

models." In addition, while at Leeds, Soyinka came under the influence of the renowned romantic critic, G. Wilson Knight.

In their respective articles, the last two contributors, Dan Izevbaye and Adelugba concentrate their efforts on the latest and "popular" work of Soyinka, notably his 1983 long playing record, Unlimited Liability Company. This record was Soyinka's response to the decadence which characterized Shehu Shagari's infamous regime. Adelugba's critique of the record is enjoyable to read.

Before Our Very Eyes is a unique work on Soyinka for a variety of reasons. Although a lot has been written on Soyinka's works, the articles in this book are a refreshing and welcome addition. The strength of the book, however, lies in its descriptions and testimonies on Soyinka, the Man. One's only regret is that this collection only features one woman's article, thereby leaving the public with the erroneous impression that Soyinka's world is populated mainly by male friends, male students, male beneficiaries and male admirers. The reviewer is aware of a good number of women whose contributions to this important book could have been equally poignant and valuable.

One fully understands that the book was never intended as a publicity piece. Soyinka has never needed one! However, it may inadvertently serve as one. Especially for those who will never have the opportunity of meeting Soyinka, this enlightening collection is a good substitute. For those whose first or brief contact proved to be a negative experience, Wale Ogunyemi's piece is a lesson; it may indeed be therapeutic.

One major contribution of their collection is its limp presentation of a writer who is not just a great and hardworking erudite being but a man of character and depth, a selfless fighter for social justice, a man truly worthy of admiration and emulation.

Before Our Very Eyes is in itself an inspiration. It should, at the least, inspire students of the other African talents too numerous to count. We need not wait until they are fifty or awarded the Nobel Prize to recognize and honor them.

**The Cinema in Nigeria.** Francoise Balogun, Enugu: Delta Productions (Nigeria) Limited, 1987, 144 pages.

Film Production in Nigeria began and continues to develop at a snail's pace. For years, appeals to successive Nigerian governments to become seriously involved in the establishment of a national film industry have failed to achieve the desired result. Despite official acknowledgment that the cinema has immense

potential to champion the resurrection of Africa's identity threatened by colonial ideologies (which foreign movies continue to propagate), the film industry is still excluded from the priority list of the government's development programs. The Nigerian film industry of today emerged out of the indefatigable efforts of private individuals who managed to beat the numerous constraints that have kept other talented filmmakers at bay. The Cinema in Nigeria is an insider's account of this quagmire since the author is also the wife of Nigeria's most visible filmmaker, Ola Balogun. It offers an in-depth analysis of the catalogue of problems enveloping film production, distribution, and exhibition in this country, and pungently attacks the government's bureaucratic and managerial ineptitude.

The book begins with an introductory chapter on Nigeria and its people, followed by a discussion of its film industry's organization along with the historical formation and functions of the integral wings of Nigeria's film industry: The Film Unit; The Nigerian Film Corporation; The National Film Distribution Company (NFDC) and the National Theater; Distribution and Exhibition; Non-commercial screening; and Commercial distribution and exhibition. The second part covers the origins of Nigeria's film production and the creation of an independent cinema revealing two major trends: one comprising individuals actually committed to the development of cinema in Africa, and the second belonging to a group of Yoruba theater practitioners for whom cinema serves as an extension of their stage performances and as a money-making machine. The second part is followed by a compilation of Filmography, Selected Text, and Bibliography.

Francoise Balogun's overall assessment indicates that Nigeria has the potential for a viable film industry but that numerous policies must first be instigated to ensure its development: A quick move to overhaul the current bureaucratic structure and the policy governing the industry's structure; to devise a valid means of funding for production; improvement of the channels of exhibition and distribution; and the need for quality in Nigerian filmmaking. Here, what the author considers "apathy and hostility of Nigerian officialdom towards Nigerian filmmakers" (P.30) coincides with what critics and concerned Nigerians call a mantle of mediocrity at the level of incompetence displayed by indigenous films (both have impeded the fostering of distinctive cinema art). While the author strongly indicts the former, she glosses over the latter. Although Balogun makes some candid comments regarding the flaws in Nigerian filmmaking, including that of her husband's early films, she refuses to acknowledge all the problems responsible for the low quality of film production. While no one doubts the genuine

aspirations of some of these filmmakers regarding their contribution to the development of the Nigerian film industry, it is necessary to point out that there are problems created by the filmmakers themselves, which seem to militate against them, and which have cast a pall on their integrity.

Compounding this situation is the Nigerian government's procrastination in financial support to promote individual inventions which could develop into technological achievements. This attitude also extends to the film industry whereby the bureaucrats are antagonistic toward artistic and creative people who are denied financial assistance to make films in government-controlled theaters, thus undermining the exploration of important social, cultural, and political issues. The reason for this attitude is that if these concessions were granted, this would bolster the personal ego, status, and wealth of the filmmaker. To beat the odds, the undaunted Nigerian filmmaker resorts to the cheapest, shoddiest means to commercialize his work in order to recoup his capital. He thus becomes director, producer, scriptwriter, accountant, - - everything, "gbogbuegbogbue" in Yoruba. He controls distribution and exhibits his films at exorbitant fees. And even if there is willingness on the part of authorities to allow the exhibition of indigenous films at the National Theater or to show them on television, the Nigerian filmmaker is afraid of piracy. He obviously wants the lion's share of the cover charge demanding a percentage which the exhibitor (who is also in business to make profit) invariably rejects. This is the "catch-22" emanating from jealousy and greed that permeate and stifle all aspects of development in this country that once had, as Balogun puts it, "tremendous economic and human potential and a very rich pluricultural heritage" (p.11).

While it is legitimate to bring the problems of Nigeria's film industry to readers, it is ludicrous to attribute the poor quality of Nigerian films, as Balogun clearly does, to the problem of finding "cinematographic equivalent of the Yoruba theater technique" (p.52), the training of theater actors to act for film, and the incompetence of indigenous technicians. Nigerian films, by their very existence, have raised questions, and debates have ensued regarding their integrity in fostering a distinctive cinematographic art. This situation is not addressed in this book, but it is an issue that has preoccupied critics, filmmakers, intellectuals, and concerned individuals since independence. A fear of cultural pollution and the psychological impact of foreign subjugating films about Africa lead to the call for an establishment of Nigerian films made in Nigeria by Nigerians, acted by Nigerians, for Nigerians, and more importantly, rooted in the cultural legacy of Nigeria and Africa in general. Sadly, however, Nigerian films reveal overt commercialization by

pandering either to the appurtenances of the Hollywood mode of representation or to cheap glorification of local folklore, both of which are rendered even more retrogressive by inept craftsmanship and directorial incompetence. Unfortunately Balogun's book digresses from this important issue by not probing into how this aspect of Nigerian film practice could be remedied. It is worth stating that the technique which was to free film from literary and theatrical forms was invented during the early stages of the evolution of cinema.

The curiosity of the Lumiere brothers first inspired things and people in motion; Georges Melies discovered the ability of film not only to reproduce reality but in fact rearrange that reality at will, thus putting the filmmaker and his equipment in the position of authority. In fact, the rules demanded that the director dictate and assume responsibility for the success or failure of his film. Then came further innovative practices: editing (Edwin Porter); mobility of the camera, variation of distances, change of angles, perspective, or, if you will, utilization of transitions and montage (D.W. Griffith); and the revolution of the dynamics of montage for various applications (Sergei Eisenstein). These are important adjuncts to a fine-tuned and innovative cinematography which could be applied with skill to improve Nigerian cinema without destroying the African consciousness these films portray. Numerous African films have applied them with conviction and great efficacy.

The Cinema in Nigeria releases a useful Filmography with details on production and co-production companies, cast, and other general information. The addition of the Useful Texts and the Bibliography aid those in pursuit of questions raised in this book and alert them to ones conspicuously missing. As suggested above, the book also leads one to ask pertinent questions regarding the future of the Nigerian film industry, particularly how to tackle the aesthetic and ethical concerns facing it. Even though this book has an autobiographical slant in what looks as a defense of Ola Balogun's career, it still proves to be a very useful introductory guide to the film industry of Nigeria.

Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike