

TOWARDS AN AUTHENTIC AFRICAN THEATRE

K. E. Agovi

This paper deals with the emergence of the literary theater in Africa and its aspiration towards a sense of an ultimate African identity. Since the literature on this subject is extensive,¹ we will attempt no more than a historical survey of significant developments. Although this issue has often inspired passionate disagreement, and various viewpoints have been expressed, there seems to be an emerging consensus.

There are those who have predicted its achievement "when the conceptual and creative approaches [in the literary theater can] cast off the mental constraints imposed by acquired Euro-American plays."² There are others who wish to see it realized as a "synthesis" of African and European ideas and experience. This idea has often implied an awareness of the fact that "the creative personality in any place and period of human history has always been enriched by experiences external to his native creative-cultural heritage."³ And as Keita Fodeba has also pointed out, "a spectacle is authentic (in the theater) when it recreates faithfully the most characteristic aspects of life which it wants to show on stage."⁴

For the purpose of this article, the concept of an "authentic" African theater may be defined as that form of creativity in the theater which is rooted in the composite tenor of African experience, embodying a relationship of relevance between the past and present, and which in effect reflects principles of African performance aesthetics. It employs a communication strategy which focuses on an *integrated* perception of visual, kinetic, aural, and auditory elements addressed simultaneously to the faculties of man.⁵ In this way, it is seen to embrace no "arbitrary separation of the dramatic, lyric and choreographic forms."⁶ This definition assumes Africa and her cultural traditions as the *ultimate* reality and denies the centrality of Euro-America and its theater traditions. It seeks to entrench notions of "rootedness," "continuity," and "relevance" as cardinal considerations in its range of vision. The efforts to achieve these objectives in the African theater will be the central pre-occupation of this paper.

There is now common agreement that the literary theater in Africa originated in the contradictions of the colonial situation and that this has since saddled it with special and peculiar problems. One such peculiar problem has been the question of its allegiance and loyalty to

Africa. From its inception, since the colonial period, literary theater has had problems in promoting a sense of total allegiance to Africa, her people and their traditions. In the case of colonial Ghana and Nigeria, the emergence of the literary theater was carefully nurtured by a network of modern alien institutions. Social clubs, literary clubs, newspapers, educational and church establishments effectively collaborated to cultivate the literary theater so that it was in line with the theater traditions of Europe.⁷ Cantatas, biblical plays, Empire Day "patriotic pageants," and Shakespeare became the theatrical fare. This scenario, with various modifications, took place in most parts of colonial Africa—whether the ruling power was British, French, Portuguese, Boer, or Spanish.⁸ Significantly, the "nurture" was also informed by the "imitation ideology," whose seminal ideas consisted of the view of colonialism as a benevolent and civilizing enterprise. It repudiated any originality or significance to African traditions, exhorting Africans to emulate the values, practices, and institutions of their colonial masters. These views were reinforced by the unprecedented social advances of the time: urbanization, education, trade and commerce, roads and transportation, and media innovations such as film, radio, and newspapers. All of these for the first time in the African environment introduced wonders which emphasized the necessity of European imitation. Accordingly, colonialism and the emergent literary theater functioned in partnership to further the objectives of this ideology of imitation.

However, these developments did not go unchallenged. In the course of the 1940s, incipient but powerful dissenting African voices emerged, at least on the colonial scene in West Africa. There were those who sought to modify the colonial theatrical fare by introducing either African costume, music or theme into standard productions. The concert party and the popular theater tradition in both Ghana and Nigeria emerged under these circumstances, rapidly giving way to productions that had African experience and indigenous performance values as their frame of reference.⁹ There were Africans such as Kobina Sekyi of *The Blinkards* fame who satirized the ideology of imitation and called for attention to be paid to African oral traditions.¹⁰ These efforts were complemented by such nationalist writers as Azikiwe, Casely Hayford, Attoh Ahuma, and J. B. Danquah who, by their intellectual fervor, sought to merge the incipient nationalism of the time with the assertion of the validity of African cultural traditions.¹¹ In the end, all these efforts culminated in a decisive will, among enlightened African opinion, to negate the colonial ideology of imitation. Subsequently, literary nationalism in the form of a greater concentration on African history, oral traditions, and folklore became central to African creative thought and expression.¹² By the end of the 1960s, these directions

had been consolidated in concepts such as "Negritude" and "African Personality," and in moves towards the establishment of national theater movements.¹³ Fundamental assumptions in these aspirations included cultural revivalism, the desire to create new artistic institutions, and a focus on making the African past relevant to contemporary experience. It also included a mandate that new states in Africa pursue culture as a political weapon or as an important consideration in African diplomacy.¹⁴ The immediate result, discernible in African creativity of the 1960s, was the inauguration of certain trends and tendencies in the literary theater.

A major trend was the belief among some of the early African playwrights that wherever it was found, the literary theater had a distinct *international* and *universal* character to it. The theater was regarded as an *international* arena for articulating universal human concerns, as is evident in the works of the Greeks and Elizabethan playwrights for example. There was therefore nothing wrong with working to bring up the young literary theater in Africa to this international arena and to stress its commitment to *universal* human values.

At its base line, this trend gave rise to quite a number of straightforward adaptations of European plays. Until his major achievement *Muntu*, Joe de Graft, for example, sought to establish this feature in the Ghanaian theater through the adaptation of Shakespeare's plays. In this tradition, *Hamlet* becomes *Hamile* while *Macbeth* comes out as *Mambo*, adaptations which consisted of retaining everything of Shakespeare in these plays except costume, props, setting, and background to suit local Ghanaian audiences.¹⁵ Another form of adaptation involved thematic transformations in which the African subject matter was the same as an existing classic in the European tradition. According to Wole Soyinka, this is derived from "inspirational models to be found in a lot of European literature, drama, as well very often in their style of production."¹⁶ J. P. Clark has argued that this can be explained in the sense that "there do occur areas of coincidence and correspondence in the way of living among several peoples separated by vast distances and time, and who apparently are of distinct cultures, practices and persuasions."¹⁷ In the early years of Efua Sutherland's experiment in the Ghanaian theater, she became convinced that "the historical, romantic, religious, and epic content of the rousing odes (of the Asfo Companies of Ghana) make them definitely exploitative for big drama along the lines of Greek tragedy."¹⁸ It was thus not surprising to find in her *Edufa* echoes of Euripides' *Alcestis*, while Soyinka's *The Bacchae of Euripides* "has very close parallels with the myths of (Yoruba) society."¹⁹ In the same way, Olan Rotimi's *The Gods Are Not to Blame* has been identified as "a sensitive re-casting of the classic drama, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*

in a Nigerian setting,"²⁰ while Zulu Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods* has been perceived in the tradition of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

In contrast, there were plays which sought to express their "international" character through a certain rootedness in European structural features. Plays such as *Song of a Goat*, *Ozidi*, *Anowa*, *The Masquerade*, and *Edufa* belong in this category. In most of these plays, there is a concern with Western features of form such as the unity of time, place, and character, including echoes of Greek choruses and conceptions of tragedy. K. Muhindi, for example, has pointed out that at a point in her career, Efua Sutherland had to "exorcise the double obsession with Shakespeare and Aristotle" that is easily perceived in *Edufa* in order for her to make "a resolute return to sources of traditional African theater."²¹

Paradoxically, however, all the plays cited above also reveal a profound concern with African oral traditions, modes of thought, and expression, including a heavy reliance in some of them on African performance ideas and values. Dapo Adelugba, for example, has spoken of Ola Totimi's indebtedness in *The Gods are Not to Blame* to "a good number of dances, songs, and dirges borrowed from our indigenous artistic repertoire and sensitively used within the milieu of modern drama."²² We witness in *Anowa* and *Song of A Goat* a profound probing and use of African language structures and modes of thought. In much the same way, *Ozidi*, *Anowa*, and *The Masquerade* seem to radiate with the energy and vitality of traditional narratives, as indeed their themes and actions are themselves drawn from the folktale tradition. Thus, in this phase of development, while one leg of the theater thrusts suspiciously into Europe, the other seems to balance it with a foothold in African oral traditions. The earlier problem of divided allegiance on a background of institutional development and indifference towards a home audience gave way to a conception of the African past as a centrifugal force. The African past became a "charter of expectations" which provided a common frame of reference for creative artists, writers, and cultural institutions. Fortunately, during this period, research knowledge on the African past was becoming easily accessible, and research journals and magazines which provided new insights to stimulate the minds and creativity of African writers increased. Barriers to shared knowledge on Africa lessened as oral tradition, social change, continuity and modernization became vital and unifying concepts of intellectual pursuit among writers, researchers, and Africanists. In the literary theater itself, however, there was no single attitude towards the African past. This came out in the increasing postures of ambivalence and ambiguity towards tradition evident in plays and productions. Ola Rotimi's historical plays, such as

Ovonranwen Nogbaisi and *Kurumi* depict a sympathetic perception of the problem of political leadership and statecraft in traditional society. Similarly, Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa* and J. P. Clark's *Song of A Goat* reveal tremendous pride and admiration for the resilience of African language structures. However, the actions and deeds attributed to their central characters speak of conflicts between individualism and the collective will, and attacks on fundamental notions of social responsibility as implied in African tradition. We witness the same conflict in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, in which the demand of collective salvation is subverted by individual considerations.²³ Indeed, as one critic has observed, "the art of mental dislocation. . . dominates the drama of Wole Soyinka, constituting for him a most significant innovation and a method which this dramatist, owing to his concern for realism in the theater, is the first to have employed successfully."²⁴

The fact is that the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a lot of innovation and experiment in the theater in a determined effort to address the problems of form. There were legitimate complaints, for example, about some of the plays that their forms were rigidly fixed and "only their subjects show their African source." Not only was the approach in some of them "coldly academic" but their style of play production was "very much that of the modern European theater."²⁵ It was such complaints which led to a wave of innovation and experimentation in the literary theater of the 1970s. In some cases, traditional performances were "re-fashioned" to meet the new sensibility of the times, and new ways of presenting "old" material dominated the stage. There were also direct recreations and abstractions of traditional ideas and concepts as a basis of stage performance.²⁶ Perhaps the most notable example of this trend took place in the Ghanaian theater with Efua Sutherland's *Marriage of Anansewa*, whose central design was based on the African folktale tradition.

In Ghana, the experiment to abstract the folktale tradition onto the modern stage attracted varying talents such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Asiedu Yirenkyi, and Martin Owusu, whose works in this context constitute a "modified recreation of well-known folktales."²⁷ However, it was Efua Sutherland who, in addition to accomplishing this feat, also carried consciousness of form that involved a recourse to African performance ideas and principles. Her unique experiment was known as "*anansegoro*" (spider plays). In an article titled "Venture Into Theater," in *Okyeame Literary Magazine*, Efua Sutherland articulated some of her primary concerns in this experiment. First was her concern to recapture the traditional idea of drama as "community experience," and second was the view of theater performance as a

composite art form in the sense of emphasizing the integration of dance, song, drumming, and spectacle in the theater.

Central to the two concepts is the need to involve the audience in the performance. Efua Sutherland felt that there was a lack of intimacy between actors and audience in the literary theater, occasioned by the African theater's total surrender to the European idea of distancing the audience from the actors. Such physical distancing also implied emotional distancing, which was alien to a true sense of African drama as a shared experience. She was also concerned about what Meki Nzewi described as "dry theater," that is, "drama of un-relieved dialogue and stage movement. . ."²⁸ Efua Sutherland's experiment in the theater was therefore aimed at overcoming these obstacles.

Her first recorded attempt took place in Adropong, outside Accra, on March 27, 1959. On hand were the Ghana Experimental Theater Players who decided to choose "a delightful open-air courtyard of an old building on the premises of the Adropong Training College" and compel it to take on "the atmosphere of a Ghanaian theater":

. . . screens of woven split bamboo formed the background and to the stage, representing the walls of a courtyard. Along the "walls" were laterite colored seats, three steps deep, where the CHORUS would sit. These seats were representative of traditional courtyard seats round the inner walls of a Ghanaian home. . . .²⁹

This sitting merged well with the crowd movement, processions, and the strong presence of song, drumming, and dance. In the performance itself, a flute player strolls on to the stage "playing snatches of folk lyrics that would be sung later during the interludes in the performance." He is soon joined by drummers who play

. . . an opening invitational sequence on their drums, and answering to their call, the CHORUS of men and women representing people gathering for a story session, made their appearances in friendly groups of twos and threes. Some shook hands in greeting each other across the stage in Ghanaian fashion. Some even shook hands in greeting with the audience nearest the wings!³⁰

Her point in the Adropong experiment was that given such an indigenous stage structure and a flowing atmosphere of spectacle, "the CHORUS in ANANSEGORO can draw the Theater Audience into participation."³¹ This was also the concern of Ola Rotimi, whose experiments in this context have been based on "the need to involve his

audience positively in his dramatic experience and to establish close intimacy between actors and audience."³² Thus in his well-researched article on Rotimi's contribution to a new form of African theater, Efik B. Uwatt examines Rotimi's various methods and approaches and concludes that

...Rotimi's adoption of the traditional open space performance to contemporary stage is both physical and conceptual. Physically, he has not only recaptured the audience-actor rapport which this theater formation enhances but he has also achieved simultaneity of different actions, after the manner of the traditional open space in which several actions are enacted simultaneously within the same acting space. Conceptually, Rotimi has adapted to the modern stage the traditional spatial concept of theater, not only as a physical acting space on stage, but also as an arena for metaphysical relationship with the cosmos. The presentation style which this theater formation enhances is made manifest in the use of symbolism and economy of stage iconography and decor. Thus with Rotimi's theatre-in-the-round performance, the foundations of the new form of African theater are laid in traditional "open" space stage...³³

It must, however, be pointed out that in spite of Efua Sutherland's achievement in "*anansegoro*" experiment, an achievement which included, as Michael Etherton points out, "a process to establish a modern African theater form on ancient traditional foundations,"³⁴ she only pointed to *possibilities* of liberating the African theater from its fixation in European forms; her experiment was not the hour of liberation itself. The person who has carried the promise in Efua Sutherland's initial experiment far enough to constitute a real African achievement in the literary theater is Mohammed Ben Abdallah, who seems to have dominated the Ghanaian theater since the 1980s. So far, he has two anthologies to his credit—*The Trial of Mallam Illya and Other Plays* and *The Fall of Kumbi and Other Plays*.

There is, first, the tendency in his plays to incorporate "such devices as music, movement, dance, mime, and costume, all concurring in a sort of central expression. If any of these other ingredients is removed from any of the plays, the play will cease to be drama."³⁵ Second, as we witness in both *The Verdict of the Cobra* and *The Witch of Mopti*, the action is conceived as a folktale and, particularly in *The Verdict*, the narrator becomes also the main protagonist of the action. The narrator-protagonist may choose to stand "outside or be part of the action of the story at will without breaking down barriers of

credibility. So integrated is this design in the play that, as we find in the folktale tradition itself, one cannot disengage the story from the narrator."³⁶ A third feature in both plays is that "while the narrative is going on, actors mime in movements depicting and concretizing the oral narration," and the total effect is that the plays "move beyond the dance and drama [in the sense that] we have an oral rendition of the story to satisfy the ear and a simultaneous demonstration and re-narration in visual symbolic movements to satisfy the eye."³⁷ Through these means, Abdallah achieves a greater integration of form and message that is directly inspired by African creative principles and values.

Yet another development, this time linguistic, is suggested in Abdallah's *The Witch of Mopti*. This is a historical legend in which two narrators relate to both the action and the audience in two separate languages—Akan and English. He employs the technique of simultaneous translation as the two narrators argue, debate, comment, or forewarn about an impending situation or action. This is certainly intended to enhance audience appreciation and involvement, but this deliberate bi-lingualism is also intended to raise the problem of the status of African languages in relation to European languages in the literary theater. One is aware that the language of the popular or concert party theater in West Africa is largely indigenous. We are told that the Ghana Experimental Theater Players under the direction Efuwa Sutherland chose the town of Akropong in order "to put to the highest test their first performance (of anansegoro) in Twi."³⁸ In the 1970s, I was privileged to witness in Ghana the stage productions of Duro Ladipo's *Oba Koso* and *Oba Moro* in Yoruba. And in the East African literary theater, we are told that Ebrahim Hussein's *Kinjeketile* was "written and first performed in Swahili,"³⁹ while Ngugi wa Thiong'o has experimented with Gikuyu in the Kenyan theater. Indeed, there are no more surprises in the use of African languages in the theater. Nevertheless, the effect of juxtaposing two separate and *unequal* languages and forcing them into a relationship of equality through the technique of simultaneous translation and mutual intelligibility is certainly calculated to produce a shock in an audience that has come to associate other people's language with its literary theater as a normal practice. In this way, Abdallah has anticipated the great language debate now taking place in literary circles in Africa. There is the feeling that in order to realize a sense of authenticity to contemporary African creativity, there is the need to do so in African languages. However, inherent in this debate is also a concern to develop African languages and raise them to a stature comparable to that of widely-used European languages. The idea is to rid our languages of a certain inferiority complex in relation to English or French, and the only way to do that is to accept making a conscious attempt to use African languages as the legitimate tools of creativity. It

is this concern which Abdallah only briefly articulates in *The Witch of Mopti*.

Another significant experiment in the quest for authenticity in the African literary theater may be seen in the improvisations attempted in the productions of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*. Athol Fugard, the playwright, and the actors—John Kani and Winston Ntshona—came together, and on the basis of a few sketchy ideas, gave form and meaning to the two plays through experimental improvisation and team-work. The situation where a playwright provides a sketched, thematic outline that is subsequently transformed into full-fledged theater by the actors on their own initiative is remarkably similar to processes found in the concert party theater in Ghana. In the concert party troupe, the script is originated collectively through improvisation until the final product is presented to the audience. This process is continued before the immediate audience, allowing the latter to exert a healthy influence on the performance.⁴⁰

In the South African example, improvisation is not carried before the live audience. Nevertheless, the end-result is the same. Improvisation in this context arises from a desire to communicate effectively with an audience whose collective problems and concerns are also the subject matter of the plays. In the specific case of South Africa, it was perhaps felt that "team-work" or "team-effort" was needed to confront a society divided by the collective problems of race and discrimination. The principle of team-work in Fugard's plays is significant, for it recalls the traditional notion that creativity is not necessarily always individual-centered or solely originated by the individual talent.⁴¹ In the traditional African theater, it enables creative artists, producers, directors, actors, and performers to find a "common voice" in their confrontation with sensitive issues. In *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, the "voice" that emerges is depersonalized, constituting a dispassionate narration of sensitive issues that threaten the South African Society. The actor-audience interaction and design in the plays assume a direct relationship in which mutual confidences are shared, and revelations acquire a seemingly unemotional proportions.

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Kenyan experiment of the Kamiriithu People's theater, the initiative is community-inspired, for there is a clear desire to mobilize a whole community to focus on the celebration of the heroic deeds of ordinary peasants in the liberation struggle of Kenya. It is a kind of "people's history"⁴² in the theater, in which historical reconstruction is seen from the point of view of "lesser humans." In this experiment, it is not so much the historical theme or the use of Gikuyu language that becomes important; it is rather, as already suggested, the mobilization of a whole community to undertake the task of using theater to express their own distinctive view of the history and

politics of the country in two major productions—*I Will Marry When I Want* and *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o describes how, with his own eyes, he saw "peasants, some of whom had never once been inside a theater in their lives, design and construct an open-air theater complete with a raised stage, roofed dressing-rooms and stores, and an auditorium with a seating capacity of more than two thousand persons," at the same time witnessing the spontaneous way in which "the whole project became a collective community effort with peasants and workers seizing more and more initiative in revising and adding to the script, in directing dance movements on the stage, and in the general organization,"⁴³ to the extent that "the play which was finally put on to a fee-paying audience on Sunday, October 2, 1977 was a far cry from tentative, awkward efforts originally put together. . ." by him and other writers.⁴⁴ In the end, playwright, actors and audience achieve such a unity of purpose that it raises the theater into new awareness of community experience:

. . . I felt one with the people. I shared their rediscovery of their collective strength and abilities, and in their joyous feeling that they could accomplish anything—even transform the whole village and their lives without a single Harambee of charity—and I could feel the way the actors were communicating their joyous sense of a new power to their audience who too went home with gladdened hearts.⁴⁵

Theater as a "community experience" therefore becomes the most important consideration in these experiments. From Efua Sutherland's *Anansewa*, through Athol Fugard's *Sizwe Banzi is Dead* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, there is a gradual consolidation of the view of theater as a community experience. The production of these plays has sought to experiment with communication strategies that will involve the audience and make them committed to the concerns being dramatized. All of this is accomplished without recourse to western assumptions of the theater. Whether the experience embodied recalls the past or a contemporary one, there is a consciousness that it is Africa-centered and that it is communicated on the basis of principles that are easily recognizable as African. In this sense, the drive towards an "authentic" African theater excludes foreign and alien considerations in the selection and ordering of principles which guide its sense of communication values and relevance. It takes into consideration an audience with whom it can share mutual trust and confidence even on the most sensitive issues in the society.

There is also no doubt that the literary theater, in its bid towards authenticity since the 1960s, has benefitted from and demonstrated a

close relationship with dominant ideas and ideological concerns from one decade to the other. From the colonial "ideology of imitation" to the contemporary assertions of "African identity" and cultural autonomy in the face of neocolonialism in Africa, the literary theater has responded with an increasing consciousness of a return to the past; it has made use of history, myths, legends, and oral tradition to provide a frame of reference for contemporary life. It has sought to establish a relationship of relevance between the past and the present in a movement that assumes that African voice and African concerns ought to be the starting point. Playwrights who have sought to "internationalize" the literary theater by encouraging a linkage with western "classics" have been made to realize that it is only by projecting legitimate African assumptions and values and appropriating Africa-centered communication strategies to do so that one can begin to talk about a world theater that is also relevant to Africa.

In this regard, the literary theater is firmly on course. What remains to be done is for it to "link up" with the popular party tradition. Both traditions have continually experienced "mutual borrowing and interaction"⁴⁶ since colonial times. They have benefitted from the same environment of ideas and values that has informed cultural nationalism in Africa. And over the years, one has witnessed a gradual development towards a common allegiance to African expressive traditions, including a firm commitment to African cultural ideas, values, and aspirations. In order, therefore, to consolidate meaningfully the drive to achieve a complete African identity in our theater, it is desirable to have this linkage so that one coherent tradition of modern theater in Africa can eventually emerge.

NOTES

¹Quite a number of the articles in *Drama and Theater in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1981), Ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi, deal with this subject matter.

²Meki Nzewi, "Music, Dance, Drama, and the Stage in Nigeria," in *Drama and Theater in Nigeria*, p. 437.

³*Ibid.*, p. 439.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁵This is discussed in K. E. Agovi, "The Aesthetics of Creative Communication in African Performance Situations," in *Research Review*, Volume 4, No. 1, 1988, pp. 1-9, and amplified in "The Philosophy of Communication in Traditional Ghanaian Society: The Literary and Dramatic Evidence," in *Research Review*, Volume 5, No. 2, 1989.

⁶Felix Morriseau-Leroy, "African National Theater," in *Okyeame*, Vol. 4, No. 1, December 1968, p. 92.

⁷This is the subject matter of K. E. Agovi's article "The Origin of Literary Theater in Colonial Ghana, 1920-1957," in *Research Review*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1990, pp. 1-22.

⁸See a survey of this in *Theater in Africa* (Ibadan University Press, 1978), Eds. Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele.

⁹This point is made in Eburn Clark, Hubert Ogunde: *The Making of Nigerian Theater* (Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 121-131; see also Biodun Jeyifo, *The Yoruba Popular Travelling Theater of Nigeria* (Lagos: Nigeria Magazine, 1984), pp. 9-30.

¹⁰Kofi Agovi, "The Origin of Literary Theater in Colonial Ghana," p. 15.

¹¹See S. K. B. Asante, *Pan-African Protest: West Africa and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis, 1934-1941* (London: Longman, 1977), p. 17.

¹²This is the subject of E. N. Obiechina's article "Cultural Nationalism in Modern African Literature," in *African Literature Today*, No. 1, 1968, pp. 24-35.

¹³So far, it was Ghana that took steps to launch a state-sponsored National Theater Movement in post-independence Africa, but the cultural nationalism on the continent gave rise to an atmosphere where writers, artists and researchers in all African countries were virtually operating under conditions similar to those assumed in Ghana's vision of a National Theater Movement.

¹⁴This was originally true of Ghana's diplomacy under Nkrumah, but it quickly spread throughout independent Africa and consolidated in FESTAC 1977. This was preceded, I believe, by UNESCO's attempts to get African member states to formulate their cultural policies in documentary form during the early part of the 1970s.

¹⁵See K. E. Agovi's article "Joe de Graft, 1924-1978," forthcoming in African and Caribbean Volume of *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* (Austin: University of Texas Press), Eds. Bernth Lindfors and Reinhard Sanders.

¹⁶James Gibbs, "Soyinka in Zimbabwe: A Question and Answer Session," in *The Literary Half-Yearly*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 2, July 1987, p. 69.

¹⁷Quoted from Albert Olu Ashaolu's article "J. P. Clark: His Significance as Dramatist," in *Theater in Africa*, p. 180.

¹⁸Efua Sutherland, "Venture into Theater," in *Okyeame*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1960, p. 48.

¹⁹Dapo Adelugba, "Wale Ogunyemi, Sulu Sofola and Ola Rotimi: Three Dramatists in Search of a Language," in *Theater in Africa*, p. 213.

²⁰James Gibbs, *Op. Cit.*, p. 72.

²¹K. Muhindi, "L'apport de Efua Theodora Sutherland à la dramaturgie contemporaine," in *Presence Africaine*, No. 133/134, 1985, p. 76.

²²Dapo Adelugba, *Op. Cit.*, p. 213.

²³Kofi Agovi, "Is There an African Vision of Tragedy in Contemporary African Theater?" in *Presence Africaine*, No. 133/134, 1985, p. 69.

²⁴Siga Asanga, "Theater and the Common Life: Innovations and Experiment in Soyinka's Theater," in *African Theater Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, April 1987, p. 4.

²⁵Demas Nwoko, "Search for a New African Theater," in *Drama and Theater in Nigeria*, pp. 471-472.

²⁶Discussed in K. E. Agovi, "The Ghana Dance Ensemble and the Contemporary Ghanaian Theater," in *Legon Observer*, Vol. XII, No. 9, p. 214.

²⁷K. E. Agovi, "New Directions in the Ghanaian Theater of the Eighties," an unpublished conference paper presented at the 10th International Conference on African Literature and the English Language (ICLAL), University of Calabar, Nigeria, 1st-5th May 1990.

²⁸Meki Nzewi, *Op. Cit.*, p. 433.

- ²⁹Efua Sutherland, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47; see also E. Ofori Akyea, "The Atwia-Ekumfi Kodzidan—an Experimental African Theater," in *Okyeame*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1968, p. 82.
- ³⁰Efua Sutherland, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.
- ³¹*Ibid.*, p. 48.
- ³²Efiok b. Uwatt, "Towards a New Form of African Theater: Theatre-in-the-Round Performance in Ola Rotimi's Drama," in *Literature and Black Aesthetics: Calabar Studies in African Literature*, No. 5 (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., Nigeria, 1990), p. 180.
- ³³*Ibid.*, p. 191.
- ³⁴Michael Etherton, *The Development of African Drama* (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1982), p. 194.
- ³⁵Dannabang Kuwabong, "From Play-writing to Play-making: Mohammed Ben Abdallah's Search for New Dramatic Forms," an unpublished paper presented at the Tenth International Conference on African Literature and the English Language, University of Calabar, Nigeria, May 1990, p. 6.
- ³⁶K. E. Agovi, "New Directions in the Ghanaian Theater," p. 16.
- ³⁷Dannabang Kuwabong, *Op. Cit.*, p. 8.
- ³⁸Efua Sutherland, "Venture into Theater," p. 47.
- ³⁹Brian Crow, *Studying Drama* (Essex: Longman, 1983), p. 62.
- ⁴⁰See Eburn Clark, "Hubert Ogunde," p. 121.
- ⁴¹K. E. Agovi, "Sharing Creativity: Group Performance of Nzema Ayabomo Maiden Songs," in *The Literary Griot: International Journal of Black Oral and Literary Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1989, p. 19.
- ⁴²The concept of "people's history" has been developed in Prof. Terence Roger's "Chingaira Makoni's Head: Myth, History and the Colonial Experience," Eighteenth Annual Hans Wolff Memorial Lecture, Bloomington, Indiana, African Studies Program, 1988, pp. 1-25.
- ⁴³Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Barrel of a Gun: Resistance to Repression in Neocolonial Kenya* (Michigan: Africa World Press, 1983), p. 42.
- ⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 43.
- ⁴⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
- ⁴⁶I share Biodun Jeyifo's articulate views on the same problem expressed in his article "Literary Drama and the Search for a Popular Theater in Nigeria," in *Drama and Theater in Nigeria*, pp. 411-421.