deprivations that surround him. He fights to liberate his imprisoned colleagues and humiliate the government in an attempt to satisfy a personal ego.

Titubi's arrival among the farmers practically and visibly animates the radicalism of Marshal in the play, giving it a focused vision. Before this time he was merely a character of impulse and exuberant radicalism. This exuberance leads to his death at the end of the play. In *Morountodun,* Titubi offers us a fitting example of the radical. At the beginning of the play,Titubi

and Marshal stand at the extremes of the binary complex. Later in the play Marshal's position is assumed by Titubi's mother and the Deputy Superintendent of Police. At the beginning Titubi belonged to the established social order. Her attempt to enforce and perpetuate this social design transforms her into an opponent of that social structure. Marshal is driven by a personal goal for social conquest to embark on his fight against the government. This personal ambition to humiliate the government soon degenerates into a paranoid state of unceasing violence. Baba the old leader of the farmers soon realizes this and confronts him. In this confrontation Marshal dismisses Baba as a leader of words and not action, a village leader and not a battle leader (76-77). The irony of this confrontation is that it was Marshal rather than Baba who fell to the government superior firepower. Marshal is killed and Baba negotiates a settlement with the government. In an attempt to achieve a personal ambition Marshal turns a collective fight into a personal quest for self-assertion (77). The monster of personal drive undermines Marshal's image as hero and a positive radical as he confuses this drive for collective goal. He strikes us more like a man who sees in the farmers' struggle the effective means of waging a personal war against an establishment that has pauperized him. Hence, when the farmers urge for an armistice, Marshal, enthralled by his personal quest, urges the opposite, which is violence. The violence that he wages against the government is essentially the same malaise, which he accuses them of. In another instance, the establishment represented by the Deputy Superintendent of Police exercises a significant degree of violence and irascibility associated with the government's force of coercion. In suggesting that Titubi submit herself as bait to catch the elusive leader of the farmers, the Deputy Superintendent exhibits the same desperation displayed by Moniran in asking Jolomitutu to go and spy on the farmers in Sowande's Farewell to Babylon. Interestingly, Moniran and Superintendent work for the government.

Analyzing Marshal's character from the viewpoint of deconstruction, one notices that he stands side by side with the forces which he fights against. Their ambitions are homologous and their methods of operation similar. What gives Marshal the badge of positivism in most critical studies of the play is his roots in the farmers' enclave and struggle. Unlike Marshal, Titubi's evolution into an iconoclast comes late in the play. Unlike him also, her radicalism is tinged with some level of foresight and pragmatism. This is highlighted in her entreaty to Marshal not to embark on the fatal mission to the security headquarters that cost him his life and those of his friends. Titubi states her vision as a radical (66). At first reading, Titubi's testimony strikes us as egalitarian and humane. However, we are given enough vignettes in the play to critically deconstruct Titubi, the 'later day radical-iconoclast', and Titubi, the 'spoilt rich daughter' of Alhaja Kabirat. Like the

other radicals discussed so far, Titubi is ruled by personal fear. This fear is to excel in life and create an atmosphere of stability. This fear is exhibited in the first scene when she disrupts a play production that criticized her mother and members of her social class, asking an avalanche of questions (9). At this stage, the only social group that Titubi has had effective contact with is her own. It gave her the security and the opportunity to excel in life, making her to see any other social class below as a threat to this social security. Her encounter with the farmers changed Titubi's worldview. This change nevertheless, does not alter her motivations and ambition; it merely changes the channel of achieving them.

Although she emerges from the farmer's enclave a changed person, Titubi retains the close bond between her and her affluent mother. In this regard she does not deny or abandon her background. It is instructive that her first words on returning home are, "I went, and I returned, triumphant. Like a legend" (60). Titubi sees in the farmers an avenue to achieve the comfort of her social security and existence as their persistent revolts threatens the social equilibrium that she is used to. In accepting to infiltrate the farmers' enclave she is motivated by these ideals. On getting there, however, it dawns on her that the best means of attaining these personal goals of her class is through pacification. This is akin to contemporary patronizing diplomacy of the West towards the developing world in their quest to fight terrorism. The point being made here is that despite the change in outlook, Titubi is still motivated by the very factors that led her to the farmers. The only thing that has altered about her is that she sees the farmers and not her social class as those that would guarantee the personal security and freedom she yearns for. In this regard Titubi stands against herself in the theoretical crucible. Elaborating on this form of critical indeterminacy, Derrida describes it as "a signification formed only within the hollow of difference, of discontinuity, of discreteness, of diversion and reversal of what does not appear" (69). With the views above, we can conveniently approach the character of Titubi from two perspectives. These are the pre-farmers' Titubi and the post-farmers' Titubi. Evidently, one cancels the other. They change and yet remain the same. The two personalities of the one girl seek for the same thing; what changes is just the method of approaching the goal. The two Titubis are motivated by the same factors.

Another point of note is the personality of Titubi. She strikes us as a strong willed character, very comfortable with her social class. The force of character with which she is presented to us at the beginning of the play casts much doubt as to the believability and the level of profundity of change which she went through in the farmers' enclave, taking into cognizance the fact that she spent just three months there. For a character that has known no other life outside personal comfort and affluence, it becomes really tasking

to believe that her ambitions and motivations in life can vaporize after a few months adventure with farmers in the forest. During the confrontation with the Deputy Superintendent of Police, for instance, Titubi uses strong words to paint the picture of a young lady with a very strong personality (12). Although Titubi's character undeniably was affected during her stay with the farmers, a more critical examination of her personality in the play suggests that the level of association with the farmers vis-à-vis the length of time she stayed there does not present enough critical evidence to argue that the tryst altered her personality profoundly. It may be more accurate to suggest that the claim towards Titubi's re-orientation is more of an artistic design in the mould of the Moremi myth. It should not be read from the surface signification but rather should be understood in the context of the character's persona and motivations.

Red is the Freedom Road takes its heroes from the realm of Yoruba myth and history. Unlike the other plays of this study, action in *Red is the Freedom Road* is situated within an environment of war and general social dislocation. As the play begins, the land is already populated by slaves caught in the Oyo war of attrition. Out of this scenario emerges our radical, Akanji, himself a captured slave who has found favour with the Oba and thus has been selected to become the Bashorun or war commander. In accepting to serve the oppressor of his people, Akanji shares similar revolutionary temperaments with Moniran in Farewell to Babylon who tried to change the system from the inside. Akanji's vision also serves as an overriding motivation in all his actions in the play. Akanji's motivation springs from a personal desire to reclaim his kingdom and wife. He paints a rosy picture of the past before a band of colleagues who are all nobles in their respective kingdoms. Seeing that he could not go it all alone, Akanji uses the method of mass psychology to give his struggle a mass colouration. He reaches out to the other slaves, appealing to their sense of the past to win them over to his side (129). Akanji sacrifices his wife and mother in the pursuit of his goal of self re-assertion. The scenario here makes a complex reading in the context of this study. Moniran sacrifices his fiancée, Jolomitutu, while Titubi sacrifices self to fight the farmers. In the case of Akanji this sacrifice proves very fatal as his mother dies in the hands of the oppressor and his wife loses their unborn child. Subjecting Akanji to the efficacies of the indeterminate design, he visits the same degree of violence on his people as did the oppressors in his attempt to achieve his personal goals. These well-intentioned goals, ultimately consume those he loves. Plagued by the glitterati of his royal past, Akanji sets out to destroy the slave holding kingdom and reclaim his royal heritage. In doing this, he sacrifices everything.

In this play we see a battle of two individuals, Kabiyesi and Akanji,

each motivated by a personal ambition to assert his hegemony over the other. Akanji is classified as the iconoclast because he attempts to change the prevailing social structure of slave-master relationship highlighted in the plot of the play. The mode employed in pursuing his vision cancels out Akanji as a positive hero. By putting his people in jeopardy and sacrificing his mother and wife, he calls to question his image as a mass-driven radical. His aim of reestablishing his sovereignty and suzerainty is a primal motivation; every other consideration is sublimated to this overriding ambition. Ibidun best captures the significance of Akanji's chicanery in her remonstrations with one of her maids of honour (127). In his bid to liberate his people and restore his kingdom he causes irreparable harm to both his people and his family. The playwright realizes this fact of Akanji's character hence he tries to rationalize the extreme measures he took to achieve his goals. The 'Aftermath' scene that ends the play appears to be contrived. By making him drown himself, Osofisan tries to rehabilitate the image of Akanji and give it the stature of a tragic hero. This structure is further amplified by Ibidun's suicide beside her husband after eating the poisoned ado leave. This scenario bears close resemblance to Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods,* and the heroic tragedies of renaissance Europe. This attempt to rehabilitate the image of the radical hero and show him to be motivated by egalitarian ideals is severely punctured by Akanji's admonitions to his fellow slaves at the start of the rebellion. In trying to psyche them up, he invokes personal achievements and gains and not collective ones (128).

At his death Akanji sees himself not very much different from the slave-holding king he sought to supplant. The iconoclast, by virtue of eclipsing the opposition, finds an unsettling parallelism in their hitherto diametric relationship. When it dawns on him that he is not much better in motive and method compared with his foe, an overwhelmed Akanji takes his own life. The mode of his death raises an important critical argument which highlights the notion that no signifier, whatever its substance and form, has a unique and singular reality. Despite his tokens of iconicity, Akanji vacillates between the realities of an iconoclast and that of a reactionary. His self-immolation could thus be described as a deconstructive self-discovery.

A different situation is presented in *Once Upon Four Robbers* which is constructed with characters of both affluent and poor origins. The plot highlights the role of violence as a legitimate vehicle of struggle between the rich and the poor. The robbers represent deviants pauperized by the society, while the market women represent the materialistic establishment. Consciously or unconsciously, the playwright tries to draw empathy for the robbers by highlighting the circumstances that forced them into a life of crime. He invokes the Moremi motif common to most of his plays in

justifying the choice of armed robbery made by Alhaja, Major, Angola and Hasan (71).

A first reading of this play gives the impression that the robbers are men who have been driven by the society to take to a life of crime in an attempt to break out from poverty. It is not surprising then that Muyiwa Awodiya sees them as victims of abject penury forced into armed robbery by "scandalous affluence", "insidious corruption" and "bureaucratic ineptitude" (132). In this mould they could be seen as iconoclasts out to procure a violent change from an oppressive system. It is therefore necessary to deconstruct this generally accepted assumption. The market women are used in this play as motifs to represent the establishment. They are classified as being corrupt, greedy and extravagant employing the apparatus of the state police and the army to perpetuate their oppression of the poor masses. They stand opposed to the radical and iconoclastic disposition of the robbers as portrayed by the playwright. The principal tension in the play is generated in the interplay of intrigues, violence and ambition associated with these two groups.

Aafa the old religious mendicant in the play gives us the first insight to the persona and motives of the robbers. In his first encounter with them, Major chants the usual song of hunger and poverty, "Forgive us. It's hunger that drives us" (20). To this Aafa replies, "As it drives other people. But not into crime" (21). Major counters, "We are honest. We steal only from the rich" (21). The robbers' attempt to rob Aafa, a poor itinerant preacher, however, punctures their argument of robbing the rich only and not the poor. In fact a majority of the market women in Nigeria, whose proclivities are represented by their kind in the play, barely exist above the poverty line. These women's materialistic disposition counter poses the robbers seeming deprivation. Hence while the former is seen as the oppressor, the latter is viewed as the victim. The robbers who are the victims here are canonized as radicals who have taken up arms to get a share of what society has denied them. However, a glance at the numerous robberies, which they carried out and which brought in much money to them shows that honest hard work was never a virtue to them. While the much vilified market women toiled daily under the sun, the seemingly lazy robbers waited in the dark to plunder the fruits of their sweat.

Strictly speaking, the robbers and the market women seek one thing; escape from the fangs of poverty. While the robbers choose the path of violence and crime, the women elect to engage in petty-trading and production. The problems of inflation, hoarding and avarice, which the robbers accuse them of, are normal antics and idiosyncrasies of traders all over the world and have almost assumed the status of conventions. It would appear that Osofisan highlights these features of the traders to elicit empathy for the robbers who have been presented as outsiders and victims of

circumstance. Corollary to the above, the economic violence which the market women are accused of shares a binary commonality with the violence of the armed banditry of the robbers. In fact when placed on the pedestal of logic and morality, the violence of the robbers outweighs that of the market women because apart from robbing people of their belongings they also take human lives. Pride, Aafa points out, is the main obstacle to the robbers' path to honest living. They do not desire to get honest jobs, which sometimes come as low paying offers. Rather they aspire to highly paid jobs despite the fact that they are men of limited education (22-23). The robbers' demise occasioned by personal greed vividly paints the picture of characters of individual persuasions motivated by personal goals that have nothing to do with the social state of the masses. Aafa recognizes this fact about the robbers hence he extracts a pledge from them never to rob poor people again. This pledge, one would say, is not kept because in subsequent operations they rob the entire market women both rich and poor with the magical song Aafa gave them.

After the massive heist which they carried out against the market women, the robbers, rather than think of using some part of their loot to help the masses who are victims of the same poverty which they claim drove them to steal, resort to cornering everything for themselves. They give no thought for the future or investments but dream of the same life of profligacy and ostentation, which they accuse the women of. Major's dream exemplifies this fact:

> This is money! Money! A new life... A house the size of a palace! The law' tamed with my bank account! And children! ... I'll own the main streets, six, no ten Mercedes, the neon lights, the supermarkets (52).

The motivations of the robbers for fighting the establishment are not too different from those of the market women. In fact the women pursue their social goals with honour while the robbers resort to violence. The essential difference between the two social groups lies in the circumstance of their past. The robbers, born in the lower depths of the society, find in dissent and violence a tool to bring down the establishment and climb to the driving seat of social status. As positive radicals they fail woefully. What they set out to destroy is primarily what they wish to achieve as life goals. The social factor that motivates them is personal and not collective. They see in the masses a gullible vehicle to whip up sentiments and justify their inglorious profession of armed brigandage. It appears that the playwright envisioned this interpretation hence he does not end the play

We shall summarize by re-echoing what Abiola Irele has termed "the quest for coherence in literary works on purely technical grounds" (23) which he sees as pervasive in the study of African literature, and a "very dangerous procedure" (23). A lot of the pioneering works on Sowande and Osofisan as we argued suffer from this tendency. They tried to impinge only Marxist significations in their interpretation of their woks and also canonized their radicals as positive heroes. Our task here has not been to urge for the rejection of Marxist or biographical criticism although their dogmatic pervasiveness in the criticism of the works of the playwrights discussed here, could provoke one to such extremism. Rather, this paper has tried to argue that the heroes of Sowande and Osofisan are no saints or more patriotic than the forces they set out to confront. Unlike scholars who classified them as positive heroes, the paper took a neutral and dispassionate stance and examined these personages strictly from what they say, what they think, how they act, and what motivates them and their relationship with their fellows. We also investigated the inner conflicts and complex emotions which have been sublimated to the over generalized theme of the righteous oppressed revolutionary. While advocating the need for alternate readings of these plays, we remain conscious of the fact that no single interpretation of Sowande and Osofisan will suffice. We rather conclude by aligning our self with Bernth Lindfors who likened the study of African literature to the six blind men who went to have a feel of the elephant (1).These six men approached the animal from six different directions. Being visually impaired each interprets the animal from the perspective of its physiology which he encounters. Like the six blind men, we can only approach literary criticism from the perspective of a subjective-objectivity. Applied to the works of Bode Sowande and Femi Osofisan, it becomes obvious that like the blind men, it is impossible to speculate on an exhaustive method or theory that captures the totality of their dramatic effort.

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relationships between music, songs, chants and instrumental music? According to Microsoft Encarta Suite (2009), 'Music is the artful arrangement of sounds across time'. Merriam (1977), in an ethnomusicological perspective defines music as both sound and context. Ekwueme (2004) however, tries to excise the subject of context from music and says music is simply sound.

Bebbey (1974), Nketia, (1974), Allan P. Merriam (1977), Ekwueme L.E.N. (2004), Okafor (2005), Warburton (2000), Adegbite (1993), and many others attest to the fact that music is made up of sound and rhythm or time. Very many definitions of Music abound but the most popularly accepted and acclaimed one is that Music is the organization/combination of sounds made melodically or harmonically pleasing to the ear. Simply put therefore, music is organized sound.

A song is a short lyric or narrative text (or poem) set to music. Chants, on the other hand, are unaccompanied sung melody, the rhythm and melodic contour of which are closely tied to the spoken rhythms and inflections of the text (Microsoft Encarta Suite, 2010). Vocal music is any kind of sound that is produced melodically or harmonically through the human voice. On the other hand, instrumental music is the organized sound made through the manipulation of material resources other than the human voice. The context under which sound is made for it to be music is another musicological discourse for music scholars. Music is an all embracing term for vocal music which could be songs or chants, instrumental music or a combination of both vocal and instrumental music. Chants are considered as vocal music; therefore chants are subsumed in music. Music is an all-embracing term for songs, chants, and all types of instrumental music.

Christmas carols are rendered in concerts or cantatas as organized by various Christian groups. Most churches of Christendom and schools where Christian bodies exist see it as an obligatory task to organize such concerts annually. Some of these carols have been developed by music directors over the years to incorporate all forms of theatrical entertainments including drama and dance. However Muslims, in celebration of Islamic festivals, have been reserved in organizing "sallah carols" or cantata" or 'sallah concerts' publicly. Carols are nothing but "songs of joy or praise" (Encarta Premium Suite 2009) to God for His mercies in diverse forms. Wikipedia (2010) simply defines carols as 'joyful hymns'. This paper thus focuses on the possibilities of researching into Islamic music and organizing them into concert for public entertainment during Islamic festivals.

Although Kofoworola (1981:169) makes mention of 'Tashe' as being "a form of entertainment to mark the period of Islamic Ramadan" in some parts of Northern Nigeria, such entertainments are not widespread especially in the middle belt and southern zones of Nigeria where there are a good number

of Muslims. Moreover, none of such Islamic musicals has been organized in any University for the purpose of entertainment.

Islam and Music

Islamic religion makes use of music. When one considers the rhythm, tempo and mellismatic pitches manipulated by Imams while reciting Quranic texts and the call to prayers, then it is baseless debating the use of music in Islamic religious worship. Euba (1986:45) stated that "The only music that can be described as true Islamic music is the cantilation used in the call to prayer and in the reading of the Holy Quran"

This statement corroborates the fact that Muslims' worship is musical. However, the claim that Quran reading and prayer recitation is the only musical feature in Islam is contestable since other musical features have been found out. Bell-Gam (1989:78) defines singing as an "oral, rhythmic, verbal and non-verbal interpretation of dramatic poetry'. He went on to say that "dramatic poetry includes dramatic narrative". Going by this definition and explanation, one can assert that the Quranic recitation done in Islam are in singing style which is an aspect of music. However, Ames (1973) had pointed out that Muslim religion (i.e. Islam) accords a very low position to music and musicians" Akin Euba (1986) confirms this when he also stated that apart from the Quranic recitatives no other form of music is used as part of Islamic worship. Buttressing his point Ames (1973:140) has this to say:

> Musical instruments are not played in the mosque, and music is excluded from everyday Islamic ritual with the exception of the unaccompanied chanting of religious poems and Muslim hymns".

One basic fact in Ames' submission here is that there are 'Muslim hymns', which are used in mosque. These hymns can further be rearranged for such Islamic Sallah concerts by musicologists for theatrical entertainments hoping that such arrangements will not be seen by Muslim fundamentalists as being sacrilegious. Moreover, Adesokan (1998) asserts that "fuji music emerged among the Yoruba peoples as an outgrowth from 'were', an Islamized musical genre". During the Ramadan fasting period, it is observed that musical instruments are played by young Muslims to wake up Muslim faithful for their night meals in preparation for the fasting ahead. Moreover, Salawa Abeni is a popular Nigerian Muslim who performs were music to entertain people. Abeni had performed with Sikiru Ayinla and Alhaji Kolington in their fuji musical bands before she went solo.

The Unilorin Sallah Concert

A musicologist in the Performing Arts Department had the mandate to research into Islamic songs and directs the organization of a Sallah concert which would be used as part of Ensemble Studies assessment for the participating students. The students in the Performing Arts Department have been used to Christmas cantatas. This deviation was not too strange although more efforts were needed since the Christmas concert still had to be held amidst final year students' fiesta of major productions. With the assistance of some Muslim colleagues and students, Islamic songs were harvested, arranged into voice parts with instrumental accompaniment and rehearsed rigorously for a few weeks in a workshop style. Below are the titles of the repertoire of songs for the concert:

Section One

1. Bisimilahi - Yusuf Islam
2. Asalamalekun - Ofosu
3. Here we come Allah - Yusuf Islam
4. Y' Anabi Sallam Allaem - Yusuf Islam
5. Everything Allah - Yusuf Islam

Section Two

6. Welcome Ramadan - Yusuf Islam
7. Different Colors of Islam - Yusuf Islam
8. Lahillah illalahu - Yusuf Islam
9. Allabu Akbar - Yusuf Islam
10. Eje ki ajo - Lateef Oloto

Section Three

11. Oluwa awa nbe o - Anon
12. Mo le j'asalatu l'eti okun - Anon
13. Ona ayo - Anon
14. Alasalatu - Anon
15. Talo fe ti Mohammed - Anon
16. Assalam Aieikun - Ofosu

The workshop method adopted in rehearsing the songs contributed in facilitating rapid learning of the songs in various parts. Most of the songs were in call and response form while a few were homophonic. Only one was in contrapuntal style. Apart from "Assalamalekun" which was composed by Dr. Ofosu (a musicologist/composer) all other songs used were recorded from Islamic adherents in Ilorin town but were re-arranged by departmental musicologist and director of the concert to suit the purpose of the Sallah concert.

Textual Analysis

A textual analysis of the songs shows that the mercy of Allah is extolled, His blessing sought, peace is wished for all and Mohammed praised. The songs are arranged into three movements. Section One consists of sueh songs as: Song1. Bissimillahi - This song is a kind of prayer in Islam requesting for His mercies upon all present at the concert. Song 2: Asalamalekun: this song is a kind of greeting to everyone present at the concert, wishing them the peace of Allah. The title of the song is actually the general greeting of Muslims. Song 3: "Here We Come, Allah" this song is about the consecration and adoration of the faithful at the ceremony. The song also makes the faithful pledge their loyalty to Allah. Song 4: Y'Anabi Sallam Allaem: This extols the virtues of Allah and Mohammed, Allah's messenger. Song 5: Everything Allah: This song extols the attributes of Allah as the overseer of all human affairs.

The second section of songs was on Ramadan. The first song welcomes the month of Ramadan to all faithful Muslims that they have been expecting. The second song in this section is about the different religious practices and other activities done in Islam, including the festivals and beliefs of Muslims, Ramadan fasting being one of such tenets of Islamic religion. The third song here is on the mighty nature of Allah, Allah Akbar. Muslims are used to shouting "Allah Akbar" anytime they face any situation that looks beyond their imagination. The last song in this movement is a kind of bridge or link to the last movement. The song is in Yoruba - Eje ki ajo - and it means rise up to dance for the joy of Ramadan.

Section Three is entirely in Yoruba language. The songs in this movement are also arranged in danceable rhythms whereby the performers danced gracefully to the rhythms of the music. Song1. Oluwaawa'nbe o. This song affirms the presence and readiness of the Muslim faithful to dance to the glory of Allah. The last song in this section was so thrilling that everyone was called to dance at the end of the concert.

At the performance, very simple but graceful dance movements were choreographed with the songs by the choristers who were beautifully costumed in Islamic adornment with very good make-up that brightened up their faces. The lighting effects and the scenography added some theatrical aesthetics to the entire performance.

Audience Participation

Audience perception and participation in any African theatrical performance cannot be ignored. In fact the responses of the audience, to a large extent attest to the acceptability and success of a performance in an African, setting. Enekwe (1991) corroborates this fact when he gave a picture of an audience participation in dance performance at Opi near

Nsukka. In attendance at the Unilorin sallah concert were eminent Islamic scholars and clerics from within and outside the University community including the Vice-Chancellor. They all expressed their approval and satisfaction of the way the sallah concert was organized.

However, an Islamic scholar in attendance commented that a public entertainment performance by mature women is against Islamic practice. Ethnomusicological researches have shown that mature Muslim women had been involved in sociocommercial performance of Islamic music which had been for entertainment. In fact Biodun (1999:58) ascribes a whole musical genre to Muslim women, which they use for entertainment. He states:

> Baluu music is one of the Islamic music genres popular among the Ilorin Muslim community. Its practice is genderly categorized (sic) since it is performed only by the women folk of the community. Baluu music is led by a woman and its chorus are (sic) all women. (Biodun 1999:58).

In his research, 'Biodun affirmed that the exponents of Baluu music are 'Alhajas' which means they are Muslim faithfuls who have visited Mecca. Moreover, he gave the performance norms of Baluu music, which included "versatility in texts from the Quran with strict adherence to the doctrine of Islam". Therefore, mature ladies taking part in a "Sallah" concert should not be seen as religious syncretism or sacrilege.

Nevertheless, we need to make a distinction between Islamic socio-religious music as performed to entertain people and purely Islamic music used in Mosques for worship. Generally, Muslims are not known to use music in their worship as Christians do. However, the chants and cantillations done in Mosques during Jumaat worship can be equated to music if we consider chants as music. In fact Farmer (2009), corroborates this when he posited that 'the influence due to the Arabian Culture in respect to musical instruments was far wider than has been generally acknowledged'.

Basic Rhythmic Patterns Used

Some basic rhythmic patterns were used as various idiophonic instruments were used to accompany some of the songs. Some of the basic rhythmic patterns arranged for some idiophonic musical instruments to accompany the songs are:

$^{2}_{4}$ I I I I

$^{2}_{4}$ .I .I .I .II

$^{6}_{8}$ I .I I II

$^{12}_{16.}$ I II

These rhythmic patterns easily fit into the songs which had been arranged by the musicologist/music director of the concert. Some of the songs had been collected from the immediate environment as sung by Muslim faithfuls.

Challenge to Musicologists and Theatrical Artists.

That the maiden University of Ilorin Sallah concert was a success should pose challenges to Musicologists, Theatrical Artists and Music Directors. More researches could be carried out into various Islamic musical genres including Islamic hymns with the objectives of arranging them for theatrical performances and entertainment. Composers can also venture into composing Islamic songs with texts from the Quran. Such compositions would go a long way to realizing the objectives of getting Muslims entertained during Islamic festivals. Moreover, Islamic musical compositions can be arranged for the Philharmonic Orchestra performances.

Furthermore, similar performances can be organized around other Islamic festivals such as 'id el fatir, ileya' and the id el maulud celebrations. In fact operatic and choreographic libretti could be written based on Islamic events for artists to realize on the stage and for films. The twenty-first century musicologist has the audios task of harvesting different Islamic songs for scholarly discourses and analysis.

Muslim faithfuls who are wealthy should sponsor such concerts, which could be made broadcast on radios and televisions. Musicologists can begin to collate and analyze different Islamic musicals for academic purpose as they bring out their textual, harmonic, tonal and rhythmic features.

Conclusion

This paper has pointed out the possibility of orchestrating and staging Muslims' musical concerts with a reference to the University of Ilorin sallah concert of December 8, 2002. The sallah concert was an innovative experience which turned out to be successful. Islamic musicals are still very

viable and open area of academic exploration for musicological and theatrical researches. The theatrical audience wants new things happening in the theatre if the practitioners are ready to give what it takes. There could be some initial challenges of acceptability but with time the people would be used to it. In fact it can be a way of dowsing tension where there had been hostilities and killings of people. It can be another way of bringing people of different religions together for conviviality. However, in areas where there is aggressive religious fanaticism, the music concert director should be diplomatic enough not to enlist anything that could ignite trouble. Moreover, the dance movements should be choreographed in such a way that Islamic tenets and beliefs are neither mocked nor ridiculed.

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Gender Talk or Powerless Female: Edufa T. Sutherland's Edufa and The Marriage of Anansewa as Paradigms

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Abstract

African female playwrights' works have often been analysed within different female discourse frameworks, but this paper examines Efua T. Sutherland's Edufa and The Marriage of Anansewa from Judith Butler's view on gender. Sutherland is categorized as one of the first generation of African female writers who creatively explores how gender and woman status within her society is often viewed from the cultural perspective. This analysis of Sutherland's plays will provide a reliable guide to the interpretation of the themes which explains woman's position in the society, how this position affects her perception of identity within the society through language and action, cultural vulnerability and woman's quest for self-expression. This paper analyses Efua T. Sutherland's plays by exploring the identities of the female characters in relation to that of the male characters whose fear and greed make them victims as well. It also discusses the playwright's view on women gender in relation to their language. Butler's view that gender is Performative is employed in this paper to a large extent hinging on women's capabilities to analyse the relationships between the female and male characters. This enables the discussion of Sutherland's characters exploration of female identity through the language choice of these characters that feminine and masculine is not what we are, nor the traits people have, but effects people produce by way of a particular things they do.

Gender is complex. The willingness to understand the definition of gender is the willingness to struggle within the complexities of the society that defines it. It is essential to understand the difference between gender and sexuality. While Sexuality concerns physical and biological differences that distinguish males from females, gender is what the society makes of these sexualities that have no biological component. Cultures are agents which construct differences in gender. These socio-cultural constructions attach themselves to behaviours, expectations, roles, representations, and sometimes to values and beliefs that are specific to either men or women. Instead of biology, socially agreed upon and constructed conduct, and the meanings cultures assign to that conduct, constitute the concept of gender.

Judith Butler and Sara Salih in *The Judith Butler Reader* argue that sex

construed as a biological category is as heavily socially constructed as gender, and that biological sex itself is a gendered category. Butler insists that while feminist analysis successfully identified the social practices that produce gender as a category of identification, they have failed to see that sex itself is produced as a category that precedes gender. In line with Butler's view, the meanings attached to the female body as an object of scientific scrutiny are determined not just by the practices of science, but in conjunction with other cultural and economic formations, for example, global capitalism, the mass media, institutional racism, or homophobia. Gender however is seen as a means of investigating the variability and contingency of male and female understanding of sexual difference.

In exploring this, Efua T. Sutherland, one of the renowned first generation of African female writers has explored this issue of gender in her works. Through language, her works analyse female issues in the male dominated society. This paper discusses the works of Sutherland's in relation to the female gender's lack of emotional capabilities as portrayed in the female characters. This playwright believes that thoughts, feelings and emotions are the inner attributes which a woman possesses and needs to be expressed but are devalued by the males in her female characters. Such feelings, thoughts and emotions presented are interlinked with the masculine gender that regards females as possessions and emotionless. Sutherland exposes how the male-dominated societies influence female decisions and uses her sexual attributes as a way of enslavement. Simone de Beauvoir's in *The Second Sex* is of the opinion that one is not born, but rather becomes a woman is evidenced in the plays to be analysed. According to Butler, becoming a woman or a man is not something one accomplishes once and for all in a lifetime, but it is an accumulation of what the society constitutes a particular person to be. Deborah Cameron in *Language and Gender: A Reader,* notices that:

> Gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms (themselves historically and socially constructed, and consequently variable) which define 'masculinity' and 'femininity' (271).

The Performative view of gender allows an interesting discussion in the actuality of gendered speech which Sutherland treats in a way that switches the male characters language to the female characters way of life. This allows her to explore the themes of fear and greed in the two plays. Sutherland's recreates *The Marriage of Anansewa,* the storytelling drama to expose how Ananse denies his daughter from choosing her own husband.

Despite being an oral story which Sutherland translates from the Akan spider tales (Anansesem) into a new dramatic structure which she calls Anansegoro, she exposes Butler's view about the construction of gender as a repeated stylisation of the body that is a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeals over the time to produce the appearance of substance, of a "natural" kind of being' (33). Traditionally, in the Ghanian setting, Ananse means trickster, the spider that often appears as a man. Sutherland's portrayal of Kweku Ananse in relation to her beautiful daughter, Anansewa is presented as the most valuable asset which the trickster has and if he succeeds in persuading one of the country's chiefs to marry her, he believes he is going to be wealthy.

Language and Character Representation in Sutherland's Plays.

Sutherland's *The Marriage of Anansewa* exposes a cunning and dishonest father, Ananse who sees the female gender as a source of wealth like Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods.* As a trickster who can take different forms, Sutherland makes Ananse an old man; Ananse tests the suitors of his daughter, Anansewa, who is a Western-educated urban woman. He tries to gain money by demanding a bride price and playing with the hopes of the four different suitors from various clans. Following the oral technique, the playwright uses a storyteller who stands outside the action and mediates between the actors and the audience. With the actors, the audiences participate in singing or recounting mboguo, musical performances that comment on the story. Ananse disregards her daughter's emotional feelings without considering what she wants for herself and her choice of husband despite being educated.

This is similar to the situation in Edufa where lack of feelings and sympathy makes Edufa sacrifice the love and life of his wife in order to align with one of the society's expectations of the masculine gender. Sutherland portrays Edufa as a man of high social status, reputation and prestige who in his quest to maintain and improve it, consults a diviner who saw death hanging over him instead. As the only means of averting this disastrous situation, he must sacrifice something with the power of speech who can swear an oath to die on his behalf. At this point in the play, the playwright questions the positionality of a man in his quest to maintain his societal position and his loss of a dear one in order to maintain this status. Edufa's father, Kankam, reveals the hidden mystery behind his wife, Ampoma's ill-health which is as a result of what Edufa does:

> KANKAM: You had willed that some old wheezer like me
> should be the victim. And I was the first to speak.
> 'Not me, my son', said I joking. 'Die your own death.

> I have mine to die.' And we all laughed. Do you remember? My age was protecting me. [Pause] Then Ampoma spoke. [Pause] Yes, I see you wince the fatal words that day and condemned her life. 'I will die for you Edufa', she said; and meant it too, poor, doting woman. (17)

Ampoma's doting nature makes her the victim of her husband's wickedness. She portrays the love and affection the society expects of a woman towards her husband and children both in actions and words. In her discussion with Edufa, she identifies how the love towards her husband will allow her die young which will deter her from being the mother of her children whom she feels she has greater love for:

> AMPOMA: I could not live where you are not. I could not live Without you, my husband . . . Over me, the sun is getting dark. [With great agitation] My husband! Watch the death that you should have died. [She frets from place to place as if escaping from him.] Stay over there in the sun. Children! My children! If I could cross this water I would pluck you back from the mountain side. Children! Hold my hand! (10-11)

Ampoma's lines reveal how a woman's feelings is often taken for granted, regarded as useless, expressionless and treated with triviality. This is noticeable in Robin Lakoff's assertion in Language and Woman's Place that a woman's language is often 'tentative, powerless and trivial'. Sutherland portrays Ampoma's language to reveal a woman's vulnerability, powerlessness, and self-expressionlessness in a male-dominated society that silences woman's emotional communication. This corresponds with Messner, (2001) and Julia T. Wood's (2001b) opinion that the qualities men are expected to have such as aggressiveness, dominance, sexuality and strength are identical to those linked with women subjugation and their abuse. Eckert and McConnell- Ginet in Language and Gender: A Reader observe that:

> Women's language has been said to reflect their (our) conservatism, prestige consciousness, upward mobility, insecurity, deference, nurturance, emotional expressivity, connectedness, sensitivity to others, solidarity. And men's language is heard as evincing their toughness, lack of

affection, competitiveness, independence, hierarchy control. (485)

The above assertion is what constitutes Ampoma's feelings and language. As a woman, her language tends towards the sensitive side than that of the men present at that time in the play which allows the different attributes to become visible in Sutherland's work. The playwright's use of language serves as a form of empowerment which enables her to confront certain culture that limit the female gender and to question the masculine authority, therefore challenging the socio-cultural values.

This form of language is explored in the two different relationships the playwright presents in the characters' use of dialogue. While Sutherland examines the wife-husband relationship in *Edufa, The Marriage of Anansewa* exposes the father-daughter relationship. In the father-daughter relationship, Ananse and Anansewa have a good rapport, although there is the socio-cultural perception about womanhood as an object and a source of family wealth. At the beginning of her father's cunning act, she questions his use of words that regards her as an object in the letter she writes to the four different chiefs, but she is subdued and silenced by her father. The money sent by one of the chiefs involved in Ananse's plot so her daughter can get a higher education she desires is used as a means of making Anansewa voiceless despite what she wants. This shows that poverty is another form of female voicelessness in the society.

ANANSEWA: [Searching for the copy] Is it I? Here is the letter. [She reads . . .] 'the object of your interest'. Is that me, father? Am I the object? Oh, I wish, I wish . . . (21).

Ananse's view of his daughter as 'the object of your interest' symbolises women as mere property to be owned and discarded anytime the society feels like, he esteems the chiefs involved in his plan to make them honoured and respected. For example, instead of calling one of the chiefs by the name 'Chief of Sapa', he sees it as too ordinary for a man of high calibre due to his trick in order to find the highest bidder for his daughter, he asks Anansewa to type his letter starting with lots of respects and social recognition that:

ANANSE: . . . [He assumes the stance of an official praise-singer.] 'O Mighty- Tree-Of Ancient-Origin! Mighty-Tree-Of-Ancient-Origin, rooted in the shrine of deity! Countless branches in which benighted wandering birds are welcome to shelter.' (14).

Ananse believes that men need their appellation in order to assume the societal status that they should have. The above six lines rendition is used in place of the single line of 'Dear Chief of Sapa' which is a means of placing the masculine gender in a superior position as depicted by Sutherland. Although Sutherland places Anansewa to question most of these masculine social attributes given, but her poverty and language limits her actions. Anansewa ignorantly believes her father, but she is sad and afraid that her father will not be able to unite the knot he is tying around them to secure a good husband for her and to end his own poverty. The playwright places Ananse in the position of a protective father in the play. Ananse engages in the act of negotiation which Sutherland portrays in a way that innocent Anansewa feels it is to her own advantage while her father engages in a kind of talk with the Chiefs involved that he feels will benefit his daughter in future.

Likewise, the other female character, Christie is taken off by Ananse who plays on her intelligence to get what he wants. Christie explores the plight of a woman seeking love and attention to fulfil one of the social expectations of the female role which is what Ananse uses against her in order to carry out his plans. At first, Ananse does not see Christie as one to solve his problem, but as someone at his beck and call whom he passively engages in detangling his puzzle amongst the four chiefs. Against Ananse's mother's view that sees Christie as an agent of destruction to culture and social norms of womanhood, Christie becomes the active instrument through which Ananse is able to solve his puzzle. Ananse at this point recognises that both genders go through a difficult time in their life time which does not determine what the society makes of gender:

> ANANSE: . . . if you are merely human like me, you'd better make your laughter brief, because in this world, there is nobody who is by-passed by trouble (61).

The above statement exposes Butler and Salih's view that gender is performative. This acknowledges the instability and variability of gender identities and the behaviour in which those identities are performed through language. At this stage, Ananse becomes what he makes of himself through his cunning ways and not what the society makes of his gender. Although, one should not forget the fact that he does this as an avenue to secure a future at the expense of his daughter, he also wants to align with the social construct of masculinity.

Sutherland's two plays analyses the characters of Ampoma and Anansewa as incapable of making their own choices, asserting themselves and expressing their emotions in the society. While Ananse sees the worth

of her daughter due to the financial gain, Edufa appreciates his wife in order for her to die on his behalf to maintain his position of honour. Ananse sees his daughter as a treasure and at the same time 'the object of a man's interest'. This same object of interest makes the chiefs who are highly respected in their different communities ignore their ego in order to have Anansewa because she is considered as an additional asset for them. Sutherland gives the four chiefs/suitors the names that reveal their social status and how much they are respected at the expense of the feminine gender.

Although Sutherland portrays women's value in a derogatory manner in relation with these chiefs, she also exposes how the female gender can be expressive through her worth in the patriarchal society. Being educated and beautiful, Anansewa is the subject of discourse from the beginning of the play to the end; the male characters see her as the subject of their story which acknowledges the self-worth of the female gender to be appreciated the more. Ksenija Horvat in Cat on the Hot Tin Roof sees this as a means for a woman to become the writer of her own 'herstory'. Sutherland allows the female protagonist not only to be seen in relation to the men but also in what she is able to achieve as an individual especially in West African societies that attribute more value to educated women.

As at the time this play was written, some of the people that have come in contact with the missionaries in some part of West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana amongst others believe that education is a means of liberating women from the claws of the socio-cultural injustice against them to a large extent because the woman is able to express herself. Some other group amongst the two mentioned above also believe that education limits the type and category of suitors that wants such a woman's hand in marriage because she is respected, knowledgeable and intelligent which makes men see her as being sophisticated. This idea corresponds with the first messenger's speech in *The Marriage of Anansewa* when Anansewa pretends to be dead in order to untie his father's knot and to know the chief that truly loves her amongst the four:

> FIRST MESSENGER: Respected lady, and you, elder of the family, whom we meet here. . . . Our royal one, the wealthy paramount Chief of the Mines whose praise name is 'You Are Coming Again, Aren't You', has had many discussions with his councillors about ths (sic) marriage he was going to contract. He insisted-against their advice-that if a lady of this quality came into his hands she would give enlightened training to the many children to whom his wives have given birth to (78).

First messenger's lines reveal the nurturing attribute of tending the young ones to maturity associated with the female gender. This allows the Chief of the Mines see Anansewa from two different perspectives of both domestic (private) and academic (public) sphere. The chief does not only see Anansewa as a woman whose education will positively influence his kingdom, but also sees the marriage as a way of maintaining his social prestige amongst his people who will see his new wife as an additional advantage to his kingdom. It is this obsession in maintaining social status that makes him neglect his council's advice not to marry Anansewa.

Similarly, Edufa's obsession in maintaining his position of privilege leads him to stylishly destroy his wife against loss of prestige. Sutherland's play reveals the story of greed, where a man's wealth and societal status surpasses all other things to Edufa who devalues human life in his search for social recognition. *Edufa* is a play filled with so many ironies that attribute some of the feminine qualities to the male gender. Despite what Edufa does to his wife, he still confesses love and shyness which are feminine to cajole her and make people believe in his affection and love towards her. In his discussion with his friend, Senchi about the bouquet of flowers which he asks his sister to take to her, he confesses:

> EDUFA: [To Abena] Little one, you who is about to marry, I'm giving you a chance to look at love. Take these flowers in to Ampoma. [He speaks emotionally into the flowers.] Tell her that I, her husband, send them; that it is she who has so matured my love. I would have presented them myself, but I have learned the magic of shyness, and haven't the boldness to look into her eyes yet. (40).

Edufa's lines are romantic and captivating after his evil deeds to his wife which makes his friend, Senchi thinks he is the lovable husband he used to think he is not. Senchi at the beginning of their conversation accuses him of not being romantic enough, but at the end of the lines, he agrees that it is Edufa's first graceful act towards his wife he had ever seen. The song Senchi renders at this point is a praise of womanhood which Sutherland uses to celebrate the female gender's boldness at some point in life.

SENCHI: Nne
Nne Nne
Nne
Nne Nne
O, Mother

Nne
Nne Nne
If I find you
Nne
Nne Nne
I'll have to worship you
Nne
Nne Nne

I must adore you
Nne
Nne Nne
O, Mother
Nne Nne

She's wonderful
She's wonderful
O, Mother
She's wonderful . . . (40-41)

Sutherland uses Senchi's emotional song to explore the value of motherhood which makes Seguwa to sob quietly and Edufa to feel the pain of what he has done to an innocent woman who loves him wholeheartedly. When the Chorus finally arrives at the party organised by Edufa to appreciate his wife, Senchi's conversation with them reveals the societal view of women not knowing how to say 'No' even if they do not agree with what they are experiencing. This is similar to what an Italian-Scottish female writer Marcella Evaristi notices in her play, Commedia as 'How to Say No Without Guilt' or 'Yes Without Guilt' that allows positive thinking and succeeding in whatever a woman chooses to do single-handedly. Evaristi discusses this through the portrayal of her female character, Elena whose experience in the play affirms Senchi's confirmation of what the society expects of a woman. Despite the fact that Elena wants to stay with her young boyfriend, Davide, she is unable to follow her heart because she does not want to disagree with what the society expects of a woman and a widow which is what leads to Ogwoma's death in Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*. Instead of Elena rejecting the hypocrisy of her sons and the society, she put on with it to become the victim of an unvalued emotional capability.

In this view of unvalued emotional capability, Ampoma and Anansewa's situation is what Jessica Benjamin in *The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination* views as lack of women

independence that limits their desire. Her opinion sees that women desires are often dictated by the desire of 'phallus' in the society. As far as Ananse and Edufa are concerned, their female victims expose lack of personal autonomy that is objectified to suit their greedy needs.

The playwright analyses the core idea of female personal autonomy as a self- independent attitude that has to do with self-personal rules while remaining free from the control and interference of others. Such autonomous nature allows a person to act in accordance with a freely self-chosen and informed plan, but Ampoma and Anansewa become enslaved in their own autonomy. These female characters autonomy can be described as a weakened autonomy which makes them incapable of deliberating or acting on the basis of their own volition, liberty, self-determination, independence and self-reliance.

Anansewa's lack of self-sufficiency and emotional capability is used by her father to manipulate and make her readjust to the core expectation of the females in a male-dominated society. Sutherland explores both conscious and unconscious processes involved in what Alice Walker describes as emotional capability. In Walker's view, this emotional capability allows a woman to be bold, audacious, outspoken, brave and independent to express herself in the midst of the masculine forces that dictate who and what she is or becomes. Such masculine forces are norms and principles that establish a woman's role as a mother, wife and daughter which the society accepts as the true nature and expectation of a woman.

Despite the female expectations in the society, Ampoma and Anansewa make additional efforts to assert and express themselves in the midst of a culture that does not cherish their gender which make them become the victims of their own actions and languages. Ampoma's show of love towards her husband through language conveys a sense of sacredness rather than an avenue of a sweet communion that will deepen the bond between her and the husband. Unlike most women's language, Ampoma's language becomes unapologetic for her actions at the end of the play which reveals most of the hidden structure. At this point, she is able to express herself freely without being controlled by her fear and other women's sense of fear that will definitely challenge the socio-cultural values that have always been looked up to as the standard of a society.

This is the standard of love and fear that captures Ampoma's mind in *Edufa* at first which makes her surrender her own life in place of her husband's. Ampoma's realisation of what she has done makes her give an open retaliation to the husband in order to expose his evil deeds of maintaining his societal position. She presents her husband's with waist beads which symbolise one of African feature of female beauty. By so

doing, she attributes Edufa with the societal perception of female timidity that makes him want to hold on to his position by refusing to die.

> AMPOMA: [Inscrutable] Women, you understand, don't you, that with this, I mean to claim him mine. And you are witnesses. My husband, wear this in my honour. [She surprises EDUFA by slipping the beads round his neck. His first is of shock.] With it, I declare to earth and sky and water, and all things with which we shall soon be one, that I am slave to your flesh and happy so to be. Wear it proudly, this symbol of the union of our flesh (52-53).

Although Ampoma's action and language seems alien to the guest at the party, but it reveals the degree at which a woman's emotiona capability can help her reject the restrictions around her in the presence of what constitutes the society. The standard language accepted by the male-dominated society allows the males to employ female language as a way of enslaving her. Sutherland explores the difference in language and knowledge through the character of Edufa's father, Kankam whose old age and knowledge is able to decipher his son's skim from the beginning of the play when he asks the question which becomes Ampoma's death sentence. This reveals the knowledgeable attributes given to men in the society as opposed to women's gullibility and insensitivity through the use of words and expression of emotions towards her husband.

> EDUFA: Father, are you mad?
> KANKAM: [Shocked] Nyame above! To say father and call me mad! My ntoro within you shivers with the shock of it!
> EDUFA: [Aware that he has violated taboo] You provoked me.
> KANKAM: [Moving away] All right, stranger, I am mad! And madness is uncanny. Have you not noticed how many a time the mad seem to know things hidden from men in their right minds? [Rounding up on Edufa] You know you killed your wife that day. I saw fear in your eyes when she spoke. I saw it, but I didn't understand. I have learned that in your chamber that night, you tried to make her forswear the oath she had innocently sworn. But the more you pleaded, the more emotionally she swore away her

> life for love of you; until, driven by your secret fear, you had to make plain to her the danger in which she stood. You showed her the charm. You confess to her its power to kill whoever swore to die for you. Don't you remember how she wept? She had spoken and made herself the victim. Ampoma had lived with that danger ever since . . . (17-18)

The above lines signify that Kankam is aware of Edufa's inhuman nature. It also reveals Edufa as a coward and a disgrace to the masculine gender who is not ready to face the challenges of life as a man. While he commits an abominable acts calling his father a mad man, his language enslaves him because he can not control the words he uses out of annoyance. Edufa's behaviour exposes how the cultural imperatives of the patriarchal society coerce not only the women, but also the men. The playwright renders the male characters in both plays to be powerless like the female characters that are at the mercy of their words and actions in the society.

Conclusion

Through these plays, Sutherland exposes the fear of both genders in line with their socio-cultural status. While the female gender sees their language as a means through which they are cheated and defeated, the male gender believes it is an asset they need to value in order to maintain the social prestige. Although Sutherland portrays in her plays that most of the cultural beliefs about gender often deprive women of the virility and the spirit to express themselves due to historical, social and intellectual basis which are not always in favour of their gender, the male gender in the plays also suffers the same predicament. This, however, aligns with Judith Butler's earlier mentioned view that it is possible for both genders to performatively subvert or resist the prevailing conventions associated with their gender which is what Sutherland does in the two works analysed, asserting that femininity and masculinity are not monolithic constructs.

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The Mirror and its Image: Reflections for Change in Evelyn Anfu's *Edibles and Disposables*

Faustina Brew

Abstract

This study sought to ascertain the dynamic relationship between theatre and society as has been opined by many theatre scholars. The research explored the effect of literary theatre on various audiences who watched the play; Edibles and Disposables by Evelyn Anfu. This play is selected for this research because it is didactic and seeks to address several unacceptable social vices as well as undesirable cultural adulteration currently on the ascendancy in Ghana. Respondents were variously selected from the four nights of performance at the Amu Theatre, University of Education, Winneba in October, 2009. Empirical data collected from the selected audiences was analysed to ascertain the extent to which this performance has influenced perceptions and social behaviours of respondents, vis-à-vis the playwright's vision. The findings of the study confirmed that the play, Edibles and Disposables had a strong influence on audiences' perception in a direction that reflects the playwright's objective.

It has become something of commonplace in theatre studies to state that the spectator is at the centre of the theatrical event and hence of theatre itself' (Balm: 2008:34). Despite the several researches on impact of theatre on audiences Balm further laments that 'this assumed centrality is not however, marched with responding quantity of research.' Contentious as this assertion might be, there is no doubt that more audience research could go a long way to authenticate the acclaimed effect of theatre on audiences. The performance of the play *Edibles and Disposables,* which is the subject of this study was appraised by an art reviewer and reported in the November 13, 2009 edition of the Weekly Spectator (a Ghanaian National Paper) with the caption- Theatre Arts- Tool for Education, with an introductory note as follows: 'It (theatre) acts like a doctor who diagnoses the ailment of a patient and prescribes medicines for possible cure. Aside its entertaining qualities it packages the problems of a society and provides possible solutions. That is what Theatre Arts does.' That was his own observation as well as that of the student respondents who performed the play. This paper presents the results of a research carried out amongst audiences who watched the play.

Statement of the problem

Despite the ubiquitous assertion that theatre cannot thrive without an audience and the various declarations that theatre is efficacious, there are assertions that this view has basically been concocted by the view of theatre scholars and critics. The need to augment involvement of audiences in appraisal of theatre performances is greatly emphasised by these assertors. For instance, in an interview conducted by Nardacci and Chura with Edward Albee, a renowned playwright in 1965, he revealed:

> ... the majority of our audiences take cues from what the critics say ... I think that if our audiences thought for themselves a little more we could be more amused by our critics. ... One of the desperately bad things that happen to so many playwrights is that they try to accommodate themselves to the status quo ... to what the critics want, and to what the critics tell the audiences they want. And the audiences in turn think that what they really want is what the critics tell them they want. And it's this accommodation to the status quo that I have seen ruin the talents of more playwrights than I can mention (Albee, E. in Wager Ed 1967:43)

Forty-four years afterward, Freshwater (2009:4) still wonders why theatre scholars seem to be more comfortable making assertions about theatre's unique influence and impact upon audiences than gathering and assessing evidence which might support this claim. She further asserts that these scholars appear to prefer discussing their own responses or the opinion of reviewers, than to asking 'ordinary' theatre-goers with no professional stake- what they think of a performance. It would appear that an over reliance on theatre critics to determine what is good or acceptable might lead to biases as to the actual effect of any play on audiences. These critics, though also members of audiences often view plays from their own perspectives, assumptions and theories of exposure and endeavour to direct the thinking of the audience to their school of thought. Typically, in the review of the play Edibles and Disposables, the views of other audience members were completely out of the appraisal.

Purpose of the study

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the play; *Edibles and Disposables* affected *perceptions and subsequent social behaviours of* audiences who watched the play vis-à-vis the playwright's intent for social change.

Research questions:

- What motivated audiences to watch the play Edible and Disposables?
- To what extent did the play Edibles and Disposables affect the thinking and subsequent behaviour of audiences who watched the play?
- To what extent do these upshots of the drama reflect the aims of the writer?

Significance of the study

Findings of this research will contribute to the debate as to the efficacy of theatre as well as concord of the playwright and audiences; a shift from critics' appraisal. Critical audience reaction of theatre performance has enormous benefit for the playwright. For instance after the performance of Osofisan's play, *Nkrumah Ni Africa Ni* in 1994, feedback indicated that the play was obscure. The playwright has since edited the play to make the message clear. Clued-up on that reaction, the message and form of *Emancipated Captives* (a workshop play created with similar themes on the vision of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah - Ghana's first president) is unpretentious and lucid.

Synopsis of the play

The people of Nzemaland realises that all the states around them are fast developing. The chief confers with the citizenry and decides to send some of their young men abroad to study, and to return to manage their rich resources to an enviable prosperity. The return of these scholars changed the social lives of the people dramatically. Bleaching (as the writer puts it) became the order of the day. Everybody suddenly developed sophisticated taste for everything foreign, yielding into confusions and chaos in all aspects of life. The people of Nzemaland are doomed to be destroyed totally as divined by the fetish priest of the land but they are given the chance to rectify the social deviation that emerged from Civilization, Modernization, Americanisation and Europeanization.

The playwright's vision

The play *Edibles and Disposables* was written by Evelyn Anfu and submitted to the University of Ghana in partial fulfilment of the requirement of a BA Degree in 2004. An interview with Anfu revealed her disquiet about the practice of democracy and forms of leadership, cultural adulterations and malpractices such as corruption as well as moral decadence in Ghana. She envisaged the play will serve as a forum to help

address such social issues. She sets the play in her native Nzemaland with a traditional background encompassing traditional dances and cultural display for convenience, but still believes the message is pervasive enough to affect any audience. The maiden performance of this play was in October 2009 for four conservative nights at the University of Education, Winneba. The play received an affirmable appraisal from which was reported in the Weekly Spectator (a Ghanaian National Paper). But what did the audience say?

Literature Review

The dynamic relationship between theatre and its audiences cannot be overemphasised. Wilson (1998:11) affirms that: 'The audience is an indispensable element in the theatre because theatre occurs only when spectators are present to interact with the performers and identify with the characters being presented on stage.' Though most playwrights who are the initiator of the theatre process create their works in isolation, thus making the relationship between dramatists and audience seem abstract the correlation cannot be ignored. Most Playwrights have expectations of their creativity in relation to envisaged audiences. Tennessee Williams (in Wager Ed 1967: 178) believes that 'all plays come out of some inner tension in the playwright himself. He is concerned about something, and that concerns begins to work itself out in the form of a creative activity'. Chatman (1990) suggests that:

> ... like all other speech acts, (oral narrative performance), is a communication system in which a social discourse takes place principally between a narrator/performer and an audience. All instances of such discourse are designed by the performer for examination of the dominant concerns of the artists' immediate community in particular and human behaviour in general. (P.139)

Although Edward Albee says he writes plays because he is probably playing a hedonist, he is quick to add 'But at the same time ... one can't help, I suppose, thinking occasionally about the effect one's work has on people, and the relationship of it to the whole historical continuum of the art form' (Albee in Wager Ed 1967: 41). In affirmation of the above, Owen (1993) opines:

> Social interaction by definition involves other people ... The goals of the others involved in the interaction are of vital import. Not only do we pursue our own goals, but we also try to interpret what the goals of the other persons are.

> If these goals concur, then this will facilitate social interaction, but if they conflict, interaction becomes more difficult. (Pp.:25-26)

In spite of the obvious dependence of theatre on audiences, Balme (2008:34) avows that 'Major books on the subject can be counted on the fingers of one hand.' He further ascribes this setback to methodology difficulties audience research poses. 'To study the spectator individually or collectively implies a shift from interpreting an aesthetic object to studying the cognitive and emotional responses of actual human beings.' Balme (2008:35).

Notwithstanding contention of inadequate research on theatre's influence on audiences, there are various arguments on potency of theatre to reform individuals or society. Wolf, as quoted by Asiedu (2003:264), expresses the view that, 'art (plays, novels, films) cannot change people's minds; but rather just articulates ideas already held'. Brecht, as quoted by Cassady, asserts that 'the theatre needs no passport than fun.' Though Cohen (2000:497) seems to suggest that theatre could lead to self evaluation; he sounds a bit uncertain in his declaration on efficacy of theatre. His view is that: 'The theatre is a medium in which we invariably see reflections of ourselves, and in the theatre's best achievements, those reflections lead to certain discoveries and evaluations concerning our own individual personalities and perplexities.' In more concrete terms, Welleck and Warren as quoted by Agyekum (2007) assert that:

People may model their lives upon patterns of fictitious heroes and heroines and other characters they read about or see in movies and performances or the songs and dances they encounter. In some extreme cases users of literary works have made love, committed crimes and suicide according to the books read or movies they have watched. (P.:15)

They further claim that 'the young are more directly and powerfully influenced by their reading than the old. The efficacy of theatre is confirmed by Osofisan (2001), as he argues that:

> Literature can entertain ... but it is only the dim-witted or brainwashed artist who is content with merely to entertain, to play the clown. ...Literature must be used to play its role in the advancement of our society. (P.84)

In affirmation of the aforementioned, Osofisan discusses one of his plays which reveals Nigeria of the 1970s, at the time armed robbers were publicly executed. The play, *Once Upon Four Robbers,* directed by the writer in 1978, accomplished significant reform. Although Osofisan does

not claim sole credit for the discontinuation of that practice, it is beyond doubt that the debate and public outcry that emerged after the productions contributed immensely towards that change.

Furthermore, a research conducted by Dr. F Hakemulder of the Institute for Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University Sri Lanka, revealed that the Forum Theatre to dispel the negative Beliefs about setting up private Business in Sri Lanka achieved tremendous success. As a result of the play many participants and audience believed stronger in the possibility that businesses are beneficial for their local community as they also discovered their potential to start businesses in their communities. (Hakemulder 2009).

However, in assessing the role of audiences in the production of efficacious theatre, Asiedu (2008) underscores the fact that audience interpretation and subsequent impact of theatre performances are influenced by their background, histories, experiences and their perception of theatre. Citing the performance of Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers,* she contends that the play engaged the interests and passions of its Nigerian audiences that the Ghanaians because the issues addressed in the play was more pertinent to the former than the latter.

These opinions cannot end the discourse. It is obvious that more research into impact of audiences is necessary to inform playwrights on the effects of their creativity on envisaged audiences. And as Freshwater (2009:4) suggests, the assertion of the unique influence and impact of theatre on audience should be authenticated by gathering and assessing evidence from the audiences themselves.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used for the study because it aids in the process of explaining the phenomena of efficacy of theatre. It also allows the researcher to examine implications of the observable facts obtained. (Babbie: 2005 :91)

Population

It composed of audiences who watched the maiden performance of the play; *Edibles and Disposables* at the Amu Theatre, Central Campus of the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Sample

Sample was made up of 80 audience members selected from all four nights of performances.

Sampling Technique

A simple random technique was used to select respondents from all four nights of performances for the study.

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire were distributed to audiences before the start of each production and collected after the production.

Instrumentation

Instrument used was questionnaire. Questionnaire was used because respondents needed to be independent and anonymous. It was hoped that anonymity would aid respondents to be as candid and honest as possible thereby augmenting the authenticity of the findings of this research.

Data Analysis

The responses were analysed into frequency tables and charts using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences; SPSS.

Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Respondents by Status and Age

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)	**Age Group**	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Senior Member (lecturers from various Departments)	8	10.0	18-24	45	56.2
Senior Staff	12	15.0	25-39	20	25.0
Junior Staff	16	20.0	40-59	15	18.8
Students	44	55.0			
Total	80	100.0		80	100.0

Table 2: Respondents by Gender

Male	37	46.3
Female	43	53.7
Total	80	100%

Table 3: The responses on respondents' reason for patronising Edibles and Disposables theatre

Response	Frequency	Percentage
For Fun	62	77.5
Curiosity	10	12.5
To be educated	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

On the issue of why respondents patronised the play, table 3 revealed that 62 (77.5%) respondents indicated they wanted to have fun. 10 (12.5%) respondents said they wanted to find out what is going on around them while 8 (10.0%) them said they wanted to be educated.

Table 4: The responses as to whether respondents believed they had been entertained

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	72	90.0
No	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

The results in table 4 indicate that 72 (90%) respondents believed they had been entertained while 8 (10%) respondents felt otherwise.

Table 5: Respondent's responses on change of perception on societal issues in the play?

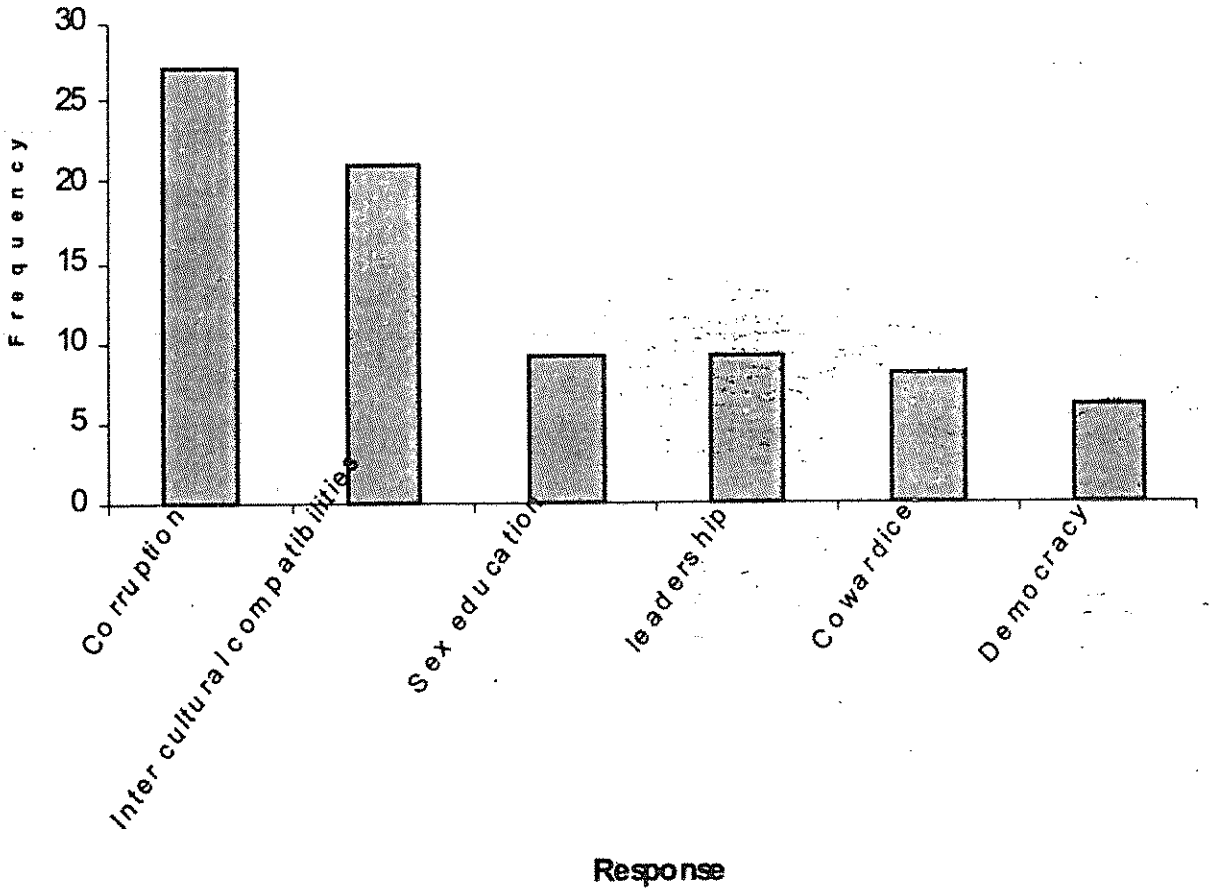
Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	73	91.3
No	7	8.7
Total	80	100.0

Another variable the study sought was whether the play, *Edibles and Disposables* has changed the perceptions of social problems raised in the play. As showed in table 5, 73 (91.2%) respondents indicated that their thinking about the social problems raised in *Edibles and Disposables* have changed whilst 7 (8.7%) indicated otherwise.

Table 6: Respondents' response on themes that touched them most.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Corruption	27	33.8
Inter cultural compatibilities	21	26.3
Sex education	9	11.2
leadership	9	11.2
Cowardice	8	10.0
Democracy	6	7.5
Total	80	100.00

Chart 1: **Respondents' response on themes that touched them** most.



As to which of the play's themes affected the respondents' judgements the most as shown in table 6 and chart 1, 27 (33.8%) picked corruption. This was closely followed by cultural incompatibilities with 21 (26.3%) with the least number of 6 (7.5%) choosing democracy.

Table 7: Respondents' identification with citizens of Nzemaland in relation to the themes enumerated.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	72	90.0
No	8	10.0
Total	80	100.0

The questionnaire also sought to establish whether in relations with the themes in the play the respondents identified themselves as citizens of Nzemaland. Results from table 7 indicates that 72 (90%) respondents responded in affirmative while only 8 (10%) responded in the negative.

Table 8: Respondents' consideration of citizens of Nzemaland in the play representing the people of Ghana.

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	100.0
No	0	0%

As indicated in table 8 all respondents agreed that the people of Nzemaland represent the people of Ghana.

Table 9: Respondent's response as to whether the feeling of social responsibility would affect their behaviour henceforth?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	76	95.0
No	4	5.0
Total	80	100.0

Table 9 denotes that 76 (95.0%) affirmed a change of behaviour henceforth whereas 4 (5.0%) indicated otherwise.

Table 10: Respondents' response as to whether theatre could bring about social change.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	1	1.3
Agreed	3	3.7
Disagreed	23	28.8
Strongly Disagreed	51	63.7
Undecided	2	2.5
Total	80	100.00

As to whether theatre should be just for entertainment or not table 10 showed only 4 (5.0%) respondents agreeing on the motion. The majority of 74 (92.4%) respondents disagreed, indicating agreement that theatre has other social roles to play apart from entertainment. However, 2 (2.5%) respondents were undecided on the motion.

Table 10: Respondents" response as to whether theatre should just be for entertainment.

Response	Frequenc	Percentage
Strongly Agreed	50	62.4
Agreed	24	30.0
Disagreed	4	5.0
Strongly Disagreed	1	1.3
Undecided	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

Chart 2: Respondents' response as to whether theatre could bring about social change.

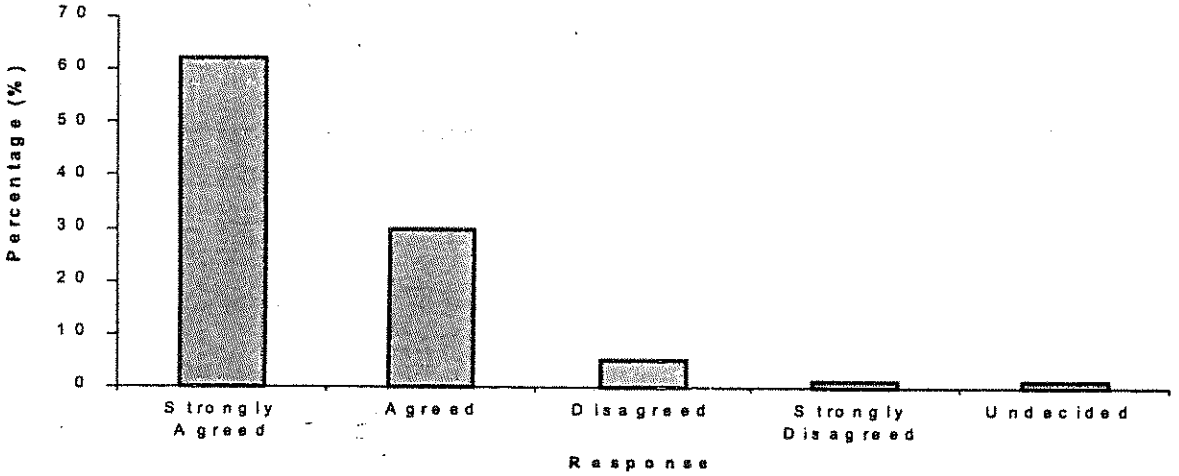


Table 10 and chart 2 show that 74 (92.7%) respondents think theatre can cause social and attitudinal change while 5 (6.3%) disagreed to this assertion. Only 1 (1.3%) respondent was undecided on this issue.

Findings and Discussion

Findings on audience purpose of watching the play and the effects of themes in the play.

Although 22.5% of respondents gave varied reasons for watching the play, 77.5% indicated that their primary aim for watching the performance was for entertainment. And as indicated in table 4, 90 % of respondents agreed that they had been entertained; a finding which seems to confirm Bretch's view of theatre.

However, it was evident in table 6 that all respondents have been affected by at least one of the six themes raised in the play. Furthermore, in table six 90% identified with the people of Nzemaland and all respondents agreed that in view of the issues raised, Nzemaland represents the country Ghana. This discovery and evaluation of respondents, who were also audience, concurs the view of (Cohen: 2000).

The study also revealed table 5, that 91.3% of respondents agreed that the various themes raised have changed their thinking about those social problems. 95% of respondents further affirmed that their attitude towards social responsibility was going to change henceforth. This indicates that

theatre can change society refuting the argument of Wolf and in support of (Osofisan: 2001) assertion of theatre's potency in effecting social change.

Although majority had earlier agreed that they had come to be entertained, 92% of respondents disagreed in various degrees that theatre should just be for entertainment and 97% of respondents agreed in various degrees that theatre could actually bring social change; alleviating Freshwater's fear that the assertion as to theatre's potency of social change is scholars' illusion.

Findings in relation to playwright's vision

The playwright's intention was to create a forum that will help address the issues raised in the play. In the first instant the respondents who were also audience identified with the concerns of the playwright. This identification brought about reflections of the audiences that led to audience change of thinking of these social issues and a decision for change of attitude. It is evident that the writer's aim has been achieved as the audience, though had come with the view of being entertained had been affected positively concurring (Owen: 1993) in the theory of social interaction.

Conclusion

The study was aimed at audience appraisal of the play, *Edibles and Disposables* in an attempt to find the concord between the playwright's vision and audience impact. It was also to confirm or disprove the claim of theatre scholars as to the dynamic influence of theatre on audiences. The study has proved beyond reasonable doubts that though audiences come to the theatre with the primary aim of having fun, they often turn to imbibe the concerns of playwrights in a manner that affect their thoughts and subsequent behaviour.

Recommendations

In view of the fact that the playwright's concerns are for the consideration of the audience, it is recommended that the perceptions of audiences about performances and how creativity of artists affect them should be constantly sought. Audience research should go beyond questionnaire and interviews to observation over a period of time to further authenticate the acclaimed ubiquitous influence of theatre on audiences. Such findings should be relayed to the originator of the theatre process for

further consideration of their works in relation to the audience. This will help artist to create works that will affect society positively and help improve and sustain the performing arts in Ghana.

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Three Designers in Search of Theatrical Expressions: Set Design Concepts and Experimentations in The Cinema Hall 2 of the National Theatre of Nigeria

Ernest Agoba Ph.D

Abstract

An assessment of practising professionals in the stage art of the theatre reveals a disenchanting lopsidedness in favour of the non-technical areas of theatre. This anomaly which can be explained from insufficient design training instigated by structural defects in the curricula of theatre departments in Nigeria, has in combination with the poor patronage of this special form of art, suffocated the prospects of a dynamic theatre trend in Nigeria. However, armed both with the zeal and quest to make impacts in this special area of the theatre some set design professionals have seemingly picked up the gauntlet in search of effective visual idioms for the African play. This paper examines and appraises their efforts in entrenching traditions of scenery in Nigeria through the visual renditions of works by Nigeria's Wole Soyinka, Elechi Amadi, and Ahmed Yerima. It is equally hoped that in charting paths in set design for others to follow, such efforts could still constitute historical subjects for academic discourse.

Design practices in the Nigerian literary theatres are traceable back to the colonial periods when foreign theatrical activities like the Opera, concerts and cantata were performed. Echeruo mentions that in August 1886, the play, *Trial by Jury* was produced with very realistic stage settings with other design attempts witnessed only after the establishment of the Arts Theatre of the University College, Ibadan in 1955 (356-369). It was this School of Drama that motivated the literary tradition of theatre within which scenic design developed through the rewarding efforts of Geoffrey Anxworthy, Martin Bentham, and Dexter Lyndersay. The pioneering theatrical practices of the University of Ibadan and theatre practices in some other Nigerian Universities, in main, offer a veritable understanding of Nigerian literary theatre tradition. In Sunday Ododo's words:

> The literary tradition cuts across ethnic barriers in that its main language of expression is the English language. It has also grown over the years in the hand of playwrights, directors, actors, and stage and theatre designers through experiments that draw impetus from the indigenous

theatre forms (Oni and Ododo, 18).

The Nigerian literary theatre consists not only of the university theatre genre which is the major progenitor of other variants; it equally consists of those categorized as semi-professional and professional. The purely professional group under the literary Nigerian theatre, however, constitutes the dramatists from non-governmental organizations whose salaries and emoluments are mostly paid from gate takings. Others in this category are those from governmental organizations like the performing troupes which are seen as agents of cultural promotion. The non-governmental organizations which are equally in the purely professional group include the 1984 PEC Repertory Company founded by J.P. and Ebun Clark, Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON Centre), Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos, New Culture Studios in Ibadan and the Gidan Makama Courtyard Theatre in Kano. The governmental organizations in the professional category are the Cultural Centres or State Arts Council Troupes that are organized basically to promote arts and culture and to entertain audience during government functions. It is equally to this group that the National Troupe of Nigeria under the erstwhile consultancy of Late Chief Hubert Ogunde belongs. The style of performance and scenic traditions in the literary genre of professional theatres can be properly understood from the antecedence of the University theatres that influenced their existence. The technical problems in these theatres can be equally appreciated from the perspectives of the problems in these university theatres that assisted in producing them.

Today, the literary traditions of Nigerian theatres have not only suffered from gross inadequate financial problems, they have equally suffered from poor patronage as a result of the proliferation of television, video and film. The poor state of development in the Theatre appears to have hit the technical aspects more than any other parts. This situation is lamented thus:

> In Nigeria, as indeed in most African nations, the practice of technical theatre which involves sets, costumes, make-up, sound and lighting is in a poor state of development. In other words the designer in Nigerian theatre practice operates in an environment that is not theatre friendly (Gbilekaa, 6).

The technical problems in the Nigerian theatre is further highlighted by Musa Enna when he says:

> The University based theatres, and perhaps, the National theatre, as well as some of the states' arts councils, are the

> only institutions that have embraced technical theatre as a professional field (Illah, 68).

However, the largest theatrical activity in Nigeria is probably brewed by the National Troupe of Nigeria in an architectural expression known as the Cinema Hall 2 located inside the gargantuan structure of The National Theatre of Nigeria. The multi-purpose National Theatre in Lagos is about three times bigger than the one in Varna, Bulgaria and about four times bigger than the National Theatre in London. Since its inception on 30th September, 1976, the complex has offered venue and facilities for national and international events and programmes which include drama, musical concerts, film shows, beauty pageants, exhibitions, conferences, meetings and other social and cultural activities. The Cinema Hall 2 considered a spurious proscenium stage is, without doubt inundated with its own structural and technical problems for the dramatist and set designer. Through the efforts of the National Troupe of Nigeria, the resident drama troupe, and other performing groups, a diverse range of theatrical personalities have been brought together (producers, playwrights, directors, actors and designers of the theatre) to create some great dramatic works of art that the country has ever experienced. Set designers from performing groups in Lagos, neighbouring towns and far in other parts of the country have been affected by both the challenge of visualising locales in a structure considered the fulcrum of theatrical activities in the country, and in an architecturally and technically austere confinement that posed some of the biggest challenges to set design profession. For these designers, the choice of identifying with plays produced here is not unconnected with the National theatre's vantage position as the nation's apex theatre. Like The Royal National Theatre located on the South Bank in London and the National Theatre in Washington, the National Theatre of Nigeria serves both as a platform for the presentation of high quality artistic productions and as an internationally recognizable symbol for the promotion of arts and culture. Some of the most famous Nigerian set designers whose works have helped to reveal the locales of important plays here are, Biodun Abe, Sunbo Marinho and Hilary Elemi.

The choice of using Biodun Abe's work is due to the prominent role he assumes in the design and construction of sets for productions in the Cinema Hall 2 and his relatively more active roles in set design engagements nationally. Biodun Abe, who was until recently, the President of NANTAP (National Association of Nigerian Theatre Arts Practitioners) was the set designer for *The Bridge* (1998) by Pedro Obaseki. *The Bridge* which received waves of reviews and positive comments from critics and participants was Nigeria's entry at the Festival of Experimental Theatre in

Salam Theatre, Cairo. In the Nigeria International Bank (NIB) sponsored theatre production of *Langbodo* (1994) the set design which won national accolades for Biodun Abe featured some multi-functional scenic elements with transformational ability. With references to this production, Ododo says Biodun Abe's set for the NIB production is "breath-taking when one takes a stock of the materials used " (Technical Aids in the Nigerian Theatre: Past, Present and Future, 159).

Sunbo Marinho has more than fifty scenic productions to his credit within and outside the University of Ibadan where he was based before he retired in 2002. Sunbo Marinho's set designs are seen in such productions as, Wale Ogunyemi's *The Divorce, Langbodo* and Ijaiye, Femi Osofisan's *Kolera Kolej,* and *Who is Afraid of Solarin?*, Zulu Sofola's *King Emene,* Rasheed Gbadamosi's *The Mansion...*, Samson Amali's *Onugbo M'loko* and Fidelma Okwuesa's *Nobelium.*

Hilary Elemi is the resident set designer for the National Troupe of Nigeria. Most of his works are carried out under productions undertaken by this troupe in the Cinema Hall 2. Hilary Elemi is responsible for the majority of scenery works seen in the plays of the National Troupe. These include Ahmed Yerima's *Attahiru* (1999), *The Silent Gods* (1998), *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen* (2000); Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1998) and other noteworthy productions are well over twenty.

The set rendition for the three different productions under our scrutiny are, namely by:

i. **Biodun Abe**:
Death and the King's Horseman, written by Wole Soyinka and directed by Ben Tomoloju and Jide Ogungbade. This play, produced by the National Troupe of Nigeria, had two versions: the English version, directed by Ben Tomoloju, and the Yoruba version, directed by Jide Ogungbade. Both were produced in the Cinema Hall 2 of the National Theatre of Nigeria in 1995. This work analyzes the English version which was directed by Ben Tomoloju.

ii. **Hilary Elemi**:
The Concubine is a novel written by Elechi Amadi and adapted for the stage by Israel Eboh. The play was produced by The National Troupe of Nigeria and performed in the Cinema Hall 2 of the National Theatre from June 8th June 12th, 1998. This play was directed by Martin Adaji.

iii. **Sunbo Marinho:**
The Trials of Oba Ovonramwen, written by Ahmed Yerima and directed by Bayo Oduneye, was produced in the year 2000 by the

National Troupe of Nigeria to commemorate the centenary of the British invasion of the Benin kingdom (1896-1996) in the Cinema Hall 2.

Set Design in Death and the King's Horseman.

In all the plays listed in this study, the author's directions on what the set should be are carried directly at appropriate instances in the text or as directional allusions. In ...*Horseman* we are presented with brief stage descriptions like "A passage through a market", "The Veranda of the district officer's bungalow" and "A wide iron barred gate." In ...*Horseman,* cognizance is taken of the grossly skeletal scenic references which may have been intentional to allow for scenic creativity and a wide variety of concepts in actualizing its locale. In the beginning of the play text we are presented with, "A passage through a market in its closing stages" (12). This rather vague scenic reference appears to allow the designer to ignore the need for a "passage," opting instead for a concept of set making which would enable complete integration of all the locales into a single one separated technically by the delineating power of light. Rather than see a "passage," this stage set which is pushed to occupy three quarter of back and centre stage, leaves a barely commodious area for passage, market place, the yard for surrounding the district officers bungalow, the wide iron barred gate etc. In scene 11 of ...Horseman, the author's reference is equally brief: "The verandah of the district officer's bungalow" (23).

Here, it is not particular as to what type of verandah or bungalow. The grandiosity of these structures was equally not mentioned. In scene V of this play, a reference from which a major form in this set was made is conveyed in the following scenic direction. "A wide iron barred gate stretching almost the whole width of the cell in which Elesin is imprisoned (61)".

The set for which this reference is made is however a drastic departure from the denotations of the authors reference. Rather than a wide iron gate, what is presented before us is a cell, almost square, and made entirely of bars of wood made to look like iron. In this set, the designer's imagination which accounts for over eighty percent of the scenic forms has given little attention to the author's directions. This is clearly observable from his concept of simultaneous staging.

In *Death and the King's Horseman,* the pleasure and bountifulness of life is caught by the set designer's attempt to create a set which is very realistic, symbolic and evocative. The elegant, graceful and regal character of Elesin which is captured by this set is elucidated upon by Elesin himself:

Elesin: Come then. The market is my roost. When I come

among the women, I am a chicken with a hundred mothers. I become a monarch whose palace is built with tenderness and beauty (P.10).

Elsewhere the regality and splendour imbued in Elesins character, which his environment is meant to reflect, can be seen in his stage directions and dialogue.

Elesin stands resplendent in rich clothes, cap, shawl etc...)

Elesin: The world I know is good
Women: We know you will leave it so.
Elesin: The world I know is the bounty
Of hives after bees have swarmed.
No goodness teems with such open hands
Even in the dreams of deities.
Women: And we know you'll leave it so (17).

In the set for *Death and the King's Horseman,* a great variety of forms to suggest plentitude and wealth are used to capture Elesin's "good world" and "bounty of wives" as contained in his rhapsody. From the Pilkings's bungalow to the cell into which Elesin is incarcerated, and to the gargantuan backdrop of a village scene, the designer's search for grandeur is manifested both by his combination of scenic concepts as are seen in the strong realism of forms, in the use of steps, platforms and ramps, in such decorative items as flowers, cornices, balustrade and in the soft serene lighting which give lustre and freshness to Elesin's environment.

However, scenery in this play can neither be classified as realistic, symbolic, or stylized. The play carries none of the element of an expressionist or naturalist set, thus making it hard to define. However a bold attempt is seen in Biodun Abe's effort to evoke the spirit of realism from the use of the large painted backdrop of a village scene which is as far as paintings are classified, a realistic work. Considering its overbearing size, the painted vista onto which a soft upstage light is directed fills the entire stage area with a suggestiveness of realism. However this does not get very far as the major three-dimensional scenery used in the construction of the Pilking's apartment, the prison cell, and the mat compartment are rather a representation of skeletal symbols of what they are supposed to be.

The materials with which the three-dimensional scenery is made are basically in wood, with joinery and rigging devices carrying only a negligible percentage of metal. In purely realistic scenery, the scenery materials may have been shared amongst all the major materials of scenery. This tendency which is rather restrictive is equally observable in the

proportion of the entire three- dimensional structures which are far from the correct sizes and standard measurements. This makes the set concept for this production purely that of restricted realism. Platforms are equally used in this production for both space occupation and for emphasis of major structures. There are no attempts whatsoever to use them in an abstractive style or for suggesting constructivist scenic style. In constructing the entire forms on stage, the joinery methods used were dependent largely upon different sizes of nails considering the predominant use of lumber and plywood mainly of 'obeche'. While this makes it possible for the designer to achieve firmness and strength, the tottery appearance of the cell and office structures suggest a re-assembly of wooden materials which have been used for other productions. The use of wooden platforms on the floor is repeated for all the productions under focus. The dependence on nails and wood has therefore aided in rendering these structures Immobile as they are heavy and rigged almost permanently to the floor. From the beginning of the production to its end, these structures remain immobile, unchanging. Scenic Materials used in realizing these forms on stage are, however, mainly wood, with joinery realized from nails and glue. A percentage analysis of media used in constructing the sets in *Death and the King's Horseman* is presented overleaf:

Table 1. Percentage Analysis of Scenery Materials Used for *Death and the King's Horseman*

WOOD	70%
METAL	5%
PLASTIC	0%
FABRIC	10%
OTHER MATERIALS (Flowers,Raffia,Footmats, Straw mats)	15%
TOTAL	**100%**

The Concubine

The Concubine which is, after all, a novel was not written for the stage. It, however, has a few of the author's directions on sets which are seen in the

beginning of chapter 4 of this novel. These directions are seen as explications on a major village known as Omokachi: Omokachi was a small village comprising eleven family groups. Each family group occupied a cluster of compounds, and every compound had a path bursting into the main path running across the village.

Hilary Elemi depicts a space with a cluster of sets comprising two major huts: a rounded one, and a squared one showing only their façades. The two huts with thatch roofs are created for the two major families in the play: Emenike's and Madume's. A small wooden barn to the stage right is a shrine which is repeatedly mentioned in most sets depicting traditional environment in Africa. The designer equally created a large space, centre stage left and right, for a market place which is equally repeatedly mentioned in the text. The combination of traditional forms as presented in the huts, the barn, and benches are in contraposition with the designer's introduction of geometric platforms which are diametrically at polarity with the feeble 'realism carried' by the traditional forms. Overleaf is a table that presents the percentage spread of media used for constructing the sets in *The Concubine.*

WOOD	80%
METAL	7%
PLASTIC	0%
F A B R I C	3%
OTHER MATERIALS (Flowers,Raffia,Footats, Straw mats)	10%
TOTAL	100%

Trials of Oba Ovonranwen

In *Trials...*, the set, as designed by Biodun Abe, is motivated more by the historical milieu of the play than by obedience to textual directions. However, scenic references by the author are shorter and far less definitive in *...Horseman.* Besides the beginning of the play which makes such references as 'Dark Stage' and 'a deck on a yacht', the entire play is devoid of any traces of elaborate scenic allusions. From Scene 2 to Scene 7 which

marks the end of the play, the reference to palace fills the text making it the only important scenic allusion and metaphor used by the playwright to suggest locales. Inspired by the continuous reference to 'palace', the designer of this set created a gargantuan set of palace walls that carried the composite picture of a court yard that can be passed for a palace room. Again, here, the staging concept which is simultaneous in form is partly necessitated by the grossly undefined author's directions amongst other reasons. However, it is equally clear that owing to the author's presumed position on the need for flexibility and creativity, the austerity in author's scenic directions has equally propelled the simplicity and directness which is carried in this set concept. This simplicity permits re-usability of sets especially in plays with similar cultural and conjunctive elements.

However, in the set for *Trials...*, the use of graduating platforms which ascend to the position of Ovonramwen's throne, towering him above his subjects, is the first overriding set concept used to suggest glory. The subject of glory around which his personality is built is summed up by Ovonramwen himself:

> **Ovonramwen**: Here I am. Seated in my glory. The once most feared, most respected. Oba Ovonramwen son of Adolo (19).

The glory of Ovonramwen which is reflected in his strength is further conjured by his repeated reference to the leopard. The feeling of strength is inbred in the thick high palace walls and the solidity and firmness carried by variegated levels. The scenic concept for *Trials...* however borrowed more from thematic and historical references than from author, character, and dialogue indices. Below is a table showing percentage analysis of material used in making the sets for *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*:

Table 3. Percentage Analysis of Scenery Materials Used for *Trials of Oba Ovonramwen*

WOOD	85%
METAL	5%
PLASTIC	0%
FABRIC	3%
OTHER MATERIALS (Flowers,Hedges, Raffia, Footmats, Straw mats)	7%
TOTAL	**100%**

Composite Analyses of Forms and Concepts

The Cinema Hall 2 is a hybrid proscenium stage setting without the traditional teasers, tormentors and stage curtains. Basically, the problem of making productions in the 17.2m x 10.9m x 8.1m space of this hall is first and foremost a product of the permanent features of the hall of which the most obvious is the structurally constraining structure which begs for some kind of adaptableness for different dramatic productions at different times. The Cinema Hall 2 stage structure has been created without the possibility of tempering with the permanent stage features as the hall was built without the notion of professional dramatic performance in mind. However, the designers' efforts at restructuring this basic rectangular shape are not noticeable as the regimental form of this basic stage form does not allow for these adjustments.

This unfortunate structural defect has made productions and the possibility of easing the difficulties associated with manifesting design concepts a knotty problem. However, the inability of the three set designers to circumvent this problem through ingenuous means has, in a way, betrayed some of their artistic and creative weaknesses. This is because this structural defect has made these productions to carry the fixed unchanging environment projected by its Fourth Wall. This is further worsened by its permanent rectangularity emphasized by the roomage seen in its stage space and badly constructed stage flats.

Though there is a frantic effort at portraying Realism in all the sets, there is yet no strong adherence to the established codes laid down by

theatrical or dramatic schools. The sets in all the sceneries are a feeble attempt at portraying Realism or Naturalism. In all the sets, as much as the designers had attempted to portray Realism, Realism yet remains far from being achieved as most objects and forms presented by all the designers still look either distorted, misrepresented or badly presented.

In *Death and the King's Horseman,* the major scenic form, the backdrop of a village, carries faulty perspective vistas in, for instance, the huts which appear to be bigger than their proportionate sizes as they are viewed in the distance. In this same scenic painting, the rendition of turquoise blue with tints of red is betraying of what a sky line must carry. Another major fault in the making of this scenic painting was to have applied a heavy layer of domestic oil paint in a mixed blend with dye paint. This has, during the production, made lights falling from the battens and edges of the stage to create reflections that slightly obliterate the total composition. The attempt at imitating reality by using a 2-dimensional backdrop is affected by the strong illusionism carried by this 2-dimensional painting in a space that is essentially meant to be 3 dimensional and paraded by 3-dimensional actors. The Pilkings' flat and Elesin's cell which are two major 3-dimensional set in this space appear to be neither realist, symbolist, nor constructivist in form. To qualify these as realist would see the design principle of proportion rearing up its face as the bungalow looks more like a cigarette kiosk than a real bungalow. For the cell, the structure is equally guilty of the laws of proportion. While these sets can be said to distance themselves from any globally recognized design trend, they could equally be said to embrace an integrative approach where all the trends are either important or unimportant thereby giving credence to the belief that there may not have been the desire by any of these set designers to imitate, typify or reproduce forms peculiar to the design codes of any theatrical conventions.

The other problem noticeable in all the production sets studied is expressed in the unchanging choice of materials with which these sets are constructed. Wood that constitutes a large percentage of the construction medium and materials used did not help in enhancing the general design forms and concepts. This is because the construction techniques necessitated by the use of wood, leaves large crevices between each flat thereby making them remain as sheets of plywood put together rather than simulating the appearance of walls. There were equally swells from repainting, tottery joints resulting from weak hinge joints and cracks resulting from re-nailing the same points. These wooden flats which are often used to suggest realist settings stand far from the picturesque clarity and exactitude seen in truly realist sets. True realism, however, requires adequate finances needed for form details and accuracy brought about by the employment of specialized

skills. This would have meant employing the services of painters or artisans, interior decorators, welders or fabricators etc. in order to ensure accuracy and finesse. Rather than see realism or naturalism, what is presented are fragmentary sets that are midway between abstraction and realism, and therefore, half representational. The set by Hilary Elemi is guilty of these problems. These problems are equally noticeable in in other productions that have been enacted on this same stage. These include Ahmed Yerima's_*The Silent Gods*_(1998), Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1998), and Wale Ogunyemi's *Langbodo* (1998) all designed by Hilary Elemi. Sunbo Marinho set in *Trial of Oba Ovonramwen* is equally guilty of this problem.

However, Biodun Abe, whose works are not featured as much as Hilary Elemi's, equally carries these problems in his design works particularly with reference to the works produced in the Cinema Hall 2 alone. A typical case in reference is his rendering of *Song of a Goat* which is almost a repetition of the set elements seen in *Yemoja* by Ahmed Yerima in the same Cinema Hall 2. However to be fair to Biodun Abe, his set concept as is exemplified in *Death and the King's Horseman* carrying a large backdrop of a painted scene, connotes his refusal to be affected by this unchanging traditions and his relentless resistance to be cowed by the constrictions of the Cinema Hall 2 stage architecture. Despite his undaunted efforts at fashioning a peculiar design concept for his sets, the design rendition for *Song of a Goat* and *Death and the King's Horseman,* both enacted in the Cinema Hall 2, suffer yet from syndromes which are peculiar to all plays produced in this hall. The dynamic and experimental urge carried by Biodun Abe is illustrated in his other sets designed for other productions. These include the (NIB) sponsored theatre production of *Langbodo* (1994) which featured multi-functional scenic elements that were mainly 3-dimensional free-standing geometric structures and *The Bridge* (1998) by Don Pedro Obaseki which featured a constructivist network of wooden parapet set. However, from Hilary Elemi to Sunbo Marinho and Biodun Abe, the quest and desire for experimentation in the Cinema Hall 2 is weak as from one production to the other production the creative zeal for more workable concepts and styles to set production may have been strongly subdued. This is without regard to production cost and directorial ineptitude seen in these unfolding design problems. The feeling often struck by the sets in these productions is that of unchangeableness produced in the expression, "We are yet again in the Cinema Hall 2". The entire productions reveal set pieces which are not movable and which are placed on an unmovable stage floor considering the "fixatedness" of the floor and the unavailability of scene changing devices.

With every scene that is ended and with every other that is to come, the

need for space management necessitated by the peculiar structural problems in this hall has lent support to the general inclination towards the concept of simultaneous scenery which is largely the design concept adopted by all the scenic designers. In simultaneous staging, different scenes are laid out on a stage that has the capacity to accommodate up to three, four or five independent settings that are lit separately and progressively in time to suggest continuity without having to strike or move them. The adoption of simultaneous staging in all the sets under study suggests, to a large extent, an almost complete dependence on this concept. Other major productions that have utilized this concept include *Yemoja* and *The Silent Gods* both by Ahmed Yerima, and *The Strong Breed* by Wole Soyinka. The simultaneous staging concept has equally stimulated the "Lights Out" technique which either gradually reduces the light intensity until it is completely dark or instantaneously puts out the light for the purpose of changing the scene by redirecting the audience to other sets on stage. However, these concepts are not without their shortcomings. In simultaneous staging, lights which are not often as dark enough as to completely conceal simultaneous sets not immediately in use leave such sets still within certain degree of visibility thereby creating a visual clash. This concept which was equally used for a production like *The Silent Gods* in this same stage structure was, however, crude and unsatisfactory, as delays were recorded and shadowy figures seen as they made in and out to remove set pieces from the stage. However the major unmovable large scale sets whose overwhelming presence were still seen in the dark part of the stage made this simultaneous staging concept rather faulty and confusing. These large-scale sets that were never changing remained vaguely noticeable because of their base positions and owing, too, to their large and heavy nature. In attempting to manage these problems and the evolving design concepts inspired by these problems, these large-scale sets which have been used by these designers as part of the total visual components to capture spaces have assisted in dislocating the sense of mobility and time necessary for all dramatic actions. The only means by which the feeling of transition can be realized is to create visual changes to the eyes. These changes are however only possible where the constituent design elements (lines, shapes, forms, space, texture and colours) are subtly muted as the dramatic actions unfold. This is where this concept as adopted by all the designers has revealed some weaknesses.

The three designers whose works are under scrutiny reveal that materials of scenery being no less than 80% of wood are the same for all of them. In a similar vein, construction techniques and rigging patterns are the same. In the simultaneous staging concept which is peculiar to all their sets, 'ight which illuminates and helps to define the set and whose potentials are revealed in the word, 'scenery' is not properly harnessed and has thus aided in

creating what can be conveniently referred to as a clutter of forms on the stage. This can hamper the set design's ability to promote apparent loc .tion differences, aid visual transition and encourage make belief. Rather than enhance the productions, this concept has the potential of dislocating the sense of time and movement and inviting confusion in forms seen both in individual productions and in most productions presented in the Cinema Hall 2.

Conclusion

The refusal by the Nigerian set designer to dare shows his unreadiness to equate, in visual terms, the adventure which he sees in the myriad of ideas and concepts presently prevalent as part of our global orientations in learning. This explosion in learning and experimentation, and this infinite multiplicity of possibilities, must be seen in the field of theatrical design as a clarion call for the Nigerian set designer to recover from the artistic and intellectual lethargy into which set design has slipped because, "the path leading to the theatre are numerous and varied" (Parker and Smith, 3). While the experimental attitude motivated by the new wave of ideas must be propagated, and while Parker and Smith's view is true of theatre and of theatre design, the factors of finance, of storage space, and of adequate design education cannot allow the wide scale form of experimentation that is desirable in the Nigerian theatrical scene to be manifest. Considering the wide variety of scenic materials available for scene construction and experimentations, the Nigerian set designer is inclined to further err or become even more negatively affected by the 'accept-them-all' and 'stand - away' syndromes which are capable of further exacerbating his problems. The need to re-assess his major scenic material wood - and move almost completely away from it is, therefore, his first panacea. Presently, wood which accounts for about 70% of his scene-building materials has not aided him in experimenting with forms and concepts in the theatre in tandem with the new waves of ideas in the theatre.

Secondly, For proper space management considerations, the width of the Cinema Hall 2 which is rather too large for effective dramatic performances must be reduced from the wings or sides to give a little more emphasis to sets and to enable their presence be of more importance than they presently are. Considering that true realism or naturalism on stage is difficult to achieve, a reduction of this space from the sides will mean a reduction in the total number of sets often needed to populate the acting

stage space and avoid the feeling of emptiness and poverty occasionally brought about by large spaces with very few or no structures. When the width of the stage is reduced, the rectangularity is equally reduced. This can be aided by the extension of the down stage area by creating an apron that will help to accommodate the concept of a turn table stage by which sets, which are definitely light, can be changed through rotation, by manual or mechanised means. This will mean the designers in the Cinema Hall 2 must seek means by which visible forms, like the actors on stage, are seen to mutate into other forms. This implies that the set designers generally in Nigeria, as with other developed countries, must grab the opportunities offered by technology and allow their forms and concepts in set design heuristics be affected by this technology.

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Theatre and Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Influence of theatre on basic education in Nigeria is examined in this paper. Theatre features in different aspects of Nigerian education, especially at primary and junior secondary levels, in form of teaching method, co-curricular activity and entertainment. Therefore, it is relevant as an instrument for achieving high level attendance, retention and academic performance in basic education. However, theatre could bring about an indiscriminate intermingling of males and females, high cost of costumes, poor time management in its use as a teaching method and poor control on the type of and the time for play. Teacher's role towards ensuring positive influence and guiding against negative ones include counselling of parents and other stakeholders, monitoring of pupils at work and at play and co-operating with all stakeholders in ensuring achievement of educational objectives. It is recommended that theatre should be included in all programmes of teacher education and that all stakeholders, including theatre practitioners should be aware of the influence of theatre on educational programmes and guide school children appropriately.

Education is vital to the development of an individual and a nation. In realization of this, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has adopted education as an instrument for effecting national development (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). Moreover, the Government's concern for achievement of national objectives has led to the introduction and execution of educational policies at different periods of the nation's history. For example, Universal Basic Education (UBE) was introduced in September 1999, as part of the efforts to make education available to all Nigerians. In this programme, the Government intended to enroll all children of school-age, and retain them in school to acquire compulsory basic education for nine consecutive years. That is, when the children are enrolled in primary one, they are to be encouraged to complete six-year primary and three-year junior secondary education without breaking.

The Government has invested a lot of human, material and financial resources into the programme in order to ensure its success. Also, some aspects of school curriculum and co-curricular activities have undergone modification while others have changed completely in order to ensure their relevance to national and individual needs.

Execution of Government policies on education occurs mainly in the educational institutions such as primary and secondary schools. Therefore, teachers in these schools are charged with the responsibility of utilization of available resources and ensuring the achievement of national objectives. Specifically, the educators are to ensure that relevant knowledge and skills are acquired by learners who would subsequently utilize their expertise in various sectors of the nation. This aspiration can easily be achieved when learners attend school regularly.

Although, the educators have been using different motivational strategies (e.g. free textbook to pupils in public schools) to ensure regular school attendance, little or no effort has been made to examine the contributions of theatre to school attendance, especially during the period of implementation of UBE. The fact that theatre serves as an attraction to people can not be denied, in view of the love both children and adults have for it, either as actors or as spectators. Children, in particular, are attracted to places where they can watch plays. This implies that theatre is capable of attracting children if it is organized in schools. Moreover it could influence the realization of the Government's intension to achieve 100% of admission, retention and graduation rates of children in UBE schools (UBE Act, 2004). It is therefore, necessary that prospects and challenges of theatre, and consequently the roles of educators towards ensuring a positive influence on achievement of UBE objectives should be examined.

Theatre in Education

The word 'theatre' has a plethora of definitions. Two of these definitions are germane to our discussion. According to BBC dictionary (1992), theatre is a building with a stage in which plays and other entertainments are performed. It is also a process of acting or writing plays. In agreement with the second definition, Barranger, in the Encarta Dictionary (2009) refers to theatre as a dramatic performance; while the Encyclopedia Britannica (2009) defines it as an art concerned almost exclusively with live performances, in

which the action is precisely planned to create a coherent and significant sense of drama. Drawing inference from these definitions, a theatre could mean a place for staging a drama. It could also mean the art of staging a drama. In this paper, theatre will be used as a play or a drama, which is organized in a school, a radio, a television and in public places.

Cassady and Cassady (1993), noted that theatre has existed from the ancient time even before the introduction of writing. This implies that theatre has been a part of societal activities from the early period of human history. It constitutes one of the means of educating, entertaining and informing people. At the primary and secondary levels of Nigerian education system, it features both as a co-curricular activity and a method of teaching. As a co-curricular activity, many schools have dramatic societies which produce plays within and outside their schools. The plays focus either on school subjects or on socio-economic and political activities in their community. Also professionals in theatre do visit schools in order to entertain and educate members of the school organization. Media organizations such as radio and television also present theatre on different aspects of academic and social lives of the students in particular and the larger community in general.

School drama is performed by students. These are taken mainly from literature books which the students read as part of their learning process. Through the drama, students' knowledge in languages, literature and life experiences become wide, permanent and easily applicable. Thus, the objectives of education could be achieved through theatre.

Another aspect of theatre in education is its use as a method of teaching and learning, especially in primary and junior secondary schools. This method popularly referred to as 'play-way method', involves acting a play and playing music. Students are engaged in activities that bring them pleasure or enjoyment (Salman, 2001). Teachers and learners are involved in different classroom activities using their sense organs of seeing, touching and hearing. This method could make class lessons practical, more permanent and easily applicable. It can be used to teach any subject on the school curriculum. This assertion is in agreement with Bello (1981), who noted that an occasional use of play-way method in the classroom will help to enliven lesson, create interest and sustain attention. Topics in english language, mathematics, literature in english, health education and other subjects on the school curriculum could be easily dramatized, he stated

further. In the same vein, David and Nurse (1999) opined that play was an important vehicle for learning for young children. They stated further that play could assist educators in avoiding an over-formalised early childhood education, and that through play, children would be able to exercise the body and the mind, socialize and develop intrinsic motivation, curiosity and creativity. Thus, play-way method in which learners are involved in acting different roles and imitating different characters, are expressed in the theater.

Basic Education

Basic education is the foundation level of education which consolidates the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and life-long learning. According to Obanya (2007), Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched in September, 1999, as part of 'Education For All' (EFA) movement which took off at Jomtein in 1990, with a view to providing basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age. It covers Early Childhood Care and Education, which is not compulsory. It also covers the compulsory six-year primary and three-year junior secondary education. There are also some aspects of adult literacy and non-formal education. In this paper, the focus is on primary and junior secondary education. UBE is free, compulsory and universal. There is no payment of tuition and all children must attend schools. In fact, parents or guardians who prevent their children or wards from school would face stiff penalty. These are parts of Government's effort to ensure that all Nigerian citizens acquire appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning (Universal Basic Education Commission, 2004, pp 16-17).

Moreover, UBE is very important to the Government and citizens of Nigeria. This is due to the fact that it is pivotal to the attainment of and is interlinked with programmes such as National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), State Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (SEEDS), Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2006).

The curricula and co-curricular activities for primary and junior secondary schools, as stated in the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) are meant to actualize the objectives of UBE. Some of the subjects for primary education include cultural and creative

Arts, English, French, Nigerian and sign languages. Junior secondary education has, among others, English language, French language, Languages of the Environment, Music and one major Nigerian language other than that of the environment. There are other core and elective subjects at primary and secondary levels but the ones highlighted are of direct relevance to our discussion.

In view of the subjects to be offered at primary and junior secondary levels, basic education will assist children to communicate effectively in their mother tongue, one other Nigerian language, English language and French language, both orally and in writing. Also, knowledge would be acquired on cultural practices in these languages. Thus, basic education would provide the foundation knowledge and skills for effective involvement in the theatre as an artist, spectator and playwright. Other professionals in theatre art include producer, director, casting director, designer, production staff, stage manager, stage technician, house manager, box officer and press officer (Richardson, 1998). Their foundation knowledge and skills can be enhanced through UBE programme

Relevance of Theatre to Basic Education

Theatre is a kind of entertainment and recreational activity. Therefore, it is capable of attracting a large number of people. In particular, school children are always happy when they watch and participate in plays. This is due to the fact that it relieves them of boredom, monotony and strict control of classroom environment. In this situation, schooling is likely to be more appealing to them; and this may lead to an improvement in attendance and retention of pupils in basic schools.

Moreover, the use of theatre as a teaching method provides an avenue for teachers and pupils to be actively involved in teaching and learning. It also increases their level of interaction thereby providing them psychological satisfaction. The teaching-learning atmosphere thus created could enhance school attendance and understanding of lessons. Also, absenteeism which could result from academic failure would reduce among pupils. This would go a long way in achievement of UBE objectives.

Also, theatre serves as an exercise because it involves movement of the body in different directions. It is always accompanied by music and dance, which could contribute positively to physical and mental alertness of the pupils and provide them another opportunity for attendance, retention and

improved academic performance in their schools. Theatre also promotes culture of the society from generation to generation. For instance, politics and other aspects of societal culture are expressed in drama. As pupils participate in it, they get familiar with the culture of the environment. This can assist their acquisition of knowledge in schools.

In addition, school children who have talents in theatre as actors, stage directors and playwrights would be able to exhibit their talents. They would also gain additional knowledge and skills and become experts in their talented areas.

As a co-curricular activity, many schools have dramatic societies which stage plays for people within schools especially during important events such as end-of-the-year programme, school's founders day and inter-house sports. They also perform drama to entertain members of their communities on different occasions. Besides live plays, they also produce radio and television drama for educational and recreational purposes.

Challenges of Theatre to Basic Education

In theatre, there is free interaction of male and female actors. Spectators also mix freely with one another. This could lead to promiscuity among the learners with result that some of them would suspend or even terminate their studies. This is inimical to the achievement of UBE objectives.

The use of profane language could also constitute a problem. Some actors engage in the use of words which are disrespectful in order to create fun, to amuse or to entertain spectators. Children could easily pick these words and use them in conversation. This is at variance with the culture of moral upbringing in the society. Therefore, it could negate the achievement of this aspect of UBE objectives. Also Theatre costumes can be expensive beyond the capacity of young pupils. This can result to additional financial burden on the part of parents whose level of economic capacity is low.

Theatre time consuming to organize and use as a teaching method. It takes time to prepare a play, to stage a play and to discuss the lessons derived from it. Using it as a teaching method may extend a lesson period and affect other subjects on the time table.

As an entertainment, pupils could develop the habit of watching plays for a long period at the expense of their studies. They could watch plays on television or video till late hours in the night. This may make them feel sleepy or tired when they get to school. Moreover, the drama may become

an issue for discussion among their mates. This situation would have negative effect on their learning process and consequently on achievement of UBE objectives.

A theatre that is staged by artists who are outside the school system could constitute an informal way of learning. In such plays, children may be exposed to knowledge which they are not socially ready to acquire,. Thus, it could constitute a means of acquiring wrong education.

The Roles of a Teacher

The roles of a teacher in successful implementation of basic education programmes can not be overemphasized. As a class or subject teacher, he is responsible for execution of government policies. He should play his roles as a facilitator of learning, a counsellor, a supervisor and a stakeholder in education.

As a facilitator of learning, he should teach what is factual and morally acceptable in the society so that learners will be able to distinguish between right and wrong, especially when they watch drama. Nwankwo (1982), suggested that teachers should be able to design strategies for identifying and selecting the positive influence, and also offsetting the negative ones in the society. Also, the teacher should ensure that the use of drama as a teaching method does not hinder any other school programme.

The teacher as a counsellor should advise parents, pupils and the government on the extent to which children can be allowed to watch plays on television, video and firm. Parents should have control over what their children do, especially in theatre. Parents-Teachers Association meeting could provide a good avenue for educating parents on what could be of benefit to children.

The teacher as a supervisor should oversee what the pupils do, not only at work but also at play. Hence, he should ensure that time, financial and material resources available to theatre as a co-curricular activity, a teaching method or an entertainment, are judiciously utilized.

As a stakeholder, the teacher has the responsibility of ensuring that educational objectives are achieved. He should relate well with other stake-holders (parents, theatre practitioners, community leaders and governments) in making use of theatre positively, to encourage and sustain school attendance. He should discourage any inc dence of misuse of theatre so that its negative consequences would be avoided.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The discussion so far shows that theatre could influence the achievement of UBE objectives either positively or negatively. It can also be concluded that a teacher is responsible for identification of strategies which can make learners derive benefits from theatre either inside or outside the school. The following recommendations are therefore worthy of note.

Drama should be included along with music and dance in the teacher education curriculum. Prospective teachers should learn it for effective use as a teaching method, a co-curricular activity and a source of entertainment.

Also, it is recommended that drama on radio, television, and video in public places should be of high moral standard. In this regard, government should monitor and control drama, and, their organizers should be counselled.

There should be parental control on type of drama to be watched, especially live plays organized by concert parties and the ones relayed on television, film and video. The time to spend in watching or participating in play should also be controlled.

Drama should be encouraged as part of a school's co-curricular activities in order to develop talents and bring them up right from a tender age.

Finally, subjects in primary and junior secondary school curriculum which can lead pupils to specialize in theatre should be properly handled. The subjects include languages, music, cultural and creative arts.

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Dance in Communication Art

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Abstract

Very many view dance merely as a form of entertainment, however, dance is a sign of life presenting itself out through the body as it causes excitement. Dance exhibits aesthetics of body and cultural communication as its resources portray performance art. It is an embodiment of a people's cultural milieu and can be used not only as an embellishment of drama but as an independent art for critical reflection of values, traditions, social mobilization and the promotion of the growth of dance through the building of a positive image and consciousness. Dance reflects different meanings to different societies and it is on this backdrop that 'Ivom' dance among the Tiv people of central Nigeria would be discussed. For Tiv, dance does not exist outside music and music functions to bring out dance in different social, economic or political events and occasions, expressed in mimetic or symbolic manner, the cosmology and ideas of the Tiv society. The paper looks at dance as a communicative art.

In Tiv culture the closest word to relate to dance in English language is rhythmic or patterned movement performance as an end in itself is *amar* or *ishol*. This Tiv thought of dance relates the phenomenon of dancing to game hence *ishol* means game. There are different types of amar or dances in Tivland and they are variously called the *amar*, like *amar* a *Shen*, which means *shen* dance or *amar* a *Inyon* which means bird dance. All these dances in Tiv are categorized in their historical and artistic context by well chosen names that relate them to their functions, history or artistic requirement.

The verb to dance in Tiv is vine, which applies to dance as vine *amar*, meaning dancing the dance or performing the dance. Vine however, is dispensed with altogether to describe particular dance styles employed by the dancers. The pattern describes the aesthetic quality of serious dancing with one's whole body movement matched to the music with precision and exactitude.

Charles Keil however, claims that the word music does not exist in Tiv

culture (45). This claim is misleading and not correct. Music to Tiv does not exist solely on its own; music is used for dancing or singing or as a song for dance or leading a procession. This art is different to western concept of music which is an activity of its own and many times stimulates no physical audience response.

Tiv world describes music as *Ityoulov* which is a total combination of the various musical instruments and the melody and rhythm of sounds produced. This music is divided into two groups, the drummed music and the flute or blown music. The drummed music is produced from various types of drums while the flute or blown music is also produced from different flutes and the algeita.

Tiv life in every sphere and society is accompanied by dance. The whole community involves and gets engaged in dance from time to time. Dance is not an art form for a particular age grade or gender. The Tiv do not restrict the enjoyment of dance or its participation in it to a particular people. Dance is a noble art form and good dancers are respected and held in high esteem.

From birth a baby is treated to lullabies by its mother to lull the baby to sleep with rhythms, which may apply in rocking the child to sleep in the mother's arms or on the mother's back. And as the child grows up, he is introduced to games with dancing steps in which little children in the compound get engaged in. The early dance steps are not accompanied by drummed music, but the singing and clapping induce body control and movement. It is also at this stage that the child is introduced to drumming and music. The main function of dance at this early stage in the child's life and period of youth is to exercise the body physically and stimulate it intellectually. At the age of twelve a child is expected to be fully conversant with the dance steps of the popular dances and the tunes that go with these dances. The young adult also uses dance to express various emotions. The greater the expressive ability the greater the attraction. In the rural Tiv areas it is a well known fact that many young adults have used dance to win the hearts of many women to present. So also have good female dancers attracted stiff competition and high bride price.

Tiv traditional dances are expressive in action, vibrant and vigorous in nature as they communicate meaning or power which grows out of living experiences. Most Tiv dances are dependent on age and membership of such dances could be based on this, whether young or old. Such dances

include *Ishen, Akacha, Choloko* and *Tyoilu*. Not only are dances based on age but also on gender. The dances are either all male or all female affairs. Several dances which involve only men include *Girinya, Ingyough* and *Gberchu*, while those which involve only female include *Dasenda, Ichough, Amine-paven* and *Conpani*. Certain dances on the other hand involve both male and female and they include *Ange* and *Agbaga*.

Dance for the young adult is not all about creating a form for social interaction. It also creates room for intellectual stimulation as dancers are informed about the latest scandals in the land and other forms of information with the view of ensuring normative behaviour and controlling deviant behaviour. Many times these dances are markedly protest dances where youth openly criticize the oppressive behaviour of the leadership and elders.

Viewing Tiv dances from a structural perspective dances can be said to be historical, warlike, creative, ritualistic or mimetic and each of the forms has different types of dances. Dance cannot be easily classified in Tivland by their functions as a single dance could have a multiplicity of functions. For instance the *Ingyough* dance captures the small pox epidemic which took place in the land and almost swept many people away. The epidemic swept through Tivland from the beginning of the 19th century. *Kuza* on the other hand brings to mind the forced labour relations and activities of Tiv people during the British rule which forced people to mine tin in Jos, Plateau State of Nigeria. *Dasenda* gives detail attention of the several arrests and killings of the Tiv people by the Nigerian Police, sent to curtail the Tiv revolts of 1960-65, in the land.

Inyon dance is about the flock and menace of guela birds which ravaged the countryside thereby destroying farms and other food crops thus, bringing famine. *Sunda* is a dance which portrays the agricultural life style of the Tiv people, how local implements are used on the farm and planting. The dance depicts the life style of the people. This infers that Tiv have dances for every activity. Social organizations are usually enlivened by music and dance. It is this that Charles Keil affirms that 'if only the Tiv dance could be put together they will entirely outclass many nations'(60). In dance there is the feeling of belonging together, caring for one another and sharing is regenerated among dancers. The participation by the audience is usually overwhelming.

Collectivism is a watchword in Africa. It is a social phenomena, it is applied to every organization to work together. For instance *Ingyough* dance, group choreography is more acceptable since the dance expresses group solidarity as opposed to the individual or solo performance. Composition involves the participation of every individual and an individual who succeeds must have been duly given collective support by the entire people.

Dance serves as a collective force which brings the people together. It brings people together and assures them of a communal existence. Dance to them is therefore not a mere gyration of the body parts but it is a sign of life itself which finds expression through the body. This Acholonu agrees to this when she asserts that

> The art of dance is the art of moving the body in a rhythmical way, usually to music, to express an emotion or idea, to narrate a story or simply to take delight in the movement itself... Dance is communicative; it can tell a story sometimes better and More effective and powerful than words (51).

The movement also referred to as non-verbal cues are understood in different ways, as dance talks about one's tradition, religion and many times the activities that take place in one's life and place.

A look at *Gbangi* dance as a dance of defiance which right from the early sixties into the seventies, reflects how the youth received a lot of repression from the political authority, controlled at its top by traditional head. Jobless youths turned to music making, dancing and criticizing the misrule which is reflected in the songs thereby portraying the various defiance of rulers and society.

Gbangi dance also comes as an expression of current affairs. As an agent of political education the songs call on youths to stand up for their rights. The dance attains the economic let up which is responsible for the repressive as rich people control dancers by putting them in prison. This same dance depicts social criticism, political education, justice, aesthetics and economic analysis of the society. However, as the youth grows into adulthood and gets married, their dance cultures also change. They now move from amateur to professional dancing.

Ivom Dance

Ivom dances are wedding dances in which there is no sole dancing of the bride and the groom at the wedding feast. The couple dances together to attest to their dexterity and proficiency in the dance. *Ivom* is a dance which reflects the cultural institution of the Tiv people. *Ivom* means a heap and it is symbolic to the people as it involves a great dance ceremony. This dance is performed by one who has attained great success and achievements in his community. He must also be initiated into certain traditional protective rites known as *Akombo*. With this the performer is qualified to host *Ivom*. During celebration there is a lot to eat and drink as the whole community and friends of the celebrant are treated to lavish food and choicest meat. Special songs are composed to sing his praises.

The cloth worn on this day by the celebrant and his wife is produced by the celebrant's agnates. The agnates also take charge of security at the arena since the atmosphere is tensed. Celebrant is regarded as a man of very high status, dignity and integrity. The dance is led by the man closely followed by his wife in the same dance steps, they perform on the heap and while on top of the heap many songs are rendered and the performer is free to choose the song he wishes to dance to. The song is meant to recount his achievements in proportion to his age mates. To this Akpede asserts that:

> The achievements mostly exhibited at *Ivom* ceremony are merry making with surplus food, meat, drinks and the number of wives one has. All these achievements are embedded in the songs of the age group in praise of the *Ivom* celebrant (18).

Akpede further goes on to say that the significant aspect of *Ivom* is the display of one's status in the society. This is in terms of his achievements to the development of the society in which he lives as well as his achievements in it (18).

The adult dance is more formal. Long periods of rehearsals are required and after this the performance day is very special. The patron calls together dance performers, and invites the dancers to any occasion, whether in taking of title, celebrating a personal achievement. He informs the leader of the dance group about the date of the event at long notice. He has to prepare food and drinks in very large quantity and supply during the all night dance

occasions. The leader of the dance group calls the choreographer and lead dancer and passes information of invitation to their troupes and fix rehearsals. Rehearsals last for long hours and are held in the open courtyard where everyone is encouraged to watch, participate in and criticize. The day preceding the event, the dancers arrive to their host's home in time for dinner and proceed to test their musical instruments which announce their arrival to the host community. As musicians begin playing, the music calls out the dancers to the usually all night dance occasion. All villagers also get involved in the dance performance.

As dancers get older and take up traditional responsibilities of leadership, they no longer join the main core dance performers, though they may participate in the most prestigious of the Tiv dances which is *Ibiamegh*. They however, function as dance critics as older men and women can always be seen moving up and dance formation criticizing and often forming an outer circle to demonstrate their agility and nostalgia for their youthful days.

Cultural Significance of Tiv Dances

a) Dance as social criticism: Most of all Tiv dances engage in some sort of social criticism or the other. Dance for social criticism acknowledges the fact that youth dances tend to be critical of elders. Maidens perform dances which taunt lazy young men who do not contribute to the upkeep of the house but make impossible demands on their housewives demanding the choicest meals. The swange, kpingi spare no one on lazy people, drunks, debtors, hemp smokers, adulterers, poor marriage risks. The dancers on their own capitalize on their social reputation to indulge themselves in deviancy.

b) Dance as historical documentation: Tiv dance are all embedded in historical reality and can be said to transmit the history of Tiv for posterity. This explains why Tiv dances employ gestures and strong descriptive songs about particular historical events of the past. From the historical view, *Dasenda* dance reflects the then Tiv Native Police Authority in Tiv land by the Northern People's Congress (NPC). This Native Police Authority harassed and killed many Tiv people at that time. *Dasenda* means Police, and performance of this dance reminds the people of the brutality

during Tiv riots of 1960-1964, this dance is still performed to date.

c) Dance as an outlet for physical and emotional release: Tiv dance contributes to the physical and emotional release as it possesses the unique opportunity for a society of emotional expressions. The dancers are able to release inexpressible thoughts and ideas, let off steam and also resolve social conflicts.

d) Dance as ritual process: Tiv engage in various types of rituals which aim at repairing the damage done to the society by witches. All the rituals have their accompanying performances be it songs, music, dance or a combination of all. Ritualistic dances are performed by a male and female, example of this dance is *Ivom* or *Biamegh* which reflects the achievements attained by particular individuals in the society.

e) Dance as political expression: Dance also serve to expose political affairs in the land.Dance as cultural expression: Dance depicts the life style of the people. Mimetic dance imitates movements or miming of animals or history. *Ihinga* dance falls under this category, *Ihinga* which means a squirrel is a male dance, and the dance derives its name from the animal. The dance imitates the movement of a squirrel.

Gbaseela means a wolf. This dance reflects the ideas implored for the celebration of unique human attainments especially in game hunting. *Ifiam* is performed by females it is a dance which imitates the movement of the frog in the pond. *Ifiam* means frog, and this dance reflects the movement of frogs during the rainy season as farmers till the ground for planting.

f) Dance as mass hypnotism: In Tiv culture, the power of dance over the people is acknowledged as being overwhelming. Spirit worshippers to date use this hypnotic effect of dance for control of their members at worship and during curing session. A dangerous part of the hypnosis is involved in violence where songs induce such feeling of fight and violence. This Nketia describes a similar function of music in Africa

Wars were fought with music, with drums that kept up morale and gave directions and with songs that roused the various companies into which men were permanently organized or the divisions to which towns and villages were assigned (24)

Another hypnotic dance is the girinya where dancers perform feats with their weapons getting very wild with excitement.

In spite of the various dances among the Tiv people, some cannot fall under particular dance types; this is because they are purely creative in nature. Such dances include the Tiv popular *Swange* performed by both men and women. *Swange* has experienced some tremendous change from the original performance and out of the desire to protect the nature of dance Hagher asserts that 'as dances come against change they tend to lose their original thrust, and seems to be modified to cope with newer realities' (190).

Dance is an old art form among the Tiv but it still has great impact on audience participation. Since it is a dance form which originates within the cultural set up of the people, spectators are familiar with the dance as the performers. Most times spectators participate spontaneously since they also belong to the same homogeneous society and the dance is an expression of their culture and life.

Dance expresses a philosophy of the life and ancient indigenous idea, patience and collectedness of the mind. The behavioural patterns of a given society, is to a large extent demonstrated by their concepts.

In general, complex dance reflects a complex society and simple dance reflects a simple society. Dance whether African or otherwise is a cultural activity that reveal the group of people organizing and involving themselves with their own communal relationships.

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INTERVIEWS

Moving Wor(l)ds: An Interview with Tess Onwueme

Becky Becker Ph.D

During the spring of 2001 I had the great pleasure of interviewing playwright Tess Onwueme just after she had learned of a generous grant she was about to receive from the Ford Foundation. Some six years later in the fall of 2007, Tess tracked me down at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia, where I had moved the previous year. Fortuitously, I had been planning to call her because I was considering applying for a faculty development seminar to Nigeria; though I had always wanted to travel to Africa, it was my connection to Tess and her work that made Nigeria a particularly compelling destination. Through our brief but lively catching-up, it became clear that it was time for another interview: Tess had moved into less charted terrain for her novel-writing and diplomacy in addition to her other creative work. Before long, it was determined that I would visit Nigeria, then travel to Eau Claire, Wisconsin to finally meet Tess in person. First I would meet her homeland; then I would meet Tess in her home. The journey to this interview was not just over years, but through experiences I had yet to imagine.

I talked with Tess over two days, July 2-3, 2008 in her beautiful home on a tree-covered hill outside the small city of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Through our conversation, the recurring theme that emerged was the connectedness of people, actions and systems and our seemingly dulled awareness of such connections. Much of our discussion focused on Nigeria and the deep-seeded problems there. Perhaps the most striking realization, as we continued to grapple with ideas together, is that Nigeria and the United States share marked similarities, despite vast disparities in infrastructure and governance. Now that many months have passed, the historic presidency of Barack Obama has infused many Americans with new hope despite an unfailingly contentious Congress. As the U. S. struggles to recover from a severe economic recession and high unemployment, our dialogue seems more prescient

The First Step

Becky: You know it's been [more than six] years since our first interview?

Tess: And it's just like yesterday.

B: I know, I know. And I wanted to thank you for inviting me to your home to do this one. It's very nice to sit across from you and get to talk with you.

T: Yeah. It's very thoughtful of you to actually have sustained the interest you had then and, you know, to make this kind of leap. It's a leap. (Laughter)

B: Thanks. I appreciate that.

T: A number of scholars, you know, have come here to interview me. It humanizes the whole process. It's not just an academic exercise anymore. I get to know the person. I get to feel the person. And in a way, too, it even colors the kind of response that comes out of the interaction, because you get something much more genuine, you know. It's a conversation. When you are conversing with someone that is hundreds of miles away, you don't know the person. You don't even know what you can say.

B: Right. Right.

T: Uh huh. So it inhibits [the dialogue] a bit because you stay a little cagey about things, but here you are (laughter) this is what I'm about, this is who I am, so...

B: Although even in our first interview you were just very warm and very open. I had never really interviewed someone over the phone before, you know, so that was a strange experience, but um, it ended up not being strange if that makes sense.

T: Oh well, thank you, thank you.

B: So, the last time I interviewed you, you had just found out about the Ford

Foundation Grant. I wondered if you would talk a little bit about how that experience was for you.

T: It was exhilarating. The opportunity really opened a whole new world, a whole new insight, and brought me face to face with the people, the subjects. And it moved it beyond, it transcended the academic, you know, academia, and became a life experience. And even put me in a situation of advocacy and, perhaps, activism, if I may say so, because you now feel it. It's palpable. When you meet these people who are displaced women; young women, you know, girls, and boys, you know, the youths and the degree of helplessness and surprisingly not hopelessness. Because there's that resilience you find in Africa. You go into their environment, places, you know, like this forest [referring to the trees outside her window]. It's the thick, it used to be the thickest of the rainforests in Nigeria. Then you find that the trees are just naked. They're dead. Gone. Died from pollution, the burning, the flaring of gas 24-7 for so many, many decades. And nobody's doing anything about it. And these are farmers and fishermen and women. The water is polluted. The fishes, sometimes you find just dead on the surface and they're picking such things from the swamps or the water. And to find that these people don't have industry, the only industry they can raise is oil. They have no control over it. It's very, very rarely do they get hired by the transnational oil companies, who out of their own fear of sabotage from those within, would even prefer to hire people from outside the regions. So they lose from all sides.

And of course, you know it's like you have water-water everywhere, but you have no water to drink. [The rivers, lakes and streams] are not consumable. And then the land is shriveled because more and more everyday, they lose it. The government is not protecting them; the government is in alliance [with the transnational corporations]. And unfortunately, too, even the traditional rulers who are supposed to be there to protect them are in collusion with the government and the transnational forces, so it's a very, very savvy kind of conspiracy against the poor. And then the empty gas pumps, the oil stations, because [of] the scarcity of oil in the land where they are drilling, what? Nigeria now has risen to maybe the fourth oil-producing nation?

B: Yes.

T: Supplying to [the U.S.]. And yet the people there we are complaining on the phone because of what we have to pay here for a gallon of gas. We don't even make any connection with those who are displaced, whose lives... It's like their bowels are suctioned, you know, are siphoned out to feed our need. So...it pushed me into a new level of consciousness. And I ended up writing a play from it. As it turned out they loved the play when I sent it with my report. And I got a call from the program officer: "Oh, this is so good, and so thorough, and quite inspiring. Would you like to produce this play?" I said, "Sure." They said, "Where?" I said, "Well, it would be appropriate for the people [of Nigeria], instead of me to be talking about and still denying them that voice. Let's take it back to them and let them speak for themselves."

The Ford Foundation through the international educational agency awarded me another grant of $43,000 and so I did a collaborative project with the University of Calabar. Took the production to Calabar, worked with students, the Nigerian Theatre Guild, and we actually got people from the communities. You know, these are not literate people. So, the masses were involved. And so some of the songs, for example, in the production, came from them. And because it was from their own experience...they simply just colored it to reflect certain things I would never have known just looking at it from the outside. We toured Delta state. The songs and some of the market scenes and mob scenes were adapted to suit the particular environment cultural environment we were in. We didn't just go to theaters; we actually had them in, say, the King's palace or somewhere that you know, open theater. And the community was involved they didn't have to pay for it. So, it's just like a festival you know, the kinds of spectacular events that they are used to through festivals. It was a very, very, rewarding experience.

Moving Through Critical Engagement

B: Well, it sounds like it was a true collaboration, which is why theatre is so valuable. So, were there any responses that were critical, critical because you are critiquing certain aspects of the government, of the transnational corporations, of chiefs, at times?

T: Okay, I'll say when I was doing the research I had to interview not just the people; the subjects, impacted by the experience but I needed to also hear from the other side, from the government officials and even from the

transnational oil companies. Of course, a lot of them, American oil companies like Chevron, Mobile, Texaco, the English/Royal Dutch Company, Shell were very cagey about what they said to me. And one thing I heard over and over again from the few who agreed to even respond to me or to answer, said that it's not their fault. They have done what the agreement okays, they fulfilled their own part of the bargain, you know whatever was agreed on at the top level. "So why? Why are they blaming us? I mean, they should ask the government." That's what I kept hearing. This particular line I inserted it in the play itself verbatim. This guy well, I wouldn't name the oil company. (laughter) I actually flew with him and he was going on an assignment in the delta. The only way I could have interviewed him was if I took the flight.

B: (laughter) Crafty

T: And he was very he said, "Don't quote me." And the chief she said he would have thought that the chiefs would protect the interests of their people. But that there's so much individual, individualism he didn't put it that way. People are fending for their own interests. And then he said, "Life is cheap in Africa." He kept saying that. "Life is cheap in Africa." So that line stuck out. And so in the play...

B: I remember that line.

T: [From] *What Mama Said* [as well as] *Then She Said It*! Atlantic in the play, of course, is a representation of that constituency. Atlantic that has been a friend and a foe to Africa. Atlantic has been sucking the blood and soul of Africa. Atlantic that is the conveyor belt between Africa and the Americas. And you know up till now, how many bones of Africans have got lost in the Atlantic, you know, never made it? You know, all that were dumped in the middle passage. And it's also through the Atlantic that all that oil gets siphoned like their blood being sucked away from the bowels of the land and from the bowels of the people. So it's this mixed blessing and mixed you know, very ambivalent state of existence. Yes, you need it to be the channel out into the other world, but at the same time it opens up the very bowels, the womb of Africa of Nigeria and the land to be emptied into the sea. And so it's like the mouth of the Atlantic. Where do you stop it? It's a

very large mouth. It's vast.

B: Something that I've noticed particularly in the two plays you mentioned, *Then She Said It!* and *What Mama Said* but in other plays too it feels like your own relationship with Nigeria is ambivalent. And I mean that in the sense that I feel this need to celebrate and support and love Nigeria, but then there's also this feeling of "Get up," you know. "Do something." And it's kind of painful.

T: It is. It is.

B: And after visiting there, it you know, it gives me pause right now just thinking about it. How do you deal with that?

T: Well, that's the restlessness. That's the agitation that one feels within. Let me put it very crudely. It's like you have a beloved one that is capable of so many things, has such great potential. But you find that this beloved person is so self-destructive, on a suicide mission. Nigeria has been on a suicide path and you think every moment it's going to collapse, it's about to, really, take the plunge. But it also has such resilience. And somehow even when it is just at the precipice the verge of that collapse. It's really the resilience of the masses, and they're so forgiving. They have such a large heart. It's like they're being stretched to the very limit and even the littlest beneficial anything, it's a miraculous intervention that enables them to endure. And they have inexhaustible hope, immeasurable. And so that also, in a way... I identify with them, because I feel their pain in that way in that not distant way, because I have been there. And I am not away from there. I am still there, even though I am not physically walking and living in that space. But it is even more painful when you are outside, but there's something, there is another body that inhabits your soul and that lives within your soul and you are in conversation within your soul with this beloved that is in pain. And so it's helplessness. You know it pushes you to a point of anger, you know? So it's a constant struggle.

I used to go to Nigeria every year sometimes twice a year. I was so passionately in love. Would they call it patriotism? I don't know what that is, in that sense, because sometimes these words become so bastardized.

And people just bandy words without really meaning what they say. But there was something, it's like that [Nigeria] was really my life force driving me. And when I work I pound the Earth because I have Nigeria in me, I have Africa in me. And I live it and I wear it and I breathe it. You know, Africa is not there some space somewhere, Nigeria is not some space somewhere. It's me. I'm the embodiment of it. So, you know, just like people will say, "Oh, you left long-ago almost twenty years ago, you left." I never left Nigeria. I never left Africa. If I did leave, Africa didn't leave me. Nigeria didn't leave me. They're in me. I have never left. So, the fact that I crossed the Atlantic to take a journey doesn't mean that I'm no longer what I am or who I am. I've grown bigger, larger in terms of my ways of seeing things and perspective. It just makes it, you know, my world is larger than it was and I see the world from a much bigger prism. So, I also see the possibilities and how, if only we could put our act together.

And it's not that Nigeria doesn't have the capability. They have the manpower. Think of the immense talents that are scattered all over the world. In this small city Eau Claire with all the surrounding towns around it, maybe 100,000, you have at Luther Hospital, between Luther and the Marsh field Clinic you have about eight Nigerian [physician] specialists. Multiply that all over. People work diligently, who know quality and they exude it. And yet, you go home, where you call home. The light is not there you just experienced it. You can't get a steady supply of electricity. Even the cleanliness, you know. People have given up. It doesn't seem as if anything matters anymore. And so that causes so much frustration, and the ambivalence. Look at this place that I love... And it's getting progressively more painful, because it didn't used to be that way. The Nigeria I left to travel out in 1989, it's not the Nigeria I go into now. Like Owerri, where we lived, or Ife University of Ife. Beautiful! Beautiful! You felt like you were walking into paradise. Everything worked. It may not be perfect, but you know, it was striving towards perfection. Owerri was a very clean, serene city. I went to Owerri, that time we were doing the play in 2001, June, and were touring. And I was disgusted. I made up my mind. I won't go to Owerri anymore. I went even to where we used to live. I couldn't recognize where I lived. Where I had planted all these roses. I had different colors of roses all kinds of flowers, you know, in the yard. They cut them up. I couldn't recognize the place. It's just that the frustration comes from one's

realization that people are not even striving anymore.

Keep trying. Like Shakara's mother, Omesete, says to her in *Shakara: Dance Hall Queen*. "Try. Try. That is my anthem. The anthem I have learned from life." You know, when you try, you are striving to better, to improve, to perfect. And what may be perfect this moment, perfection is not a fixed quantity. What may be perfect today, is for today's circumstance, not for tomorrow, because other challenges, other imperatives intervene and then you have to find a new form strive for a new form of perfection to deal with the problems of tomorrow. But it just seems as if our people have lost the capacity even to dream of perfection, and to strive for perfection. And so anything goes. "Oh, well, you know, that's the way it is. It's the Nigerian way." Nonsense! What is the Nigerian way? I've known Nigeria to be so much better and higher than it is now. The same society to be so much more sane. Now sanity is lost. And then you say, "Well, okay. It's the era, it's a lunatic state." Well, people can cure lunacy. And they do have the cure to the lunacy, if only they commit to curing it. It's not an impossible situation.

Ghana, eh next door. In the seventies, Ghana was a dusty, small state just a big rot. Nigeria is decaying now. The kind of situation Ghana was in at the time and Ghana didn't have the resources that Nigeria has. In the seventies when we had "Ghana must go" (see notes) I'm sure you saw those bags in Nigeria (laughter). Ghana, at that time, was really down on her knees, but something happened. Leadership. And it was bloody, but it was a bloody sweep that wasn't a flash in the pan. There was a sustained effort to strive to clean up, to strive to reinvent hope. And it didn't take one day, it didn't take two days, it took sustained effort. So even after Rawlingss left as military president it just seems like, you know, the momentum is there and the cities and government that have succeeded, have continued to strive to improve on that or at least maintain that. But in our own cases we go one step forward, tens steps backwards, and...

B: And a lot of that is leadership.

T: Well, yeah the leadership. And, you know, we can't always also just blame the leadership. We have to take responsibility, you know, for the, the *(long pause)* rot. Yeah, because if the government, the president is not going

to come to your yard to tell you to come and like I put out the garbage this morning, okay. It's an effort. I have to remember that today is the day I have to take out the garbage. Normally, my husband takes out the garbage. He is not here. He has his own chores in the house that he has to do. But he's not here; I have to do it. You have to make a deliberate effort to keep the household going. The cleanliness is a value that you have that you have to strive. And it becomes part of the daily commitment that you do. Not just make money and you are making money and sitting in dirt and living in dirt. So, you can't blame the government for thewell, to some extent, yes, because sometimes you find that even when they take out the garbage [they] heap them somewhere. There are no town council vehicles to come and haul them away. So the thing becomes a health hazard in that place. The truth is that the blame can be shared. People should demand more from and expect more from themselves and their government as well. It's like in any relationship. It's not a one-way traffic. Love. It's a two-way traffic that each one has a part to play. And if you don't exert your own part of it your own responsibility, you don't function. You just let go. Then everything just falls apart. So, it's a love affair between two entities that don't trust each other that don't expect much of the other.

Moving Through (Mis)Understanding

B: Something I noticed while I was [in Nigeria]...it felt like people who were part of the upper class, but not necessarily in leadership, really just looked down on the poor people in a huge way, and, you know, almost as if they were just dirt.

T: And that's why those who are down, you find that desperation to get to that goal. So, okay, I need to do anything, anything to become like that. Because, you know, the moral ground on which the people stood and walked and lived by, it's all gone. So now it's all material. Materialism. I'm somebody because I have this Mercedes Benz. I'm somebody because I have this mansion, and then I strut, you know? And with such bravado.

B: That's exactly what I was getting at. Sometimes we would see people living in conditions that just looked terrible, but they would still have a cell phone. You know what I mean? There is this striving toward materialism.

It made me think of [the United States]. And it made me think I see us as entirely materialistic and that it's a kind of soullessness. And that's the direction that it feels like...

T: Now, you are right on target. You are feeling the barometer. (laughter) You're reading the social, economic, cultural barometer to the very highest level.

B: But it's worse there.

T: It is, because when you are imitating it's just like people aping what they are not, what is not their own. You know, oh well, yeah once you have these material things, and you surround yourself with them, that's the end of our problem. No, it's the beginning of the problem. And they're throwing away so much. They're throwing away their soul and feeding the body. Let's put it that way. I don't want to use the biblical statement what does it pay a man to lose his soul, you know but our people don't even seem to have confidence in themselves anymore. Or in what they have, or in what they were. The culture the culture has been so demonized that people don't even want to be part of it. In order to show that they have arrived, that they are now part of this you know, what has been marketed. Westernization. America, Americanism, and Americanization. You find, you know, the youths, trying to speak American. And I'm looking at them, what are you trying to say?

Some of my friends, or my age mates during that period I was there for the production of this play [in 2001], and these were women of my generation and I was staying with a very, very close friend of mine. And these women came, and you know there was this thing about money. There's nothing else you hear from them, other than how much they paid for this, how much they bought this the shoe, the lace. But that wasn't even the most aggravating part of it. It was the fact that they were shocked that I was the professor, a professor from America that their friend had been talking about. What shocked them that I don't speak American. *(laughter)* They were making every effort, I was speaking our language to them, because they're all from the same neighborhood. And there were you know two of them, in particular, were very determined not to respond in our language and wanted to respond in some fake, phony, Americanized accent. So, at some point I

had to debunk this thing. [They asked me] "Are you really sure you've been in America." I said, well, what's the problem. "Well, I was expecting you to be very American. I was expecting you to be just Western." And I said, but why would I be? Why should I be? "Well, you know, a professor in an American university and you don't speak American?" But I don't have to lose my accent and want to imitate and ape. Maybe there's even a resistance within me to retain what I am. Because I'm comfortable with who I am. In fact, I had my usual wax prints, or batik [clothes]. That's what I was wearing. I said look, this is what I wear in America. I don't have to go and wear frock and jeans. I don't like them.

B: And the students in Nigeria that we saw they looked just like American students.

T: Yes. And they will tell you about Jayzee and Beyonce. They know everything that's going on MTV. The whole [discussion] about dislocation; cultural dislocation and the impact of globalization, you don't have to leave your space physical space, to become displaced and dislocated. They are dislocated. Forget about the youths, because the CNN is in Nigeria. Okay, and all these cable channels they can watch. And it's hip, you know? Yeah. It's fashionable to be like those and they make every effort to be that way.

I know Chris Waters was very brutal in [her] criticism of the girls in [my play] *Shakara Dance Hall Queen* speaking Jamaican patois. [She] said "They are in Africa why are they" I say, that's a very ignorant, a most ignorant critic who is not aware of what is going on in Africa at the moment. Because the people at home don't have to leave Africa to even know *more* about what is going on here [in America]. And they live that experience the TV. America is in their bedrooms. It's in their living rooms. It's every where in their schools. And you find that the patois, for example, you hear, with Reggae? Bob Marley the kids can tell you about Shabba Ranks and all these Jamaican artists. And you see them in the streets speaking patois. They imitate. They actually go and practice how to talk like that. So it's nothing [like the] static mythologized idea that people had before. And Chris Waters saying, "Oh, Africa is *this*." It's not even an image of Africa of twenty years ago. It's a new African Africa that is like a satellite of America.

B: That's true of all cultures, I think. I mean, probably ten years ago I remember reading an article about Japanese students who loved African American culture and would dress in hip-hop garb, talk, and would literally use makeup to make their faces look like they were African American. So perhaps Chris Waters doesn't know what's going on.

T: No, she doesn't. You know, I've never been so moved to respond to a critic than I did with Chris Waters. It's okay. The word doesn't belong to me. That's what publishing is all about. It becomes public. You know, you are in conversation. Once it's out there, the play is not mine. The word there is not mine anymore it's being shared. You are interacting with the word and in conversation with me, as a critic. But when you become an assassin, you know? Constructive criticism is acceptable because I can learn from it. But assassination? When you assassinate the work and, you know, really demonize not because you know what you're talking about, but because you've already made up certain...you have framed some point of reference. You expect it has to be this way. You are not thinking of the dynamic changes going on and the fact that we are constantly recreating ourselves, recreating our world, recreating scenarios, recreating even the mechanisms the forms of expression [that] imitate life as it is now.

B: That makes me think of talking about the culture being demonized and the traditional culture, something that I saw while I was there, a lot, are the signs that say "No cult meetings here," or "Cults are damaging"propaganda.

T: No, no, no. I think you are reading that out of context.

B: Really?

T: Cultism has become the bane of Nigerian universities because they go into these fraternities, sororities and again that's an imitation of what goes on in America and it becomes a forum for violence and, you know, like gangsterism. Guns. It's really yes. That's the equivalent use for here. So they have "Black Cats," "The Sea Dogs," they have all kinds. And the regional concept that they adopted from America and places out in the west has become really bastardized. So the cults...they have clashes. And nowadays, they're able some of them get guns.

B: I had a very different impression, partly because of a sign that I saw when we were at Ife that said something about human sacrifice in connection to the cult, and it just felt so propaganda-oriented. I must have misread that to mean it seemed like it was demonizing traditional beliefs.

T: It's really an aberration.

B: Okay, well thank you because that concerned me a lot. Because some of the traditional beliefs we visited the Sacred Forest and the shrine to the River Goddess near Ife and other sites like that, that I thought were so beautiful and so well, I feel like no matter what a person believes, we're all connected and that those belief systems, to me, uplift the idea that we're all connected *(see notes)*.

Moving to Connection; Demystifying Sameness

T: Let me just add to that. The destruction of the faith in *us*, and the reinvention of these faiths we put on now, that we use as some kind of guard, ammo, okay, weaponry. Where faith becomes a kind of weapon that we use not to shield but to wound one another. So and then each one is labeled. I'm a Christian. I'm a Muslim. Without seeing the unity of the meaning, the core, of what we profess: the unseen, the power of the unseen. And there's a core meaning that is shared. You know, it doesn't matter what we call it. But that awareness that there's something else bigger than just the physical or some kind of realm of existence, bigger than just what we can see. Some force. A vital force beyond what we can even express and call it. And so we have different names and we have different ways of approaching it and different ways of appreciating it. And so that's what, in my mind, manifests as different religions but this crusade for sameness, to achieve sameness. If you are not like me, if you're not doing it the way I am, then yours is inferior, yours is unacceptable. It's just like the way we market freedom ah, I'm going to some dangerous territory now. Trying to avoid certain things! But like the whole concept of democracy and freedom what is your freedom? [It] ends where mine begins. But we don't see that, because the way you perceive the world, what you consider democracy in your own space doesn't mean we have to do it that way.

B: Exactly.

T: It doesn't have to be. When I think, say, about the rural village that I grew up in, the Ibo world. Democracy lived. Democracy thrived. Democracy is the life force that governs that rules their world. So it wasn't in the same kind of way that it's being done in the West, because here everything is scripted, you know. The people [in the village] they are not confused about what they do. They know what they are doing. There's a system there [in Ibo land]. So the fact that it's not being codified the way we codify everything here and, you know, with all kinds of taxonomies, doesn't mean that they don't [have democracy]. But we fail to see the meaning that is shared in what we do and what is done elsewhere. So we have to go on this crusade. We have to bring them to our own level. They have to be like us the same thing with religion. And there is this fanatical drive in us to go and make them *be* like us. If they are not then they have to be taught a lesson. The same thing is going on in the political level. Look at the mess we're in, in Iraq and the Middle East. Well, the Middle East is an invention.

B: It seems like what you're talking about applies to capitalism too. And that makes me think of your plays *Riot in Heaven* and *No Vacancy*, which feel more like a critique of capitalism and American politics. I mean they critique other things too, but...

T: Well, unfortunately, America is an empire, although it will never come out to say that. All of America's actions now just prove it more and more.

B: We're the colonizers.

T: Yes. So, it's happening everywhere, but America is the embodiment of it in these times. And it's like a cancer, a pandemic that's growing all over the world.

B: What do you think it's going to take to change that?

T: Well, it has to start from here, you know, because it's so powerful, the pulse if there's a major change from within. Because this place I love it, I'm American too and I've been for how many years. But I also see it's not the same degree, it's not in the same kind of way, but the same rot I see and decadence. The slow decay and the loss of confidence and the loss of hope

even of hope and the loss of morals you find elsewhere in Nigeria and Africa. It's also happening here. It's like a society that is dying from within. The soul is dying from inside. America, no other country can come and attack it and conquer it. No. The attack is coming from within not, "it's going to." It's already here. Because we're looking out there you know, America sneezes [and] the world catches fever and Africa in particular. To measure or to assess it based on just what is happening within the country itself, is like one-tenth of what it is. The gravity is so much more. It's grave, of grave consequence for many in Africa, the Caribbean and other parts of the world.

B: It's like the tip of the iceberg.

T: Yes.

B: Something you said made me think that part of our sickness is our excess. And it's a really strange sort of a mirror image, to me, of Nigeria, because Nigeria it doesn't have the excess in the same way. But maybe it's the absence of that excess.

T: Well, the excess those who have, really have it and those who don't have, really don't. And so that is what is energizing the desperation.

B: It's imbalance.

T: Yeah, the imbalance, the huge imbalance. And the middle class don't know whether there's a middle class anymore it's wiped out. The same thing here, too, so the middle is almost hollow. And then there're so many down there who are trying to take a leap through that hollow space into that top because that's all they see.

Moving From Theory to Practice

B: I was thinking about your position as the Department"the U.S. State Department Public Diplomacy Specialist and Speaker for India." And I'm wondering, how did that come about, and then how does that relate to all of the work that you've done in Nigeria, as well?

T: Okay, let me just explain a little bit about the U.S. State Department the

title, the way you read it. It's not a title that is special for me or to [just] me, in that sense. The U.S. State Department actually until I got appointed to that program I didn't know about it. I wasn't aware of it. It's called the Public Diplomacy Speaker Program, okay? It's one of those cultural initiatives for intercultural relationships and friendship and communication done through the academy. And of course as you know, no time more in the history of this country has that become so important than now with the enmities created all over the place. So I think what the State Department does is to have select influential writers, artists, professionals who can descend on the world as cultural envoys. They embody so to speak American values, to go and be in another country interacting with the communities, winning friends for America. So we're winning friends, sharing and [showing] the human side, you know, the human face of America. So it's not the government officials talking between governments. It's now ordinary citizens like me who have certain talents, who have certain contributions that can be shared with the people. So India, for example, they get to see that human face of America and Americans that the TV doesn't show them. So, by having me go on such a mission and appointed for a given period, it was an eye opener. It was an epiphanic moment for me in my career as a writer and as one who is not just interested, but very passionate about youths, about the masses, about the poor, about women. And I came face to face with them. And it's like just a continuum from Africa to the Americas, here. I also happen to be married to a Jamaican and I'm very familiar with the Caribbean. And they [Africa, the Caribbean, India, etc.] could well have been all in the same space. Okay, so I saw that echo. I felt it. It was a very intense program. I was a guest of the U.S. State Government and had diplomatic vehicles and personnel from the American Center take me around everywhere as soon as I arrived in New Delhi. Everything was already arranged, you know, nice hotel and the officials from the U.S. Embassy or cultural center were there, high-level officials, to meet me. I spoke at the International Center, New Delhi.

We actually hit the ground running because the program was intense. I was on an international conference at the Indian National School of Drama yeah and I had to go give an inaugural address and keynote addresses. Actually I did that in how many places? I did seven of those. And I did readings from my work. And I was scheduled for press conferences. And I was made to go to a number of universities in New Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta. I was in the East, West and North of India. So I traveled extensively.

Sometimes I couldn't tell where I was because I might be in one place for two days and everywhere I had officials with me, program officers, and cultural liaison officers. Oh, how they fell in love with me and I fell in love with them. The students and the...in fact, because of the energy, you know, that came out of it, I've established some lasting friendships. They wanted me to come back and we're going to do *Shakara* in BombayMumbai. The American Cultural Center had proposed to have it done with two of the universities the women university and the University of Mumbai, team up and then with me collaborating. So it's then they had this bad monsoon experience and I think there's been some

B: Some other problems.

T: Well, the budget constraints. The budget you know what's going on today. Budgets nowadays with education it's going to only one source. So, it's affecting those very programs.

B: How did that experience affect your teaching? So much has happened over the past five yeas or so, and I can feel that you're very passionate about so many of the experiences you've had, so how has that come out, do you think, in your teaching?

T: Let's say if I was theorizing before, I am practicing theory now. It's propelled me; it's moved me from the theorist to an activist let me put it that way. Because the people, the subjects are not fictional. The issues are not fictional. They are real. And I don't talk about them as some fictional characters. In India, for example, one of the places I was taken to it was arranged because [of] the cultural liaison officer, Janar. Janar is a precious jewel. *(laughter)* He's just a very good human being. He saw the manner in which people responded to my dramatic readings about *Shakara*, about the poor, the masses and their struggles and the fact that the, the connection with Nigeria. It's no different. It's just that it happened to be elsewhere. And they can sit down in one full room and have this dialogue. A market woman from Niger Delta who is displaced, who is struggling to put food on the table, and the Indian woman who is in some ghetto in Mumbai. They are both having very, very real struggles, you know, just managing, and they are separated.

But my play the manner in which I have used symbols to be able to allegorize, you know, to cut across and demolish all those walls that separate them, it just opens up a vast space, a limitless space for negotiating the ideas and creating these dialogues. [Janar] just decided to take me outside, beyond the normal schedule they have when they bring the celebrities and writers and all that. He felt that I was the kind of person who would really enjoy interacting with the people you know, the ordinary folks. So, he integrated it into my program. I went to visit women in the shelter. And it's one of the most powerful scenes that I will ever remember in my life. The wife of the vice chancellor of the university in Jodphur, was it Jodphur? I went to so many places, my dear, and I have to remember. And India's such a vast, I mean that's a continent by itself. *(laughter)* Even though it's a country. So, that place is being run by the wife of the vice; chancellor of the university and it's a shelter for women who didn't have male children and who were being abused or rejected by their husbands or their parents, you know for being they were just outcasts. Social outcasts. Economic outcasts. And especially with their not having male children. And they teach them to use their hands and teach them all kinds of handiwork. To weave, to sew, to do you know, just to keep them alive and a sense of purpose, and a sisterhood. And they are very poor, but they are so giving. Oh, it just made me feel so empowered, so empowered! And I saw me in them. Even though I am supposed to be living in a place like this (gestures to her home) and I'm supposed to be a professor. I didn't see any, anything separating me from them, in that I felt...I was enmeshed in their world and it was their world. It was the world I had been talking about, or searching for in my works. And I melted into them. And we wept together. We sat on the floor. There were no chairs to hold that kind of crowd because of all of them.

And I was just initially supposed to just talk with a few of them. But once I arrived and maybe it's because I've been a village girl. The village has never left me. So I became immersed. You can't pretend. You can't act this out. I felt like I knew them, and that I had seen them before, and that I have lived with them, and that I still live with them. So we shared. There wasn't anything separating me from them. And they embraced me. And we cried, you know, when they were sharing their own stories about how they were maltreated by their husbands, by their husbands' relatives, or even by their own families because they were liabilities to their own families. And I saw listening to them, I was listening to my own heart. I was listening and hearing

the echo of my own pain, and the echo of my own story. And so, it affected me forever. And then the young girls they saw me when I did dramatic readings. Many of them, they would surround me, I mean almost, you know *(smiling and making a pressing gesture)*. They would envelope me; they don't want me to go. I have pictures. They saw me as a model as a role model. A woman can be this, and a woman can do this, and that I was so simple and easy accessible. Because, you know, it's not the first time they've had people come on that program.

B: But there's [usually] distance.

T: Yes, and I wasn't talking to them. I was talking with them...and so the momentum that developed they wanted me back and they were actively campaigning for me. So it was based on that, two months after I came back there was a request for me to come back as a Cultural Envoy. So that would have been the next step to come and to stage *Shakara* in Mumbai. Well, that's still waiting.

Moving Through Vulnerability

B: Well, I hope it happens. You know, it's because you make yourself vulnerable. I feel like the only way for people to really fix any problemsit's to become vulnerable. That's what our leaders don't have. You know? And it's dangerous because when you

T: To take away the mask that we wear for the people to see the real face and the real human being behind the mask.

B: But that's what connects. And so, actually part of me thinks that it's a strategy that leaders and people of different classes whether it's conscious or not a strategy to separate. It's like self-preservation but it's also, it's really ugly because it completely threatens other people's humanity.

T: And it alienates. So there is distance, even when we are this close *(holding fingers millimeters apart)*. It's almost impermeable. So the Indian experience was awesome. And the same thing happened when I went to Sudan. Last year was an interesting year 2007. I was in India in the spring and then in Sudan in the fall. And it broke all the myths I've ever held or had

about Sudan. You know, all you hear about Sudan is Darfur, Darfur, Darfur. It's as if no life exists there. It's as if the people don't make love, and everyone *(cracks up with laughter)*. Did I say that?

B: *(authoritative voice)* That's goin' in the article!

T: Oh my god! Now I'm overruled. They do and they make plenty of it too. *(more laughter rancous)* In fact, in Khartoum Khartoum was much more peaceful to me than Nigeria, I'm telling you. Even at night I could, you know, walk and I didn't have the diplomatic security and all that. They put me up in the best hotel in the whole countrythe Rotana. And the UN and it was a hotel that was occupied by a lot of UN presence in the place, too. But life was reallyit was so different. People don't have money, okay, but there are people that are very rich as well. You know, this dichotomy. But what I saw that was so different was the dignity that people exuded even when they were materially poor. On their donkeys, you know. And the honesty, it's the society is one that is still holding on, strongly, to its values. And it's not corrupted yet; it's not giving up, it's not giving in. That's the main difference I saw between them and us in Nigeria. There was that dignity, you know, resilience that you saw in the people. And this hunger for what we don't even produce or what we don't have. There's a certain level of contentment not complacency but humility and dignity and nobility that I saw all around and I felt all around. And the play was a huge success and I worked with I am told that without me it couldn't have been the way it was.

B: Which play?

T: *Parables for a Season*. Maybe if you want when we're done you can go downstairs and get a picture of the poster. It was all over the city.

B: I willthat would be great. There are so many questions but I also know that I'm taking a lot of your time. So, I guess I'm not quite sure where to end. Maybe with just one question about how you feel your work has changed, and also maybe why you're moving toward the novel.

Moving Through Walls

T: Okay, how I feel or why I feel my work...well, they're both related. Like I said earlier until I went to Sudan my knowledge of Sudan whatever I knew was just as limited as what I see on TV and what everybody else sees on TV. And, you know, all the shriveled bodies and babies with bellies that look like gourds [or] calabashes on them, and so on and so forth. But that's Darfur. And I didn't I'm ashamed to say that until I went to Sudan, or started getting ready to go to Sudan, I didn't even realize how immensely large that country is. But a lot of it is also dessert. And it's so much larger than Nigeria. And it's oil producing. And the kind of aggressive growth development I saw in Khartoum. No TV showed me that nobody ever told me that there's anything else going on in Sudan apart from the hunger. And Darfur is just, you know like a segment of it. The bigger you know, three-quarters of the country there are people living, struggling. There are people who actually live life in those places. And they do their farming. And oh my favorite moment in Sudan, in Khartoum, was the day I saw where the blue Nile and the white Nile were meeting where they meet. It's so dramatic.

B: I bet.

T: Also, it made me, even it brought alive what we read in the history books about the Nubian civilization. Kush, you know. The beginning, and the Egyptian civilization is all linked with that. They were the original pharaohs, you know it's true. And even in Khartoum today you still have those unending interventions of the British and the separation. And now, you heard me talk earlier you know, just quick about the Middle East being an invention. Yeah. So when the West talks about Egypt, it's like Egypt is not in Africa. And Egypt is [the] heartland of Africa. And Egypt and Sudan were one. Sudan has the original Nubian civilization that is also in kinship with the Egyptian. It's really the cradle of that African civilization. And if we agree that, at least so far, that life began in Africa you know, our species. That's where it all started. And in a way we have forgotten it's like we have forgotten that very womb. It's an exhausted womb. It's been battered and almost forgotten. And we speak of it only as a museum piece and don't tend to even relate or see its seed.

So, I saw myself face to face, especially that moment when I met the

Nile the blue Nile and the white Nile meeting, right in the center of Khartoum. I was wowed. I was non plussed by it, to know that I was face-to-face with history. Two rivers flowing silently and each mixing and blending with the other, you know, quietly. Isn't that what Africa has done to the whole world culture, American culture, and other civilizations, and all that? And it's just doing that quietly and silently, but no one seems to notice. Or doesn't even give it credit. It was later when I also started seeing the signs, you know, like some buildings Sudan is Egyptian. Because for a long time up till 1890 or so they were about the same. Until they became more and more separated by colonial exigencies of colonial impasse and colonial interests that pulled one apart from the other. So I was living history and witness to history and it was an eye-opening experience. So now, Sudan is, for me, not Darfur alone. Darfur is like you have a province in America that iso kay, like New Orleans. When [hurricane Katrina] happened. But New Orleans is not America. You know, it is part of America. But it's not the whole of America. There is so much more to that. That's what happened to me.

And so when you ask how has my work changed or why? These kinds of travels, you know, these kinds of interactions that take me beyond the borders of comfort, that take me beyond the borders of knowledge assumed or preconceived, and imposed, in some cases. Knowledge and awareness open up the walls that have limited my scope of seeing and of perceiving the world. And just like that loud mouth of the Atlantic sea open up just a vast, an infinite space for me to see and feel and appreciate the world. And the immense volume of knowledge, you cannot really quantify. Can you measure the water in the Atlantic Ocean? No. So, for me to say, "This is how much it has affected me," or "This is how I can quantify it," is really like asking me to tell you the amount, the volume of water in the Atlantic. I cannot. And the mineral contents of it, I don't because there are so many aspects. But what I can say in summary, is it's the journeys. It's not just journeying to a country, you're journeying to people. You're journeying into new ways of seeing, new sights, new ears, new eyes, new mouths, new voices, you know. And all this the confluence my world has grown immensely, and it's growing.

B: It's like you're expanding.

T: Yes. I feel so much larger I feel larger and better for it. And then, why am I venturing beyond my zone of comfort in drama into novel? It's all a continuation. I'm venturing into the novel as a next step. Knowing the it's not that I'm losing interest or faith in theatre and drama. But unless I am able to go on the screen, you know, the people, my audience, is no longer just Nigeria. My audience is not just in Africa. My audience is global. The issues I'm dealing with are global. The subjects are global; they are real: the poor woman in Jamaica, the poor woman in Nigeria, the poor woman in India, the poor woman in Sudan. And all around, the youth that is struggling to find his or her voice in any of these in America, in the inner city Chica go and Nigeria. They may not be the same, you know, the actual manifestation, but in terms of the experience there're so many similarities.

And so, theat reeven though it's so powerful, it brings about immediacy of response and interaction. There are walls around it that inhibit, that limit the message from going beyond. So, the novel the novel can travel farther than the play, in the sense that it is so portable. You know, it's individualized, you put it in the hands, just like this your tape recorder, or this cell phone, you know, or your camera. You just, you know, you pick it up. Apart from the midwife the publisher, between us, me and that global audience it can travel on its own without much encumbrance. But the drama doesn't have the drama is bogged down a little with, you know, those encumbrances. Let me put it that way. So it takes, apart from every other thing, going through what the novelist goes through to have to write and then have it published, there is still the fact that you are still waiting for another level of personnel to actually act it out. To actually put it in the eyes you know, to present it before people.

B: And then you have to have people.

T: Yes, so it looks like I'm at the point where the message cannot wait. And I want to be able I'm hungry for that communication that forum to be able to break through those walls to reach as many in that vast audience. That is the global audience Because I see the space, the global space, as my space. And the theatre, the theatre space for us to dramatize and exchange and share the dialogue and all the issues that pertain to us, as global citizens. As people who have so much in common. But sometimes we don't even realize how so connected we are. And we're separated by so much. The novel gives me an

edge, in that sense, and simplifies a little bit. Ideally, where I would like to go is on screen to go into documentary production. That's my ultimate goal, because then, we'll be speaking that opens up. The screen is so much closer to the folklore, you know, oral tradition.

B: That's so interesting. Yeah, I can see that.

T: The visual and the oral. You can see how powerful it is, because even when people cannot read, you know, they can still see and relate. That immediacy. So it breaks all the other walls. So, whereas the novel you still assume that the individual can read. The next stage, which is the screen, breaks through breaks all that walls and all those assumptions. You can witness, you can dialogue, you can empathize, you can identify, you can you know it's direct. It's visual. So, in that sense, it's like a magnification of what I am doing on stage that is limited and the walls around the stage kind of keep within. It bursts open on screen. But the novel is like an intermediate stage, so it's a movement a movement, a progression, a journey to an ultimate goal. Perhaps what is keeping from that goal now, what is separating me from that goal at the present is financial, financial requirements, constraints. If I had the money and, you know, just all the resources I needed. That's where I want to be.

B: I bet you'll get there.

T: Thank you.

Postscript

Initially, when I realized that Tess had moved more resolutely toward the novel, I'll admit I felt uneasy about the change. As a staunch believer in the power of live theatre, I did not feel betrayed, exactly, but somewhat wistful, like a good friend had moved far away. Interestingly, I discovered during my visit to Nigeria that the entire country has relinquished ties to traditional theatre, opting for an easier, safer, and more affordable form of entertainment: home video. Theatre is still produced, primarily in academic environments and at festivals, but its impact has been greatly diminished. The lack of live theatrical activity in Nigeria was and still is alarming to me,

and yet the reasons for this movement toward video are largely practical. People do not want to risk going out after dark in urban, or even rural areas. Theatre is expensive for companies to produce and for audiences to see. Video tends to be accessible, cheap and family-friendly. Along the same lines, the novel is a form that can "travel" more easily so it seems that necessity really is the mother of invention in this case. Although I would like to remain rigidly loyal to theatre, it isn't quite practical particularly when one's vision is to influence social change. As an artist with social change on her agenda, Tess realizes that the power of novels and the films that often emerge from them is in their accessibility to a wider expanse of people.

Sometimes it can be too easy to remain exactly where we are. But interacting with someone as passionate and resourceful as Tess Onwueme is a healthy reminder of the deeper wisdom of change. While I remain ambivalent about many things the U. S. impact on cultures across the globe, the seeming demise of theatre in favor of other entertainment forms, the reasons for Nigeria's movement away from traditional theatrical forms I realize that one form does not necessarily thrive to the detriment of all other forms. It doesn't have to be either, or. Perhaps what is most valuable about seeing another's wisdom in action is the way in which it allows us to process our own experiences, our own individual journeys. Tess is a striking reminder that journeys are not measured by the straightness or the narrowness of the path, but by moments of impact.

Acknowledgment

The seminar, sponsored by the University System of Georgia was entitled, "Artistic Expressions of Culture: The Literary, Visual and Performing Arts of Nigeria" and occurred during May 2008. I was very generously funded through a University System of Georgia Chancellor's Award, as well as several grants and sponsorships at Columbus State University: Center for International Education Grant, Faculty Development Grant, College of Arts & Letters, and the Department of Theatre. In addition to funding the faculty development seminar to Nigeria, I am particularly grateful to have received a Faculty Development Grant from Columbus State University to travel to Wisconsin for the interview.

Notes

- Atlantic is the transnational oil executive in Then She Said It!; in another version of the same story, What Mama Said, the transnational oil executive is called Oceana.
- During my three weeks traveling throughout southern Nigeria I experienced numerous electrical outages. The longest and most frequent were in Lagos, but everywhere we went it was a constant reminder of just one of many infrastructural problems that plague the country. Since my return, I have been in regular contact with a graduate student I met in Ile-Ife at Obefemi Awolowo University, who is currently writing a dissertation on Tess's plays. Funminiyi emails me when she can, but is often hindered by long-lasting outages, sometimes extending into weeks and months. Rather than using her generator to power a computer, she needs it to keep food cold and provide for other necessities.
- Ile-Ife, home of Obafemi Awolowo University, is still lovely and a place where I felt most at home. While the university has struggled with limited funding and governmental support, the academic and cultural environment there continues to thrive.
- Tess is referring to large woven plastic bags that were used by Ghanian immigrants forced to pack their belongings and quickly leave Nigeria in the early 1980s. Estrada, Ivelisse. "Ghana Must Go." Radcliffe Quarterly. Spring 2004. *Http://www.radcliffe.edu/about/quarterly/sp04_ghana.aspx.*
- Another huge problem with Nigeria's infrastructure is that it lacks systematic trash removal, which means that huge piles of trash lie festering in the sun and rain, often near water sources that pollute the environment still further. One state that seems to have tackled this problem better than others is Cross River State, the capital of which is Calabar, the cleanest city we visited.
- A conversation I had with a member of the upper class who lives in Lagos really brought this home to me. He recounted an incident that morning when another driver struck his SUV. The man who hit his car had no insurance, so he took retribution by hitting the man with a stick. For the driver who told me the story this seemed perfectly reasonable and fair.
- Nollywood, as Nigeria's burgeoning film and video industry is called, is now the world's third largest film entertainment industry after Hollywood in the United States and Bollywood in Mumbai, India. I have written about this elsewhere in the most recent edition of Theatre Symposium, Volume 19, University of Alabama Press, 2011. Nollywood does have its "celebrity-crazed" quality much like Hollywood, and the overall quality of most of the films and home videos produced in Nigeria is still highly

questionable. Yet it is clearly a viable industry in Nigeria, and one that is not likely to diminish anytime soon.

Works Cited

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Interview with Ama Ata Aidoo

Tiziana Morosetti

Recorded in Accra on August the 2nd 2005

T.M. First of all I would like to ask you if you have any work currently being prepared.

A.A.A. I am. You see, there is a superstition, that writers have, which says that you shouldn't talk about any work in progress until it is really at the publisher's, otherwise you never finish it. What I can actually tell you is that I have two novels in progress. One is the older one, and I've been talking about it for the last ten years and it is not going to be finished until... twenty years seem more likely; I will tell you about that. The second one, which is more recent, I won't tell you anything about that apart that I am working on it. The first one has to do with lefthandedness.

T.M. It's fine. So you are actually writing novels but not theatre.

A.A.A. In fact, it is amazing you are asking me this, because the person who just came to interview me, who is a professor of theatre from the U.S., also was interested of course in my plays, and she asked me the same question. I don't know why, or better I know why, you know the notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy, you know you tell yourself, "I am not going to do this", and I said myself I wasn't going to write any more plays, after *Anowa;* because I saw *Anowa* as a book, before I saw a production, and somehow I let that traumatize me so much, that I told myself that unless I am working with a drama group, I am not going to write a play. And of course I have not been working with a drama group, so I haven't written any more plays.

T.M. Interesting. Actually, I am working on theatre, but also on its connection with politics, you know, Marxism, and I am interested in both Ghanaian and Nigerian theatre...

A.A.A. Ok, but I want to interview you now. Was it you, Tiziana, that a long

time ago sent me questions, wasn't it you?

T.M. No, I asked for an interview but I didn't send any questions.

A.A.A. So you asked for an interview a long time ago. And what happened then?

T.M. Well, at first I wasn't sure I was coming to Ghana, and then you were meant to be at Brown, and me too, but in a different moment, and then you went to South Africa, so we then decided to do it in Ghana anyway...

A.A.A. Ok. Because, you know, I know that we have corresponded before. But why are you interested in African theatre? Is that your field, also?

T.M. Yes, I would say so...

A.A.A. And you teach it also?

T.M. No, I am just a student.

A.A.A. African women or African literature?

T.M. African literature.

[A brief interruption to answer to a call]

T.M. So, I would like to ask you now... You said you haven't been working with a drama group, and that is the reason for which you haven't been involved in theatre since your last play. Is that because you didn't have the chance to meet a satisfying drama group, or because of any problem linked with Ghanaian theatre, like maybe not many group to work with?

A.A.A. No, I think because I've been busy doing other things. You know, since *Dilemma of a Ghost* there have always been one drama group or another here, but theatre hasn't had as vibrant a life as one wanted. There have always been groups, but the fact that I am not working with a group means that I have not actively looked for a group.

T.M. And have you ever thought of having your plays performed at Brown, for example?

A.A.A. Actually, Professor Perkins has been actively wanting me to write a play which could be performed by the group of the African department, but I haven't done it. So, again it is not the fault of Brown, but my fault.

T.M. I see. Coming more directly to my dissertation, I was also able to interview the Nigerian playwright Femi Osofisan during a conference on African drama at Leeds, in 2004. In this occasion he pointed out to how Nigerian theatre seems to be dying because of the diffusion of certain technologies like DVD, video-recorders etc., that might affect the popularity of the genre. Do you think Ghanaian theatre might experience the same problem?

A.A.A. Yes, but I think that Ghanaian theatre has had problems of its own. In Nigeria they have been doing these incredible videos, and I can imagine that any actor that is around has worked into one of these videos, because it's more instant money. And to a certain extent the same can be said of the situation in Ghana, but not that much. I think that theatre in Ghana has had a harder life, all of its own, and certainly not complicated by filming. Lack of supports, like everything else, has its role; there must be some form of investments into theatre and if the investment is not available, then theatre, like any other enterprise, does not prosper.

T.M. Yes. You know, I am also trying to compare Ghanaian theatre with the Nigerian, above all for what concerns the capacity of theatre to communicate something to the people...

A.A.A. Let me say that everywhere else, the moment you have a vibrant activity like films, television, videogames, these are more instant; the people become lazier, you don't have to go anywhere, if you have a video-machine, like a video-recorder, you sit in your sitting room, push the cassette and there you go; with theatre, you are required to make a little more effort, and either walk there or get there in a car, or something.

T.M. So, do you believe that, as after Independence theatre had a role in

presenting certain values and addressing political issues and themes, now it could still have a role in directing people in their daily life?

A.A.A. Definitely. Definitely. I mean, I think that theatre, because it is immediate, if it is really good, its impact is very forceful, much more than any other form of writing; because if it's a poem and unless it is presented to you orally, you are going to read it and work it out by yourself, and the same applies to a short story, the same applies to a novel. But with theatre, it is vibrant, it is immediate, and if it is really good it is powerful, so you get the message immediately, you have to deal with it, and I genuinely think that it's a pity that theatre is having such a hard time; but I would also like to make it clear to myself that other forms, some more local forms of theatre are very much alive in this country, I mean, like the concert party in the local languages, they pack the National Theatre; it's very funny it's rather crude in terms of presentation, because you can stand in front of the microphone and speak, but there are audiences roaring with fun and they go. So, I think to a certain extent, it's theatre in English, you know, it's the more formal, more classical theatre that is having the harder time.

T.M. I have always been struck by the mix in African theatre of "local" themes or forms and "classical" or English influences. Do you think that in this sense, if we mix the literary with the popular, it would be possible in African literature to talk about "low" popular literature or "high" literary forms, and in a few words, of the division sometimes traced in Western countries, according to which forms like science fiction are considered "secondary" types of literature?

A.A.A. I think that if one is being honest, those differences definitely exist. What I have been talking about is the type of play, theatre, literature, that some of us produce, it could be considered quote unquote as 'high literature'. I mean, the theatre that I was describing in the local languages, using microphones and stuff, ribaldry, you know, is almost like the old concert party; so you can't say whether it's low or what, but popular definitely, and there is a more formal theatre and literature and a more popular literature and theatre, so it has to do more with terms, terminology, than with high or low.

T.M. I see. It's just that in criticism of course there are so many of these terms used more and more, and...

A.A.A. It makes one nervous, simply because one doesn't want even to be that honest, and say 'I'm writing high literature and there's no literature, and my plays are high', you know what I mean. Terms like 'formal' and 'popular', you know, are a lot easier to handle, they travel better.

T.M. And how do you deal with the fact that of course, moving to Brown, you may take different ways to consider literature, different ways to study literature, in fact? Have you had to adjust yourself?

A.A.A. No, what I mean is that in any case, when one is teaching literature, the kind of literature I am presenting at Brown, could be just presented in the form of a formal bag. I am teaching African women's novels to undergraduate students in the U.S., and I am almost nervous to confess that I have been dealing with African women writers who have produced quote unquote formal novels, nothing informal, and with a bunch like that you teach them almost the way I would teach literature students in Accra. There's a slight difference, you know that you are presenting the material to a group of American students, with a certain kind of orientation, so the only adjustment is in terms of a sensitivity to their background, I mean the fact that for instance they do not know much about Africa, or African women, and therefore, when you are talking to them, you have to do that kind of background, which you may not have to do for every literary course, you need to give your students, you need to share some background information. But you may not necessarily have to go into certain details with Ghanaian students, even if you are teaching in South Africa, as you would with American. But the difference is not too big, I don't want to make it sound like you have to change your whole orientation when you speak to a bunch of American students.

T.M. So you have been teaching in South Africa as well?

A.A.A. No, I was in South Africa but I haven't taught in South Africa, I taught briefly in East Africa, but that was a long time ago.

T.M. And here in Ghana?

A.A.A. Yes, I taught for nearly ten years, at the University of Cape Coast, and before that a little in Legon.

T.M. So you don't see any other difference with American students apart from the fact that they have a different background.

A.A.A. Well, they don't know much, and some of them do because, you know, they have been nearly in every class, and there were one or two people who were for instance in Africa the summer before, and when some get to holiday they take some travel or summer course, but they don't know too much. There are also some who don't know anything at all, but that, I must confess, that's not every day. But there's one big difference, and that difference is that students in Africa, certainly in Ghana, are aware both you, the professor, and the students are aware that they are the lucky ones who go through because for every student who gets through to, say, the University of Ghana, there must at least be a hundred, I used to say ten but now I know better, it must be at least, to be honest, at least forty other students who would have qualified for the place and couldn't get it. They may not have scored excellent grades like the students we are talking to, but of course lots of students did at school excellently, because every one who gets into this university, certainly the three big ones, is one excellent student out of ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and got a place. So they are much more focused on the work, because the average American student, if they didn't come to the particular college or to the university where you are teaching, then could have gone one or two hundred others. So there is nothing special about them being in your class, and that is very different. Although, even in the United States, there are differences in the students' orientation from college to college, I've taught in places where the students clearly think they are doing you a favour by taking your class, and I've taught to colleges where the students genuinely appreciate the fact that they can take your class, so it's not too uniform.

T.M. Are you still in contact with other authors here in Ghana, like ben Abdallah, for instance?

A.A.A. Oh yes.

T.M. And have you organized conferences together, say?

A.A.A. No, unfortunately we haven't been organizing conferences and when they have, for example in Legon, about literature and stuff, much of the time I haven't been able to attend. You know there is going to be a conference on theatre...

T.M. Yes, on the 27th... but unfortunately I have to leave earlier.

A.A.A. Oh, what a pity, it's going to be interesting. I am missing it again because I have to leave for Brown, this is really terrible, I feel bad, because I thought I would stay for it, but otherwise I would get to Brown too late. But in this case, for instance, everybody who would be interested in theatre would be there. So it's not that there are not conferences here, and you know that the African Literature Association in America is coming to have its conference here next year. I think it is in April or something. And also, sometimes, when other people invite us, we also meet, especially other African writers, and you know I have this foundation for women writers, a foundation to build a retreat for women writers. You know about it? Mbaasem? It's right here. And one of our board members is Amma Darko who is a Ghanaian novelist, a woman, and we get together here and there. And recently we were invited to be in a jury for selecting children's authors and illustrators to represent Africa for that Lindgren you know, that Norwegian (Swedish?) writer of children's stories... So a group of us met, Kofi Anyidoho. . . and these are some of the ways with which we are staying in touch.

T.M. And as one of the most famous Ghanaian authors...

A.A.A. Well, I don't know about 'the most famous'...

T.M. At least in the Western countries, I mean...

A.A.A. I am flattered.

T.M. So, do you believe that the situation has changed much for the African authors, since after independence you had to cope with certain themes and needs...

A.A.A. It's become worse, you know the economy has become shaky, everything has become more difficult for writers. What I mean is that on personal levels we still don't have any support, we still have to cope with the life everybody else is living, it's become difficult, and as writers we need space, a lot more space, uncompromised space and time, and when the economy is difficult the way it's been, then we are in trouble, and the publishing atmosphere has not been very kind. Publishers, whether they are foreign, I mean the traditional publishers from England, were only interested in publishing educational books, that they can sell through the Ministry of Education or the Educational Department, otherwise they are not interested; and the local publishers have adopted the same attitude, so that is a pity.

T.M. Compared to others, like Nigeria, Ghana is usually seen as one of the most stable countries in Africa, so...

A.A.A. Let me touch wood for Ghana!

T.M. Of course! So, I was expecting the state to be of some help for the arts and the artists...

A.A.A. The state... are you sure you and Cathy Perkins didn't compare notes before you came! The state supports the Commission of Culture, with some stipend, but then it is not enough for it to trickle down to support the individual writer to do anything. We don't have support.

T.M. In a certain sense this might be good, as in this case you are not, say, linked to any limits.

A.A.A. You mean that some people, with their own support, will come with their own... I know what you mean, censorship. But you see, in Italy, in Germany, especially in the U.S. there are places the writers can go and write and still not compromise their way; we don't have anything here and it's a pity.

T.M. I also find that sometimes there is a sort of different censorship in Italy, I mean that you're so certainly free to publish, and there are so many publishers around, than when you enter a bookshop it is so full of books that no one is important, no one counts for real and there is no one who could say that he or she is being definitely important... you know, the censorship of anonimity, in a way.

A.A.A. I understand what you mean. Now, in order to get published in the world, you have to be male and white and all that, or you can be white and female, . . . and photogenic. And the physical thing, which has nothing to do with the kind of book that you are capable of writing, becomes so strong that it's almost like 'if you are not photogenic, I'm sorry'. And that for Italy and Germany, and so on. I read a hilarious piece from is he an American writer? about when his agent or publishers asked for a photo shoot, he wanted a picture of him for publicity, white male, the thing is so hilarious! They wanted a certain hair cut, they wanted a certain kind of shirt, and by the time he had tried to deal with that, they are taking so many pictures and none was good enough. That has also come to haunt writers and they want you as young as possible, you know, and everybody says 'this is for young writers and this is for young writing' and people forget that there are older people who were not writing and who may want to start. Take... what's his name? You know there is a Portuguese writer the man who wrote *Blindness* and he didn't start writing until he was in his fifties or something, but if he had to deal with that nobody would ever have published him. So, when it's like 'if you are not young, forget it', but you know we writers are such... no writer stops writing, we are still going on.

T.M. So, the only little thing I was observing in my PhD thesis is that democracy doesn't necessarily mean anything, or rather, it means, of course, for the writer, as he or she can obtain support, but there are more limits to come, more narrow spaces to fulfil, so writing is always in the wrong position, in a way.

A.A.A. I know, writers are always in the wrong position. But luckily, we also as writers have, you know, nothing matters much but writing, so out of these rather discouraging factors we still go on writing, isn't that funny?

T.M. So, do you believe (this is quite a stupid question), but do you believe...

A.A.A. Am I free not to answer it? You say it's stupid, so, am I free not to answer it?

T.M. Of course you are. Do you believe that 'war on terror' has changed anything for the writer? Because you see, we in the western countries feel that the world has changed, but when I arrived here I just realized that maybe it's not like this for everyone, a poor family is a poor family, anyway, and Ghana has its own political and economic problems, so it might be still a Eurocentric idea the fact to believe that the world has changed only for one single event in the States. So, do you think that event might affect Africa as well?

A.A.A. But of course. I think that in fact, as Africans, or as members of the so-called Third World, everything affects us even worse, because we have very little to cushion us against the horrors of the world, as we are supposed to live in a global village, but the impact of the global village is disasters, your taxi driver is going to pay for the rise of petrol, and as petrol raises the temperature of the economy how are we escaping? It's not a day-to-day thing, but we are part of it, and have you forgotten that they attacked Kenya and Tanzania first, even before New York?

T.M. No-one noticed. Not in Italy, at least, and not at a popular level.

A.A.A. Exactly, no-one noticed because it was Africans who died, five hundred people, does anybody talk about it? No way!

T.M. For a couple of days, maybe.

A.A.A. But there were so many people who lost relatives, husbands, wives, children, but they are nothing, or lost eyes, lost limbs, and I don't even think that anybody gave them compensation. So no, no, no, we are not escaping anything.

T.M. So, do you think an African writer should be more international in his

or her discourse, or should one still focus on the single African problems?

A.A.A. Well, I think that African writers, in any case, because of colonialism, have always discoursed on international problems. We always have. So it wouldn't be anything new. I think it's not local and international. It may not be obvious, but an awareness of the bigger world is always there.

T.M. Of course, English is a big key in this sense.

A.A.A. Exactly. There's also the whole business of language.

T.M. So that's why you chose English

A.A.A. No, no, no! I didn't choose English at all! It was the language of education and socialization. At least with me, and I think most African writers who write in English or French, we were colonized! We were actively negotiated out of our first languages. It didn't happen to me, but earlier on here and in other places, when you are primary school, or secondary school, and you forget yourself and you speak your first language in the hearing of teachers, they can make you wear something on your dress saying, 'I'm stupid' or 'I'm dumb'. Our first languages I couldn't have chosen I just automatically started writing in English because that's the language I find expression in. You can write Fante, but so far I have not got enough energy or courage to write anything substantial in Fante. We didn't choose it, we've had to use it. It's only by chance we've realized that English, for instance, gets you further. It's an international language, not just an international language, it's the international language. But that's not why I started writing in it. It's just serendipity. You were compelled to write in this language and then this language turns out to be an international language. But I for one am so clear about that, that I didn't choose to write in English, not at all.

T.M. I was asking because there are authors, like Ngugi wa Thiong'o of course, who debate about the opportunity of choosing an African language, but at this point with globalization it is perhaps a suicide in some sense to write in a local language, as you can't cope with problems that aren't just linked with Africa.

A.A.A. Yes, and you see, I've told myself that not writing at all is the chaos, is the violence, is the tragedy. Not writing at all. Writing in a foreign language is a minor tragedy. If English is what I have to write in, I will regret the fact that I'm not writing in Fante, but I'll write.

T.M. I agree. In your writing did you have any sources of inspiration amogst Western authors, or African authors?

A.A.A. Well, I wasn't aware of my sources of inspiration. I was aware of the kind of literature I like. I'm humble enough to say that somebody like William Shakespeare was an inspiration, because you cannot be a playwright , you cannot write plays, after you've studied Shakespeare and not say you were inspired by Shakespeare. That is a lie that is not necessary. It's a sort of self-delusion. I did Shakespeare and I know I must have been inspired by William Shakespeare. I know that I was inspired by Chinua Achebe, because until I came across Achebe's *Things Fall Apart,* although I had already written, I was already writing poems and short stories, it was like a bigger affirmation that literature is not only produced by all these English people. Here is an African who has written a book which we're asked to study in the English Department. It wasn't a prescribed text, but at least it was recommended reading. It was enormously good for me as a writer. So I know definitely I was inspired by Achebe too. And there were countless others who inspired me. For instance, one of the novels that I've read which has stayed with me, I don't know to what extent it's inspired me, but I know that if you asked me to name the kind of novel I've enjoyed, and which I've recently re-read, was, talking about Italy, di Lampedusa. I read him a long time ago, and just last year, or two years ago, I re-read The Leopard. It may not have been direct inspiration, but, you know, yes, you've been inspired. Have you read *The Leopard?* You must! I know that you are a Socialist, and therefore it is full of bourgeois...

T.M. Do I have the face of a Socialist?

A.A.A. You told me you are interested. You know, it's full of bourgeois... but he's good. He writes well.

T.M. Actually, di Lampedusa is a major writer in Italian curricula, but I have to admit I never read him.
A.A.A. But he's good!

T.M. Did you ever happen to see your plays performed here in Africa?

A.A.A. All over. I've seen my plays performed here. Every now and then in Ghana they do it. It's only two years ago, that was so brilliant, a production by ben Abdallah at the National Theatre. It's a pity. . . the National Theatre gives you this space, the play had to fold up. . . there was not money to send the production to other places in Ghana, and I still feel very bad about that. I've seen my plays performed in Kenya, I know they've been produced over and over in places in Nigeria. I've seen a production in the US. Stuff like that.

T.M. And do you usually like the way they perform it on stage?

A.A.A. Yes. Every production is different. In fact, one of the best productions I've seen of A now a in fact, the best I didn't even see the whole production, I just saw a scene the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor did a celebration of my work as a playwright, and so they brought just one movement, one act, from a full production which somebody else had done at the University of Miami in Oxford, Ohio. Brilliant. The girl was an incredible actor, and I suddenly realized, only an African-American could do that with that character. It was eye-opening. It makes you feel kind of humble. So, yes, I've seen these plays' productions. And in fact, the only production which, if I'd seen it, would have bothered me, I didn't see. I was told about it. It was somewhere in Nigeria, I don't want to mention the place, because I don't want it published, but somebody told me that in this production you know Anowa? they made Anowa pregnant. If you make Anowa pregnant, it ruins the whole play. I thought that was ridiculous. The person who told me said, 'Are you not angry?', and I said, 'No, I can't be angry', because when you write anything, you can't go attacking people for the way they interpret your work. They don't even have to bother with your work. If we think of all the funny interpretations that producers and directors give to other writers' work, what are you going to do? Crazy. . . if you are William Shakespeare, and somebody did *The Tempest,* and made Prospero a

woman, which is a production my daughter saw, Prospero is a woman, Caliban is some white woman, Miranda is some man. . . the whole thing is messed up. What do you do? Even if Shakespeare were alive. . . that is the great people. You do a play, and you are happy that people produce it. It also really shows the flexibility of your own work. If they think that they can do all these funny things to the play, and still have people come to see it and say they enjoyed it, you should call that great yourself. People interpret things, and you have to leave them. You can't go round fighting people. In any case, if you wanted only your interpretation of the work to stand, you shouldn't have published it in the first place.

T.M. Going back to the fact that you called me a Socialist

A.A.A. I don't mind being called a Socialist, by the way. I am! I would want to think that I'm a Socialist, and everybody says, 'Well, don't you know that the Berlin Wall ' and I say, 'What about the Berlin Wall? Does that change anything?'

T.M. So do you believe that Marxism still has a meaning, both here in Africa and outside? At least as a way of describing things? Analyzing reality?

A.A.A. The fact that the whole world has shifted, the focus of the whole world has shifted away from social justice, is not the fault of Marxism. Those of us who've called ourselves Marxists and Socialists it's like Christianity: you look at the lives of the priests and you say 'Eh?', and the you say Christianity is bad? No. I genuinely think that in terms of an understanding of human life, to understand society, I think we have not lived it well. You look at the Soviet Union, you look at the way Marxism or Socialism have been handled, and you're not surprised that people are sceptical. But I also think that all this move away from Marxist philosophy and Marxism is a cop-out. It's so much easier to believe in market forces. It's like a more vicious form of the European laissez-faire. Leave everything to its market value. How are you going to do that without people getting hurt? People who do not control the market. People don't set the prices so that they are at the receiving end all the time of this market thing

T.M. I was struck, reading African literature, by the fact that most African

authors are very committed and politically-oriented.

A.A.A. Because it's our situation in history.

T.M. Do you believe that if the market becomes a real force here, through democracy or globalization or whatever, do you believe that the African writer might become, as we have authors in Western countries, an individual doing just things for himself?

T.M. Of course, of course! That trend is already coming out in some younger writers. You can't blame them. They have to survive, because it doesn't pay not to be individualistic, and because the authors, really, I must confess, also want the freedom of not being committed. Commitment is work, and I don't begrudge them, anybody, the right to say, 'I don't want to deal with that.' The only thing is that it's a pity the space is shrinking and therefore those of us who believe that we can only be committed are being kind of negotiated out. If a publisher thinks, 'Oh, you are too concerned about this and too concerned about that', they will not publish your work. I don't have a problem with writers, younger or older, who don't want to deal with Africa's predicament or the Third World, but my point is that there should be room enough for all of us. For the different kinds of writers that we want to read. The market dictates, and if the market decides that your work cannot sell several millions, then the publishers are not interested. That is the pity.

T.M. So, would you say that in this sense theatre might be an exception, because theatre you can do without a publisher?

A.A.A. Yes. You can do theatre, get people to come and see your play. You may not be able to live by it, but at least you can have a certain sense of fulfilment, because you know your work is touching people.

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WATPAJO

WEST AFRICAN THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS JOURNAL

June 2011

Printed by:
DORCAMOS TOPS PUBLISHERS LTD.