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LET'S MAKE THE LAW BECAUSE WE LIVE THE LAW

New Perspectives on the Role
of Political Theatre in Nigeria

OLUCHI J. IGILI

Let's Make the Law Because We Live the Law:
New Perspectives on the Role of Political Theatre in Nigeria

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Let's Make the Law Because We Live the Law:
New Perspectives on the Role of Political Theatre in Nigeria

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This dissertation interrogates the role of Nigerian theatre practitioners in relation to Nigeria's democracy, directing critical attention to how theatre is used to stimulate and enculturate stronger democratic habits. It pays attention to how playwrights and theatre practitioners have engaged the law, used theatre to protest State abuses of the law, and explored how theatre can be used to overcome legal barriers to citizen participation. It envisages and conceptualises an interface between Nigerian theatre practice and the legal system in a manner that could engage Nigerian citizens in the process of lawmaking. The theoretical framework undergirding its interrogation of the intersection between theatre and law revolves around how citizens live the law in performance using myth and play.

Using a multi-pronged methodological approach which triangulates a contextual and historical-critical reading of dramatic writings, a qualitative sociological study of theatre in developmental policies and governance, and a practice-informed investigation of the potential and pitfalls of the Legislative Theatre methodology, the dissertation unravels the manner in which the Nigerian theatre has served as platform to explore the unwelcome impact of some Nigerian laws on the socio-economic and political lives of its citizens. The research fills the gap in Nigerian theatre history of the 20th and 21st centuries with respect to theatrical approaches to making, changing and implementing laws. It connects the dots between diverse theatrical forms in Nigeria: folk opera, modern(ist) plays and TfD, and from that interplay introduces the Legislative Theatre methodology.

Evident in the dissertation is an interest in the participatory model of democracy. In that regard, the dissertation proposes the revival of the use of political theatre to interrogate laws, the realignment of participatory theatrical engagements in a manner that accords prime importance to the voice of citizens and allows citizens to participate in fashioning the laws to which they daily yield. The dissertation views *play* as a crucial politico-theatrical tool that facilitates the citizens' participation in lawmaking and in living the law in the theatre.

*In loving memory of Papa who took his last flight barely thirty-six hours
after my BA and Mama who boarded hers while this PhD was in the
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Then came May, 2017, and my application for funding for PhD studies in a foreign university was about to be flushed down the drain for the umpteenth time. The admission I had on hand was emphatically rejected on account, supposedly, of the 'high' tuition and other costs. Most reluctantly, as I could tell, I was given a near-impossible window of about three weeks to procure an admission that would be less financially demanding. My quest became a family project, so to speak. In that frenzied internet search, my 'Project Manager' as I jocularly refer to him, 'bumped' into a professor of theatre studies at the University of Amsterdam. I quickly sent her a mail. Her remarkably prompt response exuded commitment, care and passion for her job. I was ecstatic to hear from her about the possibility of a PhD with no tuition fees! Within a record short time, I had an admission letter with which I was able to process my funding application. Thank you, Kati!

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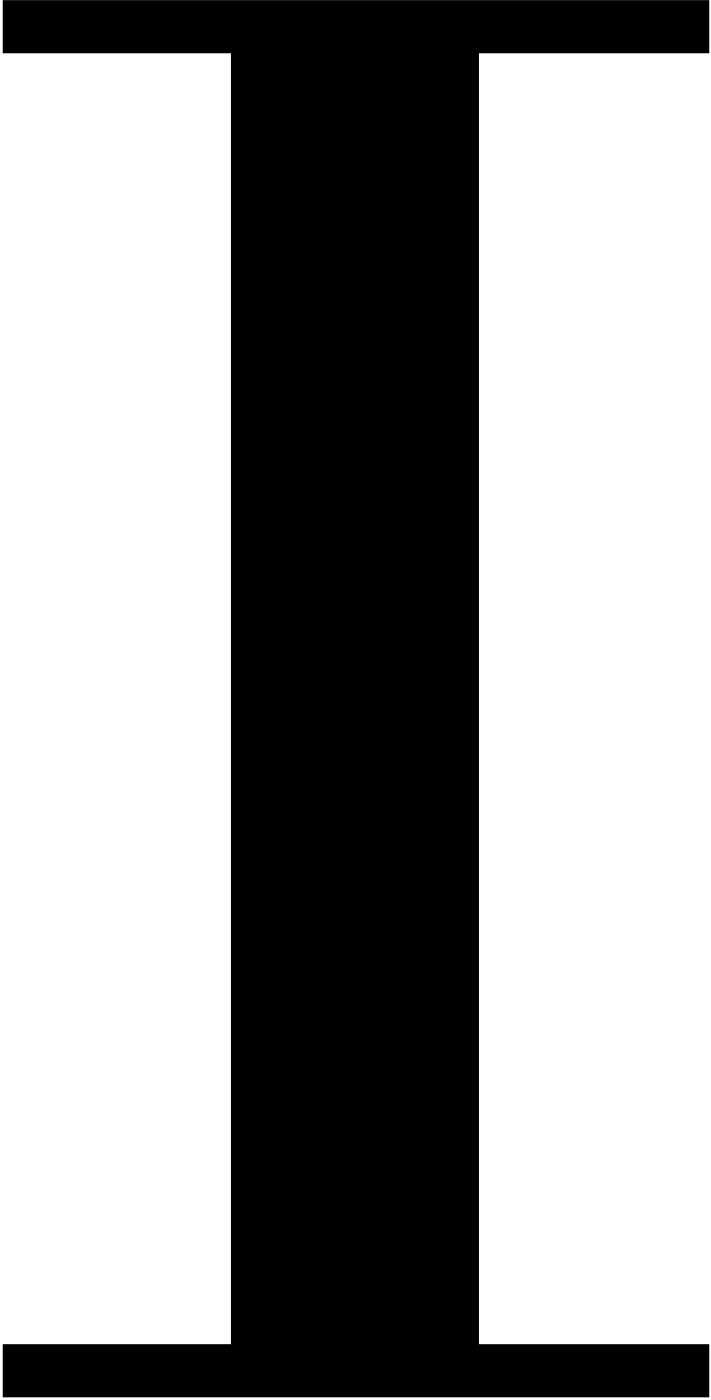
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Introduction

0.0 Introduction

This dissertation studies what has been, and points to what might be, the involvement of Nigerian theatre practitioners in the democratic development of Nigeria. It examines how playwrights and theatre practitioners have engaged with the law, used theatre to protest State abuses of the law, and explored how theatre can be used to overcome legal barriers to citizen participation. Furthermore, the dissertation envisages and conceptualises an interface between Nigerian theatre practitioners and Nigerian laws which could conceivably integrate Nigerian citizens in the lawmaking process. Undergirding the study is a theoretical framework of living the law in performance using myth and play.

0.1. Rationale and Research Question

The existing scholarship on political theatre in Nigeria primarily revolves around two aspects: the role of theatre in the struggle against colonial rule on the one hand, and against military dictatorship, on the other. Nigerian scholars shared the understanding that it was the responsibility of theatre artists to participate in the fight for the installation of true democracy in Nigeria.¹ The responsibility imputed to the theatre artist as implied by the above countenances a departure from the context of military rule to electoral democracy. This view is made more explicit by the assertion that ‘only when the masses decide through the ballot box on who wields political power that the theatre artist can be seen to have played his role’.² These submissions tend to suggest that Nigerian theatre practitioners see the installation of democratic rule through the voting process as an end in itself.

Available studies of Nigeria’s postcolonial literature aver that whether in drama, prose or poetry, ‘militarism engendered its own aesthetics’.³ In other words, military rule and its peculiarities generated discernibly distinct artistic reactions from Nigerian writers, irrespective of the genre of expression. Also, studies argue that the aesthetics engendered by militarism in Nigeria was propelled by the cultural practitioners’ perception of the challenge to ‘permanently terminate military rule and install democracy’,⁴ and further sum up the entire corpus of Nigerian drama as, arguably, ‘a search for democracy’.⁵ To

1 Elo Ibagere and Stevenson Osakue Omoera, “The Democratization Process and the Nigerian Theatre Artists,” *Studies of Tribes and Tribals* 8, no. 2 (2010): 73.

2 A. E. Anigala, “Democratizing a Nation in Crisis: The Role of the Theatre Artist,” in *Cross-Currents in African Theatre*, ed. Austin Asagba (Ibadan, Nigeria: Krafts Books, 2001), 164.

3 Gbemisola Adeoti, “The Military in Nigeria’s Postcolonial Literature: An Overview,” *Revista Alicantina de Estudios* 16 (2003): 33.

4 Adeoti, 29.

5 Simon Obikpeko Umukoro, *Drama and Politics in Nigeria* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Krafts Books, 1994), 12.

vary the metaphor, the above positions suggest that the agitation for democracy is the (creative) force that propels Nigerian drama. In addition, scholars have also argued that Nigerian theatre practitioners should not continue to be detached observers in the political arrangement of the country⁶ as they have a role to play in using their theatrical resources to effect necessary political changes.⁷

However, a closer reflection on the above scholarly inputs reveals existing lacunae. None of these studies has specifically investigated Nigerian theatre history in the 20th and 21st centuries in terms of approaches to changing, making and implementing laws. None of the previous studies has examined Nigerian folk plays, modern(ist) plays, and Theatre for Development (TfD) with respect to their connection with laws and lawmaking, nor noted the necessity for the continued interrogation of Nigerian laws on the Nigerian stage through the lens of political theatre under a democratic Nigeria. Lastly, no study has examined the prospects of effecting necessary political changes through the incorporation of Nigerian citizens into the process of lawmaking and, specifically, through the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology.

Addressing the relation between theatre and the law in understanding political theatre in Nigeria is however necessary so as to apprehend how theatre might enhance the citizens' participatory engagement in a democratic context. Thus, this dissertation aims to fill the gap in the research in theatre studies in the following specific areas. First, the research hopes to fill the gap in Nigerian theatre history of the 20th and 21st centuries with respect to theatrical approaches to making, changing and implementing laws. The research connects the dots between diverse theatrical forms in Nigeria: folk opera, modern(ist) plays and TfD, and from that interplay introduces the Legislative Theatre methodology. The dissertation proposes Legislative Theatre as a mode of theatre practice which Nigerian theatre artists could adopt to potentially draft the citizens into the processes that produce legislations. This is especially relevant and urgent in an ambience in which Nigeria's democratic culture and values are not sufficiently robust and Nigeria is implicated in the global threat to democracy as demonstrated by the country's Democracy Perception Index of 2021⁸ and 2022.⁹ In making the proposal, the dissertation countenances the fact that the introduction of the Legislative Theatre methodology would not diminish the practice or import of other forms of theatrical engagements in Nigeria. Rather, Legislative Theatre, it is hoped, would complement other theatrical expressions in strengthening Nigeria's democratic practices.

6 Ibagere and Omoera, "The Democratization Process and the Nigerian Theatre Artiste," 73.

7 Anigala, "Democratizing a Nation in Crisis: The Role of the Theatre Artist," 161.

8 Nico Jaspers, "Democracy Perception Index 2021," 2021.

9 Nico Jaspers, "Democracy Perception Index 2022," 2022.

This dissertation therefore engages with the following fundamental questions: what roles did Nigerian theatre practitioners play in the democratic processes of Nigeria through the interrogation of laws from the mid-1940s when Nigeria was still a British colony through the period of independence in 1960 to the termination of military dictatorship and the (re)installation¹⁰ of democratic governance in Nigeria in 1999? What might (in)form the nature of the role of Nigerian theatre practitioners in a democratic Nigeria in order to enhance the scope and depth of the country's democratic culture?

Subsumed under the above overarching questions are a number of other concerns. In Chapter 1, the dissertation examines how, on the platform of political theatre, Nigerian theatre practitioners interrogated some Nigerian laws during the period between the 1940s and 1999. Specifically, the chapter asks: What effect did British colonial laws exert on Nigerian citizens especially around the time of the Second World War and the decades prior to Nigerian independence? What was the reaction of the Nigerian theatre to the laws? In this study, I am also keen to uncover how Nigerian modernist dramatists reacted to laws during the period of military dictatorship in Nigeria. To do this, I will study selected works of some Nigerian dramatists. Key among the dramatists are Hubert Ogunde, Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan. How did these playwrights employ myth as a tool for the expression of political dissidence? By way of reading their plays and contextualising their practice against the backdrop of socio-political developments in Nigeria, I am interested in how the dramatists employ myth as shield to protect themselves against the long arm of the law while questioning the appropriateness of some Nigerian laws and making critical political statements. I associate the manner of the adoption of myth by the playwrights with the concept of play but make a slight departure from its supposed purposelessness to argue that play is ultimately utilitarian given its facility to allow the playwrights to make critical political comments. I will also question to what extent the pre-1999 Nigerian theatre served as the citizens' voice of protest and what the response of the Nigerian State was to the political ferment on the Nigerian stage pre-1999. Whereas existing scholarship have in various ways examined the contribution of the playwrights to democratic struggles in Nigeria, no study has approached the selected works from the angle of their interplay with Nigerian laws. I argue, from this premise, that the playwrights participated in the struggle for the realisation of a democratic Nigeria through their criticism of insufferable laws.

10 From 1960 (year of political independence) to 1999 Nigeria's history was interspersed with truncated periods of democratic rule. A notable instance was between 1979 and 1983. The year 1999 is however remarkable considering that from then on Nigeria has experienced a sustained period of democratic governance which is currently in its twenty-third year.

Springing from the considerable political agency of the citizens as the first chapter will demonstrate, Chapter 2 will study Theatre for Development (TfD) – a theatrical form which presents itself as a tool both for democracy and for the development of host communities - and pose the question about the degree to which the citizens' voices are represented in TfD praxis. It is instructive to note that TfD as a mode of theatre praxis has an increasingly strong presence in contemporary Nigeria. Also, the chapter attempts to examine the impact of TfD on Nigeria's democracy. How does the State use theatre (TfD in particular) as a tool of soft power to foster – or apparently foster – democratic participation? My interest in this regard is to investigate the affirmative relation of TfD with state governance and underscore the point, as I argue, that TfD as currently practiced in Nigeria has not placed sufficient premium on the voice and interests of members of the host communities but rather on deploying theatre as a means of ensuring and enhancing the citizens' compliance with the law.

The major question which the last chapter will address is: How might Nigerian theatre practitioners apply the Legislative Theatre methodology in building a more robust democratic culture? This is against the backdrop of the putative role theatre is capable of playing within a society and, in particular, within the ambience of a democracy. Specifically, the chapter will pose the following questions: In what ways could Nigerian theatre practitioners benefit from previous instances of the application of Legislative Theatre in other parts of the world in order to enrich Nigeria's democratic experience? This takes into cognisance the impact of the application of the methodology in other contexts. Therefore, in view of the instances in other climes where citizens were successfully drafted into the processes of lawmaking, how might Nigerian theatre practitioners assist the Nigerian citizen, whose voice is arguably effaced in the theatre discussed in Chapter 2, to regain her voice, not only to protest against laws as she did in Chapter 1, but also to take part in making the laws to which she daily yields? The chapter also interrogates the points of convergence between the concepts of Legislative Theatre and play. Thus, springing from my initial engagement with Augusto Boal's Legislative Theatre, conceptualised as a means to achieving a truer form of democracy, the interests of the dissertation expanded, as reflected in the above questions, to a larger interrogation of the various ways in which the interaction between theatre and the law manifests, or could manifest.

0.2. Structural Specifics of the Dissertation

The dissertation is structured in three main chapters, each of which will demonstrate the diverse ways theatre practitioners utilise theatre in pursuit of developing a critical relationship to the law and lawmaking processes. In the opening chapter titled 'Po-

litical Theatre in Nigeria: Faces, Phases and Contending Forces’, I will investigate how Nigerian theatre practitioners engaged actively with the democratic processes of Nigeria from the 1940s during British colonial rule to the end of military dictatorship in 1999. The chapter looks into how theatre practitioners utilised theatre during the period as an instrument for agitation against perceived oppressive legislations enacted by the British colonialists as well as by various military dictatorships in Nigeria. Underlying the agitations, as the chapter will make apparent, is the struggle for the return of Nigeria to democratic rule. Thus, the chapter will demonstrate not only the rejection of oppressive legislations by the citizens, but also the clamour for democratic governance in Nigeria.

Further, I will examine the concept of political theatre noting in particular the two canons of political theatre – the reformist and the radical (militant) category - identified on the Nigerian soil.¹¹ I will argue that what Boal termed Legislative Theatre aligns with the radical form of political theatre which presents itself ‘as a rehearsal for revolution’.¹² Furthermore, I will discuss what I consider the major pathways of the Nigerian political theatre. The theatre practice of major practitioners (Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola, Adunni Oluwole, Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan) have been identified for discussion.

With respect to the British colonial era, I will examine Hubert Ogunde’s theatre. Additionally, I will study, briefly, the theatres of his contemporaries: Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola and Adunni Oluwole. I will argue that while each of these practitioners had their peculiar knack, Oluwole’s theatre, though short-lived, resonated more significantly with Ogunde’s in its discernible interest in the political ferment of pre-independent Nigeria. That commonality notwithstanding, they differed notably in their approaches as I will demonstrate. I will argue that Ogunde’s theatre, in particular, demonstrates the fight against British colonial rule as it manifested on the Nigerian stage.

I will then discuss Wole Soyinka’s practice between 1960 and 1996 and Femi Osofisan’s in the 1970s and 1980s to show how their works, in like manner with Ogunde’s, reflected the people’s agitation for freedom from various forms of repressive rule. In particular, Soyinka’s and Osofisan’s works demonstrate the interface between university scholars and the Nigerian political theatre. Soyinka’s *From Zia With Love* and *The Beatification of Area Boy* with which he made critical commentaries on Nigeria’s political situation will serve as texts of interest in this regard. Also of interest is Femi

11 Adebayo Mosobalaje, “Reflections on Political Drama in Africa,” *Ife Studies in African Literature and the Arts* 5 (2010): 134.

12 Mosobalaje, 134.

Osofisan's 'surreptitious insurrection'¹³ a style of writing which, though pungent, was however sufficiently covert to have kept Osofisan beyond the repressive reach of governments. Common to the trio (Ogunde, Soyinka and Osofisan) is the application of myth in their works. Myth in this case reflects the people's transcendental value underscored by an affirmation of their history and reality as informed by their beliefs and customs.¹⁴ The dramatists employed myth in a manner which both dramatised their political dissidence and was sufficiently furtive – sometimes - to shield them from the long arm of the law. Also, in relating the playwrights' appropriation of myth to the concept of play, I will note that they, nevertheless, did not adopt the same approach in their application of myth.

Further, I will undertake an overview of the post-1999 Nigerian theatre in order to pursue the argument that although it displays observable indications of vibrancy, its locus of interest, however, appears to be largely outside the state or condition of Nigeria's democracy. This, as I will argue, is perhaps attributable to what Soyinka and Osofisan refer to as 'war weariness'¹⁵ and the dissipation of 'creative ebullience'¹⁶ respectively. With regard to the overall focus of the dissertation, this chapter hopes to underscore two crucial points. First, during the colonial era and the years of military dictatorship, Nigeria witnessed notable instances of laws which could be considered repressive, and which consequently hindered the people from fully expressing themselves as citizens. Also, through their works Nigerian dramatists interrogated the dissonance between those laws and the citizens' freedom, thus contributing to the agitation for the termination of repressive forms of governance and to the reinstatement of the democratic system of government. By that interrogation, I argue that the dramatists gave voice to the longings and desires of the people to live the law by being part of making the law.

The second chapter of the dissertation 'The Mask of Developmentalism in the Nigerian Theatre for Development (TfD)' will critically examine the practice of TfD in Nigeria. At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the era of development was launched by a coterie of nations that were classed as 'developed' nations. With a view to the end of colonialism, it was purported that the principles of the era of development, which would form the basis of the relationship between the colonialists and their soon-to-be

13 Femi Osofisan, "The Revolution as Muse: Drama as Surreptitious Insurrection in a Postcolonial, Military State," in *Theatre Matters: Performance and Culture on the World Stage*, ed. Richard Boon and Jane Plastow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

14 Tess Akaeke Onwueme, "Visions of Myth in Nigerian Drama: Femi Osofisan versus Wole Soyinka," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 25, no. 1 (1995): 59.

15 Olusegun Ojewuyi and Shawn-Marie Garrett, "A World of Amusement and Pity," n.d., 63, <https://read.dukeupress.edu/theater/article>.

16 Femi Osofisan, "Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary," *Theatre Research International* 33, no. 1 (2008): 17.

former colonies in order to ensure global development,¹⁷ would manifest through the application of modern scientific knowledge (developed by the First World) in the Less-Developed Countries (LDCs). According to Harry Truman (President of the USA, 1945-1953), the era of development was founded on the principles of democratic 'fair dealing'.¹⁸ In other words, in anticipation of the end of the colonial period, the era of development supposedly envisaged a relationship among the nations of the world premised on democratic principles. Theatre was deemed as one of the avenues through which the objectives of the era could be achieved hence the inception of TfD which is now found in many Third World countries. This professed connection between TfD and democracy informs my interest to closely study the Nigerian TfD under a democratic Nigeria.

I will commence with the historicity of the era of development with a critical look at the role played by the Cold War in the emergence of the era. This will lead to a brief consideration of the significance of the development discourse for Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. I will, thereafter, discuss the evolvement of TfD in Africa by examining Botswana's Laedza Batanani which is often regarded as the seminal TfD intervention in Africa. The pioneering effort of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, in the emergence of the practice of TfD in Nigeria, will also be discussed. Sequel to that, I will examine the various manifestations of TfD in Nigeria in the form of environmental, sexuality education (teenage pregnancy), citizenship, women and community developmental projects.

I will posit that unlike the pre-1999 Nigerian theatre which served as the citizens' voice of protest (as Chapter 1 will show), the post-1999 theatre seems to present itself as a tool of soft power in the hands of the authorities. I will also argue that the post-1999 Nigerian theatre appears to focus rather preponderantly on other forms of theatrical enterprise, such as aiding governance, instead of on interventions that could potentially help in building a vibrant democratic state. It will be my further argument that the continued practice of TfD in its present form is capable of precluding Nigerian practitioners of TfD from lending their services to the task of building a stronger and healthier democracy.

Chapter 3, 'Legislative Theatre: Foundation, Critical Reflections and Seminal Experiment in Nigeria', contains a theoretical study of the Legislative Theatre methodology and the discussion of an experimental Legislative Theatre project at the Adekunle

17 Beverly J. Silver and Eric Slater, "The Social Origins of World Hegemonies," in *Chaos and Governance in the World System*, ed. Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 208; Gustavo Esteva, Salvatore Babones, and Philipp Babczyk, "The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment," in *The Future of Development: A Radical Manifesto* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2013), 1.

18 Silver and Slater, "The Social Origins of World Hegemonies," 208.

Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, which I conceptualised and conducted in cooperation with faculty and students in 2020. The discussion of the project will be preceded by an examination of the socio-political ambience under which Boal's Legislative Theatre was birthed in Brazil. I will discuss its methodology of practice and examine the impact of the implementation of the methodology during Boal's tenure as City Councillor in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The similarity in the political histories of Brazil and Nigeria with respect to the emergence of democratic governance in both countries after many years of military dictatorship is indicative of possible insights and/or benefits which Legislative Theatre practice in Nigeria could draw from the Brazilian seminal case. In the face of the current challenges in Nigeria's democratic journey, it is presumed that Nigerian theatre practitioners could draw inspiration from the Brazilian instance for the benefit of Nigeria.

To give more depth to the illustrations of the application of Legislative Theatre which the envisaged Nigerian practice could benefit from, the chapter will cursorily refer to other instances of the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology in Canada, Afghanistan and USA, respectively. This is to underscore the point that although Legislative Theatre was innovated in Brazil, its potential and efficacy have been tested in other contexts. Thus, the other cases which are to be examined will further highlight the challenges, limitations, and prospects of the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology and how they could possibly feature in the Nigerian context.

Departing from that contextual underpinning, I will discuss the experimental Legislative Theatre project on sexual harassment which I carried out at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. Before delving into the discussion of that experiment, I will advance reasons for which I canvass for the adoption of Legislative Theatre methodology by TfD practitioners. Notable among the reasons is the existing widespread practice of TfD in Nigeria.

I will foreground the discussion of my experimental Legislative Theatre project by examining various positions on the nature and consequences of sexual harassment. This will then be followed by an in-depth discussion of the intervention and its outcome. Through the experimental project I foreshadow the interventional role of Nigerian theatre practitioners in facilitating the socio-political contract between the government and the citizens. By drawing inference from the experiment, I will discuss the feasibility of the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology in Nigeria and the challenges that could emanate therefrom. I will extrapolate how Nigerian theatre practitioners could play an intermediary role through the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology in order to make the social contract between citizens and government more robust and effective. In this last chapter of the dissertation, I

will further expand my thoughts on the concept of play and argue that play serves as a tool through which the citizens could (innocuously) live the law on stage. I will theorise Legislative Theatre as a play with which the citizens, in collaboration with theatre practitioners, could steer through the interstice between a mere theatrical engagement and a productive outcome (the Legislative proposal). This theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play stands as another contribution to existing scholarship on theatre studies, which this study hopes to make.

Thus, while Chapter 1 will show a theatre in which the people, through the theatre practitioners, registered their protest to the authorities, and Chapter 2 will illustrate a theatre in which, also through the practitioners, the goals of the authorities are, in a surreptitious manner, made to hold sway over the desires of the citizens, Chapter 3 advocates for a theatre in which the citizens will innovatively engage with theatre practitioners in processes that might birth legislations which could putatively impact positively on their lives. In other words, each of the chapters will present a nuanced perspective on Nigerian political theatre and will demonstrate how the positionality of theatre practitioners impacted (and/or could impact) on the theatrical output.

0.3. Notes on Guiding Theoretical and Conceptual Frames

0.3.1 Guiding Thoughts on the Concept of Theatre

Inherent in theatre is the capacity to afford one a pleasurable yet thoughtful viewing of the dramatic representation of the relational dynamics of human existence (often) among a community of audience. To vary the metaphor, theatre gives ‘life’ to life through a performative representation of human activities before a living audience. The human activities represented through the theatre include the cultural, social, economic as well as the political dynamics of human existence. Elements of theatre are present in every human society, the complexity and sophistication of that society, or lack thereof, notwithstanding.¹⁹ Fundamentally, therefore, theatre is not an index of literacy or economic advancement.²⁰

At the same time, theatre has often been credited with the capability to play significant role in the development of individuals and their societies.²¹ This claim addresses the centrality of theatre as a contiguous reality in all aspects of the lives of the members of a community including their laws and political systems. Similarly, theatre has

19 Oscar G. Brockett, *History of the Theatre*, Fifth Edit (Boston, London, Sydney, Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1987), 1.

20 Unionmwan Edebiri, “Drama as Popular Culture,” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 2 (1983): 139.

21 Evans Asante and Samuel M. Yirenkyi, “Engaging Communities for Development: The Theatre for Development (TfD) Approach,” *International Journal of Development and Sustainability* 7, no. 2 (2018): 592.

further been termed a suitable vehicle for the integration of stakeholders as holistic human beings into projects thereby empowering them to become their own ‘motors of change’.²² These claims suggest that the effect of theatrical engagements go from the stage to the audience and ultimately into the larger society. Theatre has also been described as a catalyst for social and political change.²³ Thus, the utilitarian impacts of theatre often transcends or at least complements its entertainment value.

At the centre of this dissertation is a focus on the role(s) Nigerian theatre practitioners could play in acculturating a stronger democratic ambience, bridging the gap between Nigerian citizens and their democratically elected representatives, and putatively integrating Nigerian citizens into the processes of lawmaking. This is critical considering that while the citizens do not usually have the political space and agency to participate in the making of laws, they, however, live under the impact of the laws made on their behalf but without due consultation with them by those whom they elected presumably to represent them. This, as noted earlier, is incongruent with the core principles of democracy.

Therefore, crucial to this study is the understanding that theatre is also being put to use as an instrument in the making of laws and in enhancing democratic values. In this case, theatre is deployed as means of galvanising citizens to form part of the lawmaking process. The citizens, who ordinarily do not have the facility to participate in the making of the laws that govern them, are afforded the platform on which they are integrated into the lawmaking process. Legislative Theatre which specifically pursues this goal is, as I noted earlier, intended to be used ‘within a political system to create a truer form of democracy’.²⁴ Thus, Legislative Theatre establishes a connecting thread which runs through theatre, law and democracy. The dissertation is therefore interested in the synergy made possible by the interaction of the concepts. Also, my guiding thoughts on the concept of theatre in this dissertation further conceptualise Legislative Theatre as a form of play which grants participants the freedom to explore new opportunities, activate their creativity and innovativeness including (but not limited to) the fashioning of new laws, and to appropriately articulate their demands. The effects of these ultimately transcend the boundaries of play.

0.3.2. Guiding Thoughts on the Concept of Law

For the purpose of this dissertation, I have mobilised some conceptualisations of the field of law to guide my discourse on theatre and law. Scholars have offered various

22 Julia Scharinger, “Participatory Theater, Is It Really? A Critical Examination of Practices in Timor-Leste,” *ASEAS: Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013): 105.

23 Osofisan, “Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary,” 16.

24 Augusto Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, ed. Adrian Jackson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), i.

perspectives on the concept of law. For instance, law has been viewed as the primary mechanism of social control which preserves the normative order of society.²⁵ Another conceptualisation holds that laws often represent a governmental control system.²⁶ This perspective clearly makes a connection between law and the State and indicates the weight and worth of laws in the hands of the State. Also, laws constitute an authoritative and reactive problem-solving system which are intended to meet specific social needs.²⁷ Thus, laws are crucial components of any nation, institution or social group and are therefore neither autonomous from, nor impervious to, the society. Rather, they are deeply embedded within society.²⁸ These views shed some light on the importance of laws among any group of people especially in a democratic society.

An essential companion to laws is the rule of law. The concept of the rule of law simply provides that an enacted law should rule in the sense that it establishes a framework to which all conduct and behaviour conform.²⁹ At the core of the concept of the rule of law is the principle of the equality of all before the law. Without the rule of law, democracy is literally unthinkable.³⁰ By implication, the spirit and intent of the law should prevail in every applicable circumstance irrespective of who is (or could be) affected. Implicit to this is both the question of what kind of laws are being made and, more fundamentally perhaps, of who makes the laws.

Within the operation of an existing and functioning legal system, legislative interventions are usually made by designated legal authority or authorities.³¹ In effect, the business of lawmaking and its territory are accessible only to designated lawmakers and not to all citizens. This is typically the case even in countries, like Nigeria, which lay claim to being democratic. I argue that this exclusion of the majority of the citizens from the lawmaking process runs contrary to the core principles of democracy and therefore potentially poses a threat to the building of a robust democratic culture. I further argue that in bringing about appreciable transformational impact in this regard, theatre practitioners have a crucial role to play in cultivating a democratic culture that thrives on the inclusiveness of majority of the members of the democratising unit.

25 Pospisil (1971) cited in Brian Z. Tamanaha, "An Analytical Map of Social Scientific Approaches to the Concept of Law," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 15, no. 4 (1995): 514.

26 John Harrison Watts and Cliff Roberson, *Law and Society: An Introduction* (Boca Raton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 6.

27 Watts and Roberson, 3.

28 Lynn Mather, *Law and Society*, ed. Robert E. Goodin (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

29 Angelika Klein, Kiranda Yusuf, and Regina Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators* (Uganda: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2011), 20.

30 U.S. Department of State, (1997), 19 cited in Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, 20.

31 T.T. Arvind, "Vilhelm Lundstedt and the Social Function of Legislation," *The Theory and Practice of Legislation* 1, no. 1 (2013): 22.

Law, according to Boal, is ‘the desire of the powerful’.³² In other words, the process of making laws usually takes into cognisance the interests of, and receives input from, only the privileged members of the society who are often in the minority. Put differently, laws are made by humans, representing special interests, who have power to translate their interests into public policy,³³ thus laws usually do not represent the yearnings and aspirations of the masses. This leaves the less privileged majority to grapple with the realities of legislations the making of which they had little input into. The dissertation therefore suggests that the citizens who *live* the laws should also have the democratic space and political agency to *make* the laws that define the parameters under which they live. The connection which this dissertation makes between theatre and law is hinged essentially on the concept of democracy.

0.3.3. Guiding Thoughts on the Concept of Democracy

Democracy approximates, in principle, to the rule of the common people. Of Greek etymology the term, democracy, is a combination of two words – *demos* (the people) and *kratos* (rule). Democracy was originally conceived among the Greeks as the direct participation of the citizenry in the decision-making process. However, population size and territorial expanse are among the logistical barriers that make direct participation in democracy impracticable and consequently unattractive to many modern nations,³⁴ hence the introduction of the concept of representation of all adult citizens through their freely elected representatives.³⁵ The principle of ‘popular sovereignty’ which holds that the citizens should have the final say on policies that govern their lives³⁶ has remained the goal of nations. This implies that in a democratic society, the administration should rest in the hands of the many (the citizens) and not the few (the representatives).³⁷ Thus, a major component of democracy is participation. Participation in a democracy demands, among other indices, that citizens are integrated into the decision making processes in matters that affect them. Put differently, if the decision making processes exclude the participatory involvement of the masses, one cannot talk of democracy essentially.³⁸

32 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

33 Richard Quinney (1970), 35 cited in Watts and Roberson, *Law and Society: An Introduction*, 19.

34 Michael L. Mezey, *Representative Democracy: Legislators and Their Constituents* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 6.

35 Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators*, 3.

36 Mezey, *Representative Democracy: Legislators and Their Constituents*, 1.

37 Gbemisola Remi Adeoti, “Literary Drama, Literacy and the Quest for Democracy in Nigeria: An Appraisal,” in *Theatre and Democracy in Nigeria*, ed. Ahmed Yerima and Ayo Akinwale (Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books, 2002), 54.

38 Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators*, 11.

Over a decade ago, Nigeria was classified among ‘dictatorial democracies’.³⁹ More recently, Nigeria’s democracy was described as ‘partially free’⁴⁰ and as a ‘hybrid’⁴¹ democratic regime. Hybrid democracies are partly characterised by substantial irregularities in elections which preclude such elections from being adjudged free and fair.⁴² Also, hybrid democracies are flawed by appreciable weakness in political culture, functioning of government and political participation.⁴³ These features resonate with the Nigerian situation where elections have apparently lost their ‘essential democratic essence and ingredients’,⁴⁴ and where ‘elected representatives conduct themselves in government with little or no regard for the yearnings and aspirations of the electoral populace’.⁴⁵

The above positions as well as other studies which have rated Nigeria poorly in the performance of her democracy make apparent the unwelcome track record which Nigeria has with regard to her democracy.⁴⁶ Existing studies do not, however, show evidence of sufficient engagement by theatre scholars with Nigeria’s democratic deficits and with how theatre could contribute to the field in order to address the deficit. Thus, my advocacy in this dissertation that various expressions of theatre practice should be employed in placing Nigeria’s democracy on a firmer footing is in recognition of this deficit. My advocacy takes into cognisance theatre’s putative capacity to contribute to social transformation through, for instance, the building of robust democratic habits.

Also, Nigeria’s current democracy seems to approximate to what Lani Guinier terms ‘electocracy’,⁴⁷ that is, a ‘democratic’ system where the involvement of the citizens terminates at the point of exercising their franchise during elections. In a democracy, the citizens have (or should have) the right as well as the responsibility to participate in the political system.⁴⁸ The prevailing situation in Nigeria which, as noted, is comparable to an electocracy accentuates the gap in research on the state of Nigeria’s democracy and further raises the question of how theatre might play a role in develop-

39 Esekong H. Andrew, “Social Justice, Civil Society and the Dramatist in Democratic Nigeria,” *Annals of Humanities and Development Studies* 1, no. 2 (2010): 157.

40 Freedom House, “Countries and Territories,” n.d., <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores?sort=desc&order=Country>.

41 The Economist Intelligence Unit, “Democracy Index 2020: In Sickness and in Health?” (London, United Kingdom, 2021), 48.

42 Unit, 57.

43 Unit, 57.

44 Al Chukwuma Okoli, Chigozie Joseph Nebeife, and Markus Arum Izang, “The Deficits of Democratic Mechanisms and Instruments in Nigeria’s Fourth Republic,” *African Journal of Public Sector Development and Governance* 4, no. 1 (2021): 27.

45 Okoli, Nebeife, and Izang, 27.

46 One of such ratings was conducted by The Economist Intelligent Unit (Democracy Perception Index 2020: In Sickness and in Health) in which Nigeria was placed on the 110th position of world democracies out of 165 countries.

47 Lani Guinier, “Beyond Electocracy: Rethinking the Political Representative as Powerful Stranger,” *Modern Law Review* 71, no. 1 (2008): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2230.2008.00679.x>.

48 Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators*, 3.

ing systems of representation and cooperation in the democratic project. The goal of theatre should, in this regard, include engendering downward accountability through building strong links between legislators and voters in order to foster the setting under which the electorate could form part of governance and the decision making processes, and actively participate as citizens in a robust democracy. This role is deemed crucial in view of the European Parliament's Reports on the Perceived Democracy Deficit assessments of Nigeria in recent years.⁴⁹ As I have previously noted, the return to electioneering processes is a necessary but insufficient parameter to evaluate a democracy. Thus, the value of the state of Nigeria's democracy should transcend the existence of the ballot-box system.

0.4. Theatre and the Principle of Representation

As earlier noted, direct democracy is hardly the characteristic political practice of any modern nation-state. Instead, most modern governments or states operate on the principles of representation.⁵⁰ However, the representative system in which representatives make public policy on behalf of the citizens⁵¹ is adjudged not to be equivalent to democratic government, rather it is regarded as a republic. Proponents of this position aver that representation frustrates democracy due to the inherent possibility of removing the power for political decision making from the hands of the people and reposing same in the hands of select citizens. From this perspective, the term 'representative democracy' is dismissed as an aberration.

Notwithstanding, the concept of 'representative democracy' has gained currency both as parlance and as practice having been accepted as a form of democracy in which representatives emerge through a voting process. Therefore, to ensure that representative democracy approximates as closely as possible to popular sovereignty it is crucially imperative to gauge the degree of influence which the represented (the electorate) exert on their representatives. This implies the assessment of democracies not in absolute terms but in terms of a continuum that hovers between less or more democratic.⁵²

As a concept, representation means 'to make present again'.⁵³ In other words, by being present during, and participating in, the decision making processes, the representatives are making, or ought to make, the represented 'present'. The presence of the representatives during decision making should essentially approximate to the 'physi-

49 The reports of Nigeria's Perceived Democratic Deficit for 2021 and 2022 are further referenced later in the dissertation.

50 Peter G. Veit, "On Whose Behalf?: Legislative Representation and the Environment in Africa" (USA, 2008), 10.

51 Mezey, *Representative Democracy: Legislators and Their Constituents*, 2.

52 Mezey, 5.

53 Mezey, 23.

cal' presence of the represented. It appears reasonable to assert that this is achievable only when the representatives work in concert with, harvest the opinions of, and vote on public policies in accordance with the preferences of those they represent. By doing so, the representatives will 're-present', that is, make their constituents 'present again' at the crucial moment of determining policy direction. In order to achieve this, this dissertation is, among other propositions, advocating that theatre should significantly participate in navigating the coast between the people and the government(s) by being a safe space for the people to exercise their agency on any issue which affects them.⁵⁴ In other words, theatre should serve as the platform where the opinions of the people are both produced and harvested.

The need to mitigate the inadequacies of the representative system of democracy by making it more people driven is behind Augusto Boal's innovation of the Legislative Theatre.⁵⁵ Therefore, I adopt in this research an approach to representative democracy which is deliberate about a continuously communicative interaction and synergy between the representatives and their constituents in a manner which makes the constituents and their representatives equal partners in the business of provoking a more robust democratic culture. I argue that the role of theatre practitioners is critical to the achievement of this synergy in Nigeria.

A major requirement of democracy is the active political involvement of the citizenry which is deemed crucial to the deepening of democratic principles and habits. Various methods have often been adopted in the bid to grow a more acceptable form of democracy and to ensure the involvement of members of a democratising unit in democratic processes. The innovative approaches include 'deliberative' democratic and 'participatory' democratic methods. My interest in this dissertation lies with the participatory model of democracy.

The responsibility of moving a democratic unit in the trajectory of a true democracy has been identified as one of the great services which theatre can render to any democratic community.⁵⁶ However, it stands to reason that the notable potential of theatre for social mobilisation, political change, making of laws and building democratic culture might prove unrealisable without the deliberate and active involvement, and requisite positionality, of theatre practitioners. Unless and until theatre practitioners put in place the necessary theatrical structures and apply requisite methods of praxis, the potential of theatre might remain an illusion. This places a responsibility on

54 Oluchi J. Igili, "Authentic Political Theatre: An Imperative for the Sustainable Democratisation in Nigeria," in *Dimensions of the New Nigerian Theatre: Critical Essays in Honour of Kola Oyewo*, ed. Toyin Ogundeji (United Kingdom: Alpha Crowns, 2014), 99.

55 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 17.

56 John McGrath, "Theatre and Democracy," *New Theatre Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (2002): 113.

theatre-makers/practitioners to employ their art in ways that could possibly lead to the realisation of the utilitarian outcomes which the theatrical form potentially affords.

From the insights highlighted above, it appears safe to claim that any democratic system in which the constituent members of the democratic body lack the enabling framework to participate in the decision making process is a deviation which belies the core principles or tenets of democracy. The nonexistence of the framework for effective participation of all citizens in democracy and, in particular, in the decision making processes, negates the principle of the rule of law which is hinged on the equality of every constituent member before the law. This begs the question about the subsisting degree of the participatory involvement of Nigerian citizens in Nigeria's democracy, as well as what kinds of theatre could best serve the interest of democracy in Nigeria. The concerns of this dissertation are couched within these contexts.

If, in a democracy, ultimate power ought to lie with the citizens who are expected to function as the ultimate masters, and decisions made by the representatives are to have binding effect on the represented, it follows therefore that the represented should exercise proper and effective control over the actions of those who represent them.⁵⁷ This leads to another line of thought which espouses the view that for there to be any semblance of popular sovereignty 'citizens *must* (emphasis added) be able to exercise control over the actions of those whom they identify as their representatives'.⁵⁸ Again, given the earlier stated possibility of the use of theatre for the purpose of creating a truer form of democracy, part of the interest of this dissertation is to seek what the Nigerian theatre might do to ensure that citizens have better control over the actions of their representatives.

0.5. Boalian Aesthetics in Brief

Augusto Boal's concept of Theatre of the Oppressed – the omnibus term for Boal's techniques, a substratum of which is Legislative Theatre - was inspired partly by Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, a concept in education with which Freire advocated for the 'problem-posing' method of education as a replacement for what he termed the 'banking' system of education. Essentially, the banking system dichotomises between the teacher, whose duty it is to 'deposit' his or her narration into the students as money is deposited into a bank and the students who, as 'receptacles', are expected to 'receive, memorize and repeat'⁵⁹ the narrated content. Freire's problem-posing educa-

57 Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators*, 17.

58 Mezey, *Representative Democracy: Legislators and Their Constituents*, 4.

59 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 72.

tion entails a resolution of the ‘teacher-student contradiction’⁶⁰ in which the students, having ceased to be ‘docile listeners’⁶¹ become ‘co-investigators’⁶² in the process of knowledge generation. In other words, Freire’s problem-posing system of education transfers to the students the epistemic tools with which to generate knowledge.

Drawing inspiration from Freire’s concept, Boal articulated the Theatre of the Oppressed methodological concept which he claimed would transfer the tools of theatrical production to members of a society just as Freire’s problem-posing system of education transfers to the students the epistemic tools with which to generate knowledge. Boal hypothesised that the effect of the transfer would rebound in the lived realities of the oppressed who would have acquired the political agency to transform those realities.

Through the implementation of the Legislative Theatre methodology Boal arguably broadened the space for participatory democracy by integrating citizens of Rio de Janeiro into the processes of lawmaking. Boal argued that through the process a ‘citizen is transformed into legislator’⁶³ The collaborative effort between Rio’s inhabitants and Boal (and his team) gave rise to a total of thirteen (13) legislations⁶⁴ which impacted the elderly citizens, the youth and the visually impaired. Boal’s Legislative Theatre methodology have been adopted by practitioners in other climes. Notable instances include Headlines Theatre, (Canada); Theatre of the Oppressed, New York City (USA); and Afghanistan Human Rights and Development Organization (AHRDO), (Afghanistan). These adoptions recorded various kinds of successes and impact with some leading to direct policy shift.

I propose in this dissertation that along with other forms of theatrical expressions Nigerian theatre practitioners could additionally employ the Legislative Theatre methodology as a tool to strengthen Nigeria’s democracy. I posit, therefore, that irrespective of the mode of theatrical expression, it is incumbent on Nigerian theatre practitioners to continue to employ their expertise in critical engagement with the State in order to ensure a healthier democratic society. Theatre should also be utilised in incorporating the citizens into the processes of lawmaking in fulfilment of the democratic tenets of popular sovereignty. This will constitute a furtherance, in a post-1999 democratic Nigeria, of the services which theatre practitioners had rendered towards the struggle for democracy in Nigeria pre-1999.

60 Freire, 79.

61 Freire, 81.

62 Freire, 81.

63 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 15.

64 Boal, 81–82.

0.6. Methodological Approach

In executing this research, I have adopted a multi-pronged approach triangulating a contextual, historical and critical reading of dramatic texts, a qualitative sociological study of theatre in developmental policies and governance, and a practice-informed investigation of the potentials of the Legislative Theatre methodology:

a) a contextual, historical and critical reading of dramatic writings of three 20th century playwrights in Chapter 1, focusing on aesthetic strategies of play and myth as means of interrogating theatre's relationship to law.

For the purpose of contextualising and validating one of the hypotheses claimed by this research (which is that Nigerian theatre practitioners played a crucial role in the political history of Nigeria pre-1999) I will commence with a historical survey of the previous role of Nigerian theatre practitioners in Nigeria's democratic evolution. To ascertain the political tone and texture of the Nigerian theatre during the colonial era, Hubert Ogunde's theatre has been chosen for a close study. In comparison to the theatres of his contemporaries (Duro Ladipo and Kola Ogunmola, for instance) Ogunde's theatre has been adjudged more closely aligned to Nigeria's political circumstances of the colonial era.⁶⁵ Only Adunni Oluwole's theatre is substantially comparable to Ogunde's in regard to their political fervour. Therefore, Ogunde's representative works have been chosen in order to understand the use of theatre in the interrogation of the impact of colonial laws on the citizens during the colonial era. Wole Soyinka's and Femi Osofisan's theatres seem to manifest a close alignment with Nigeria's post-independence political realities hence the choice of their works in order to demonstrate the interrogation of post-independence Nigerian laws and policies on the Nigerian stage. Soyinka and Osofisan deployed their works as instruments to question some of the laws enacted during the years of military dictatorship in Nigeria and by that token advocated for the return of Nigeria to democratic governance.

b) a quantitative sociological survey of TfD projects in Nigeria in Chapter 2, historicising this against the emergence of TfD within the larger African continent and examining how TfD, a supposed instrument for developmental policies and governance, is used as a tool of soft power to facilitate a compliant citizenry.

I will closely study secondary accounts of TfD projects executed by Nigerian TfD practitioners. To ensure a robust appreciation of TfD practice in Nigeria, diverse projects on the environment, sexuality education, citizenship concerns, women empowerment and community development have been identified for analysis. The analysis

65 I Peter Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 29.

will help to assess to what degree the projects are congruent with the objectives of the development agenda. The analysis will also examine the extent to which the projects are compatible with the tenets of democracy and democratic participation.

c) a practice-informed investigation of the potential of adopting the methods of Legislative Theatre in the Nigerian context, tracing the genealogies of Legislative Theatre in Brazil and comparing its application in other contexts around the world.

I adopted a practice-informed research in which I carried out an experimental Legislative Theatre project on sexual harassment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko, Nigeria. The project afforded me new knowledge by means of the experiment itself and also by means of the outcomes of the experiment. I will draw from that knowledge to extrapolate the challenges and prospects of the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology in Nigeria. The knowledge gained from that experiment will further serve as the basis from which I reflect on the new perspectives which, as I posit, could enrich the role of Nigerian theatre practitioners as Nigeria continues to move on the path of consolidation of her democratic experience. In theorising Legislative Theatre as play, I draw from notable play theorists and critically examine their theoretical postulations in relation to the concept of Legislative Theatre. My theorisation in which I posit that Legislative Theatre is a politico-theatrical play with the goal of effectuating identifiable real-world outcomes, takes into cognisance the nuanced positions of the theorists.

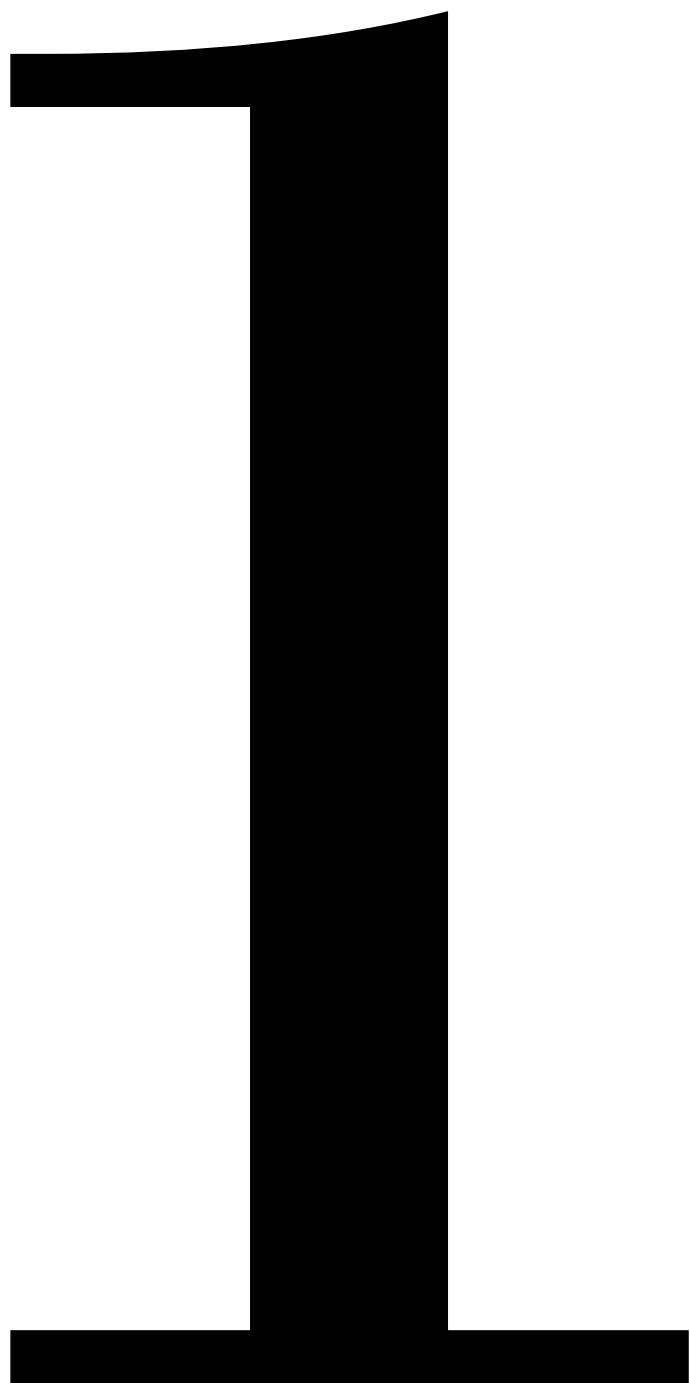
The methodological approaches adopted for this study have opened up diverse levels of subtle comparison. To begin with, the study of the playwrights in Chapter 1 shows, on one level, a comparative analysis of popular theatre and the theatre championed by university scholars and, on another level, of how the playwrights each *play* with myth in their expression of political discontent. In studying the Nigerian TfD projects in Chapter 2 there is an underlying comparison of the various Nigerian TfD projects, on the one hand, as well as a comparison of the Nigerian projects against the seminal TfD project in Botswana, Southern Africa. Chapter 3 also underscores the comparison of Legislative Theatre projects in Brazil, USA, Afghanistan and Canada, respectively. Ultimately, this produces a dissertation with related yet distinct chapters in which I study various forms of interaction between theatre and law. This enables me to extrapolate how various theatrical forms might be positioned to strengthen democratic practices in Nigeria.

0.7. Limitations of the Study

As I end this introductory chapter, it is important to acknowledge some of the limitations of this study. To begin with, there are diverse approaches that could be adopted in studying the interaction between theatre and law one of which could be to lay emphasis on the aesthetic and/or performative essence of the chosen texts. However, I have adopted a contextual and historical reading of the texts which I presume would yield a better understanding of the impact of the interplay between theatre and the law on the lived realities of citizens in the larger society. I do not claim that the chosen texts are the entire corpus of dramatic writings that deal with the interplay between theatre and law. Instead, I consider the texts as representative rather than exhaustive, thus I do not preclude the existence of other drama texts which, presumably, dwell on the same subject matter.

This study equally acknowledges the limited discussion of dramatic writings by female authors and feminist playwrights in Nigeria. The non-appearance of such works in this study is only a consequence of the set objectives and scope of the dissertation which looks at the interface between theatre and law within a specific time frame. I also note that the playwrights whose works feature in this study are all of Yoruba (Nigeria) extraction thus seemingly denying the study the necessary national spread. However, the thematic tangent of the texts lend them the required national outlook, thus making them adequately suitable in regard to the concerns of this dissertation.

It is equally pertinent to acknowledge that the practice-informed project on Legislative Theatre incorporated into this study was executed within the defined borders of a university campus. This implies that the experiment contended with limited democratic challenges and deficits. In proposing the adoption of the methodology, I am conscious that its application within the larger society where the democratic deficits are more pronounced could present bigger challenges. However, I extrapolate from that experiment with the assumption that the practice of this democratised theatre process would ultimately have positive impacts on democracy in the larger society. Therefore, notwithstanding the limitations, the chosen texts and the analytical approach adopted, as well as the practice-informed research still yielded significantly reliable outcomes as I hope to demonstrate in the following pages.



Chapter 1

**Political Theatre in Nigeria:
Faces, Phases and Contending Forces**

1.1. Theatre and the State

Theatre, wherever it exists, has, either for good or ill, an inevitable bonding with the state.⁶⁶ This bonding, which often takes the form of political theatre, is manifest in the relationship between the Nigerian State and the Nigerian theatre. In this first chapter of my dissertation, I will examine laws and policies as a critical nexus between the politics of the Nigerian State and the conditions of the Nigerian people from the colonial period (1940s) to the end of military despotism in 1999. My purpose in the chapter is to study how, on the platform of political theatre, Nigerian theatre practitioners interrogated some Nigerian laws of the period stated above. I intend to make it clear that the Nigerian theatre practitioners' overriding purpose was to steer the polity in the direction of a permanent termination of military rule and the institutionalisation of democratic governance.⁶⁷

Aristotle's submission that man is *zoon politikón*, an expression which in Thomas Aquinas' translation makes man 'a political and social animal'⁶⁸ attests to the centrality and inevitability of politics in the existence and social relationships of man.⁶⁹ The advent of political theatre in Nigeria predates the colonial era. However, for the purpose of this research, I reckon with political theatre in Nigeria from the mid-1940s when Nigeria was still under British colonialism. Among the submissions about what constitutes political theatre/drama in Africa is the position which states that political theatre is a reaction to colonial exploitation.⁷⁰

The scope of my interrogation of Nigerian laws on the Nigerian stage extends into the years of military dictatorship. In his articulation of military presence in Nigerian literature, Gbemisola Adeoti declares that irrespective of the genre (poetry, drama and prose), militarism engendered its own aesthetics.⁷¹ In other words, Adeoti contends that notwithstanding the genre of expression, military rule, with its attendant peculiarities, generated discernibly distinct artistic reactions from Nigerian writers. In extending Adeoti's metaphor, I submit that before Nigeria's military dictatorship, colonialism also engendered its own aesthetics which, as I argue, began to manifest in the Nigerian theatre in the 1940s. This chapter intends to study the manifestation of the aesthetics of colonialism in the Nigerian theatre with specific reference to the interrogation of laws.

66 Catherine A. Schuler, "Editorial Comment: Theatre and State/Theatre and Law," *Theatre Journal* 61, no. 3 (2009): unnumbered.

67 Adeoti, "The Military in Nigeria's Postcolonial Literature: An Overview," 29.

68 Giovanni Sartori, "What Is 'Politics,'" *Political Theory* 1, no. 1 (1973): 7.

69 Tunde Awosanmi, "Re-Imagining Fagunwa's Forest of a Thousand Daemons for the Modern Audience," in *Black Dionysos: Conversations with Femi Osofisan*, ed. Olakunbi Olosope (Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books, 2013), 65.

70 Mosobalaje, "Reflections on Political Drama in Africa," 130.

71 Adeoti, "The Military in Nigeria's Postcolonial Literature: An Overview," 33.

The works of some Nigerian theatre practitioners (Hubert Ogunde, Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan) have been identified for examination on the strength of their perceived congruence with the aims and objectives of this dissertation. A look at the works of the dramatists evidences their interest in Nigeria's political situations; an interest made manifest in their engagement with Nigerian laws. Adeoti avers that Nigerian cultural practitioners were spurred by the perceived challenge to permanently terminate military despotism and institute democratic governance.⁷² Thus, through questioning the appropriateness of some laws, Nigerian theatre practitioners registered their protest against both colonialism and military dictatorship, and deployed their art in the pursuit of democratic ideals. This underpins a connecting thread which runs through theatre, law and democracy.

This dissertation takes into cognisance democracy's core tenet of 'popular sovereignty',⁷³ the concept of representative democracy and the argument that democracy should not be seen as a constant but as a continuum capable of oscillating between less or more.⁷⁴ From that conceptual underpinning, the dissertation envisages the cultivation of democratic habits that derive their robustness from a continuous synergistic collaboration between citizens and their representatives. The imperative for this collaboration is underscored by the submission that the best way to exercise democracy is to participate.⁷⁵ In order, therefore, for the citizens to actively participate in democracy, a dynamic collaboration should exist between them (the citizens) and their representatives. In this dissertation, I argue that theatre makers should form the nexus which facilitates that collaboration.

Thus, from the premise of the connectedness that runs through the concepts of theatre, law and democracy, this chapter aims to interrogate the role Nigerian theatre practitioners played in Nigeria's democratic processes during colonialism and military dictatorship. The purpose is to determine how, by contending against the characteristically undemocratic nature of military decrees and policies, Nigerian theatre practitioners participated in the struggle to return Nigeria to democratic governance. Also, this chapter discusses the contentious relationship between theatre practitioners and the State provoked by the ideological positioning of the practitioners as demonstrated in their works.

72 Adeoti, 29.

73 Mezey, *Representative Democracy: Legislators and Their Constituents*, 1.

74 Mezey, 23.

75 Abdulrazak Karriem and Lehn M. Benjamin, "How Civil Society Organizations Foster Insurgent Citizenship: Lessons from the Brazilian Landless Movement," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 27, no. 1 (2016): 25.

This first chapter of my dissertation consists of several layers. Departing from a conceptual foregrounding on politics particularly as it relates to Jacques Rancière's and Augusto Boal's notions of politics, I will make clear the fact that political intervention on the Nigerian stage had, from the 1940s, been a means towards achieving specific goals. For instance, the need to expose and condemn the perceived ills of the British colonial rule provided the stimulus for politically oriented performances on the Nigerian stage during the colonial era. Through the creative oeuvre of Hubert Ogunde, I will discuss the interface between the Nigerian theatre and Nigerian laws during the colonial period. I will validate the hypothetical stance that from the colonial period of Nigeria's history, the contestation of the appropriateness of laws has continued to feature cognisably in the Nigerian theatre and that practitioners have, from then onward, sought to deploy their art in charting a democratically oriented political direction for the country.

A common feature in the works of the dramatists is the use of myth in the construction of political drama. Various ascriptive labels have been attached to the concept of myth. For the purpose of this research, I note the ascription which states that myth is the affirmation of history and reality informed by beliefs, customs and events which have attained transcendental value and have become entrenched in the life of a people in a given ethos.⁷⁶ The selected works of the dramatists demonstrate that myth could be deployed in drama and made to assume contemporary political relevance as a tool for the expression of political dissidence or unorthodoxy. Often using myth as a shield in a manner that I associate with play, the playwrights handled critical political messages without readily incurring the wrath of the law. Notwithstanding this common objective in the application of myth as means to express political discontent, the dramatists did not, however, employ myth in the exact same way. I will show how the recourse to myth aided each dramatist's covert interrogation of laws.

Also, this chapter will study instances of government intervention in the Nigerian theatre. The word 'intervention' is not used in the warm sense but rather with a negative inflection. In other words, this aspect of the chapter will examine selected instances of the application of institutional apparatus of government in the attempt to muzzle the art and practice of theatre in Nigeria. The discussion in this regard will show how, in order to avoid being assassinated, the dramatists were sometimes forced into exile – as was the case with Soyinka - or compelled to resort to consciously employing their artistry in a covert manner that sufficiently occluded the critical content of their works - as the case was with Osofisan. Also, in this chapter I will review the current state of affairs with respect to the Nigerian political theatre. Underlying the entire chapter is the interplay between politics and aesthetics in the Nigerian theatre space.

76 Onwueme, "Visions of Myth in Nigerian Drama: Femi Osofisan versus Wole Soyinka," 59.

The chapter therefore offers a critical overview of the Nigerian political theatre with specific focus on how theatre practitioners employed theatre as the people's voice of dissension against extant Nigerian laws which were perceived as repressive in nature.

The overarching objective of the chapter is to underscore the point that from the colonial period to the end of military dictatorship in 1999, Nigerian theatre practitioners utilised their art to protest against laws that did not reflect the wishes of the people. The chapter therefore illustrates the fight against both colonialism and military dictatorship as orchestrated from the Nigerian stage in the course of Nigeria's march to democratic governance. This is in order to make apprehensible both the necessity for a more robust interrogation of Nigerian laws and policies within a democratic ambience and to argue that this could be a significant role for Nigerian theatre practitioners to play in strengthening Nigeria's democracy.

1.2. Perspectives on Politics and its Interface with Creativity

Jacques Rancière's postulations on politics seems to resonate with fundamental democratic principles. Rancière notes Aristotle's two ways of reckoning with the parts of a community and, on that basis, lays the foundation for his postulations on politics. Rancière deems as paradoxical Aristotle's formulations which view politics as the ruling (or commandment) of equals (the oligarchs and the aristocrats) in which the demos (the citizens) participate in the fact of ruling only by being silent and submissive.⁷⁷ Rancière enunciates his views from the referential framework of Aristotle's conceptualisations of the Greek word *arkhêin* or *arkhê*, (or action) the various connotations of which imply 'to begin', 'to lead' and eventually 'to rule'.⁷⁸ Rancière observes that Aristotle identified three possible classes of rule within a 'polis' (city-state) as follows: the rules of 'virtue' which is associated with the *aristoi* (aristocracy), of wealth which is associated with the *oligoi* (oligarchy), and of freedom which is associated with the *demos* (i.e. the poor – not economically poor - but those without entitlement and therefore not counted).⁷⁹

Given this subsistent reality politics, in Rancière's contemplation, is not, as Aristotle adumbrates, the rule of equals (whether as aristocracy or oligarchy). Rather, politics is a break with the logic which holds that *arkhê* (action), in the sense of bearing the rule, is a determined prerogative of a section of the population which, in this case, refers to the aristocrats and the oligarchs. Politics, according to Rancière, comes into mani-

77 Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, ed. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum International, 2010), 30.

78 Ranciere, 29.

79 Ranciere, 29–32.

festation only when the demos (the people) rupture the logic of *arkhè* i.e. the logic of bearing the rule. In other words, Rancière designates as ‘police’ any disposition which tends to maintain the status quo of the narrative of *arkhè* (bearing the rule) while a ruffling of that narrative to accommodate the ‘uncounted’, or the poor, is ‘politics’.

To summarise, Aristotle’s proposal on the criteria to adopt in delineating a community appears to be in dissonant relation with basic democratic principles as it fails to recognise the equality of all members of the community. Boal’s theorisation on politics, upon which he founded first the Theatre of the Oppressed (in its omnibus form) and later the Legislative Theatre, takes its bearing from the Greek concept of ‘polis’ which involves the presentation of collective front by the less privileged members of the society. To Boal, politics involves a shared ownership as well as shared responsibility over cogent matters affecting the society the ultimate objective of which is the effectuation of a more just society.⁸⁰

There is some level of homogeneity between Boal’s and Rancière’s notions on politics. Although Rancière would not subscribe to theatre that educates and conveys political messages, his Distribution of the Sensible expresses affinity with Boal’s political views to the degree that both perceive politics from the perspective of catalysing, overall, an enhanced quality of life for the less privileged. Rancière’s and Boal’s positions on politics, and their congruence with democratic ideals, find relevance in this chapter as I discuss the Nigerian theatre practitioners’ involvement in the agitation for democratic governance in Nigeria.

1.2.1. The Concept of Political Theatre

David Edgar apprehends the interconnectedness of theatre and politics in his submission that political theatre is ‘the project of explaining public events in a privatized way’.⁸¹ In other words, using the private lives of characters on stage as instrument, public events are homed in on for a thoughtful viewing, analysis and possible action by audiences. Political theatre has been conceived as the kind of theatre which dwells on the processes of governance, power and power relations within the society and on the responsibilities of the ruler and the ruled to one another.⁸² This conception suggests that political theatre could be put to use in the pursuit of various agendas by both the ruled and the ruler. This tendency for opposing applicability of political theatre was demonstrated during Nigeria’s struggle for self-rule, a point I will further elucidate in the course of this chapter. Suffice it at this point to state that with or

80 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

81 David Edgar cited in Simon Shepherd, “Theatre and Politics,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century English Literature*, ed. Laura Marcus and Peter Nicholls, The New Cambridge History of English Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 635, <https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CHOL9780521820776.037>.

82 Mosobalaje, “Reflections on Political Drama in Africa,” 130.

without the adoption of political theatre, the ruler, being in control of the apparatus of government, has the capacity to put in place mechanisms which would ensure that the ruled act in compliance with laid down rules. One of such mechanisms is law which, as earlier noted, constitutes a control tool in the hands of the State. The reverse is notably not the case for the ruled who ordinarily do not possess the wherewithal to ensure or enforce the discharge of the rulers' responsibilities towards them, hence the need for a form of pressure by the ruled to guarantee that rulers discharge their responsibilities to the ruled.

While the above conceptualisation of political theatre points to a possible multiple or opposing applicability, Rancière's postulation on politics is crucial in the consideration of what might be classified as political theatre. Rancière's submission which apprehends politics as that which reconfigures the stratification in a community in order to recognise the poor or the uncounted would belie the aforementioned multiple applicability of the concept of political theatre. Drawing from Rancière's position, political theatre would simply mean the type of theatre which favours the cause of the poor and uncounted in the society. Thus, there is a connection between Augusto Boal's concept of Theatre of the Oppressed, that is, theatre by, about, and for the oppressed, and Rancière's conceptualisation of politics as a rupture of the given-ness of class structure within a society.

Political theatre employs the theatrical mode to make critical comments about political conditions and happenings. As a form of praxis, political theatre is a politico-theatrical intervention or protest against tyranny and oppression which objective is the effectuation of positive transformations in the lived realities of the people. Also, political theatre interrogates any action by office bearers intended to make (hollow) points rather than accomplish significant objectives. It entails the satirical representation, on the stage, of malodorous political happenings within the society.⁸³ In the African context, political theatre often represents a potential path to a promised - but perhaps yet to be realised – democracy.⁸⁴

1.2.2. Perspectives on Nigerian Political Theatre

Two categories of political theatre have been delineated within the Nigerian political realities. The first is the reformist category which favours a gradual change in the political condition. The reformist form of political theatre privileges the satiric (re) presentation of political happenings with the expectation that the prevailing political structure will, in the course of time, evolve into a form more acceptable to the

83 Mosobalaje, 134.

84 Heather Jeanne Denyer, "Re-Inventing A Political Theatre in Burkina Faso," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Politics*, ed. Peter Eckersall and Helena Grehan (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 349.

citizenry.⁸⁵ In effect, the reformist political theatre anticipates changes but not in the immediate. The second category of political theatre in Nigeria is the radical or militant category which presents itself as a rehearsal for revolution.⁸⁶ This second category is consonant with Augusto Boal's notion of the Theatre of the Oppressed. As conceptualised by Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed creates a forum for reflection on reality as well as the rehearsal of the transformation or the envisioned reality.⁸⁷ This dissertation aligns with the radical political theatre which anticipates socio-political changes either immediately or in the foreseeable future.

1.3. Pathways of the Nigerian Political Theatre

Theatre practice in Nigeria has long been put to other uses apart from pure entertainment. According to Femi Osofisan, within the African (Nigerian) cultural milieu, the art of narration is not ideologically innocent since it serves as the conduit through which a community's acceptable ethics are transferred to a younger generation to ensure their sustenance.⁸⁸ On his part, Victor Ukaegbu narrows the argument to drama by declaring that African dramatic performances have always straddled both sacred and secular boundaries thus commanding 'some form of investment in efficacious outcome'.⁸⁹ One can stake the claim that the 'secular boundaries' and 'efficacious outcome' which Ukaegbu refers to include political utility. This indicates that political undercurrent in the Nigerian theatre predates the advent of the British on Nigerian soil.

However, departing from its traditional origin, two major pathways of political theatre can be identified on the Nigerian stage; the pathway of the Nigerian popular theatre as exemplified by Hubert Ogunde's practice and the pathway of scholars and dramatists affiliated to Nigerian universities represented in this study by Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan. Osofisan underscores the utilitarian facility of theatre by stating that the stage is 'not a place for soothing apprehensions, but rather for manufacturing anxiety, a catalyst for social and political change'.⁹⁰ As will be made evident in the discussion, the dramatists whose works have been selected for this study (Ogunde, Soyinka and Osofisan) incorporated mythological accounts as tools to convey their message of protest against the oppressive proclivities and actions of both the British and military (even civilian) administrations in Nigeria. I deem their works utilitarian

85 Mosobalaje, "Reflections on Political Drama in Africa," 134.

86 Mosobalaje, 134.

87 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 12.

88 Femi Osofisan, "Reflections on Theatre Practice in Contemporary Nigeria," *African Affairs* 97, no. 386 (1998): 83.

89 Victor Ukaegbu, "The Problem with Definitions," *Drama Research* 3, no. June (2004): 53.

90 Osofisan, "Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary," 16.

in my investigation of the involvement of Nigerian theatre practitioners in the struggle for the installation of democratic practices in Nigeria. In this regard, the dramatists either incorporated the myths in their original form or subverted the narration as they deemed necessary. I relate the incorporation of myth by the dramatists to the concept of play. To discuss the pathways of the Nigerian political theatre I begin with political interventions on the Nigerian popular stage.

1.3.1. Politics on the Nigerian Popular Stage, Hubert Ogunde as Paradigm: 1946-1969

Until his death on April 4th 1990, Hubert Ogunde was active in professional theatre practice. However, based on the preponderantly political nature of plays written and performed between 1946 and 1969 my research is specifically concerned with his practice within that period. Available research show that during the 1940s ‘when the task of national integration really began at a more intimate level’,⁹¹ there was, apace, ‘the emergence of explicitly political theatre’.⁹² At this time, British colonial rule began to exert influence on what was to become Nigerian theatre as Ogunde’s works make evident.⁹³

As indicated earlier, there were two critical dynamics to the use of drama during this period. On the one hand, dramatists like Ogunde and Adunni Oluwole (more on Oluwole later) appropriated drama in their protest against colonial rule. To them, drama was a means of raising questions about the effects of colonial laws. On the other hand, the British colonial masters also utilised the same medium of drama/theatre in their attempt to drive home their point on the peddled ‘usefulness and importance of the British government’.⁹⁴ This makes apparent the capability of political theatre to play conflictual roles; that is, theatre becomes an instrument in the hands of both the oppressor and the oppressed who, usually, are at cross purposes.⁹⁵ However, to reiterate a point made earlier, the conceptual view of political drama/theatre adopted by this research is that which aligns with the interest of the poor and downtrodden members of the society. On that premise, the use of theatre by the British to reinforce dictatorial rule does not qualify as political theatre but could, in Rancière’s terms, be termed ‘police’ theatre.

91 Chudi Uwazurike, “Ethnicity, Power and Prebendalism: The Persistent Triad as the Unsolvable Crisis of Nigerian Politics,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (1996): 1.

92 Oliver Coates, “Hubert Ogunde’s Strike and Hunger and the 1945 General Strike in Lagos: Labor and Reciprocity in the Kingdom of Oba Yejide,” *Research in African Literatures* 48, no. 2 (2017): 167.

93 Ahmed Yerima, “Colonialism and the Development of Drama in Nigeria,” in *Cross-Currents in African Theatre*, ed. Austin Asagba (Ibadan, Nigeria: Krafts Books, 2001), 46.

94 Yerima, 48.

95 Note that the epistemological perception of political theatre which undergirds this research is drawn from Rancière’s concept of politics and is encapsulated in Boal’s Legislative Theatre. It is the type of theatre focused on the concerns and struggles of society’s underlings or rejects and seeks to better their existential realities by creating conducive ambience for their potential involvement in the making of laws that improve their lot.

A definitive gravitation towards the politicisation of the Nigerian theatre occurred on Monday, March 4th, 1946, when, on the platform of his theatre company, ‘The African Music Research Party’, Ogunde staged the *Tiger’s Empire*. This came after Ogunde had, in 1944, staged some operas under the auspices of his church. Notable among these was a performance titled *Garden of Eden and the Throne of God*. Departing from religious themes to embrace secular concerns, Ogunde, in *Tiger’s Empire*, tells the story of the entrance of the Europeans into Nigeria as seemingly harmless traders and missionaries and how they were received by an unsuspecting local king, King Onikoyi, who granted the Europeans the freedom to ply their trade and carry out their missionary activities. However, King Onikoyi soon realised his mistake when the European soldiers arrived and took political control of the natives who they claimed were killing the Europeans. In essence, Ogunde’s *Tiger’s Empire* dramatised ‘the deceitfulness in which the Europeans came to rule Nigeria’.⁹⁶ Through this text, Ogunde exposes the ills of colonialism by addressing the deception and backhandedness at its core. With the performance of *Tiger’s Empire*, Ogunde launched his professional theatre career. This initiative gave Nigeria her first contemporary theatre company in which (Yoruba) women appeared in a play as professional artistes in their own rights and were thus engaged as paid actresses.⁹⁷ Historical accounts have it that Adunni Oluwole was one of the pioneer actresses employed by Ogunde.⁹⁸

Ogunde’s interest in theatre commenced ‘at a very early age’⁹⁹ and received its initial impetus from circumstances within his immediate family. Ogunde’s father was a pastor affiliated with the local Baptist Church. His mother was the daughter of an *Ifa* priest and took young Ogunde with her to many *Ifa* festivals. Also, his grandfather had ‘a special liking for me and wanted me at his side always’.¹⁰⁰ The result, as Ogunde intimates, was that by constantly being at his grandfather’s side and watching him pour incantations as well as listening to the songs and drums of the traditional worshippers, his flair for theatre was stimulated.

Ogunde later joined the Police Force and became the Entertainment Officer of the Police. This position, as well as his past theatrical performances under the aegis of the church, enabled Ogunde to hone his latent theatrical talents. Having thus cut his teeth in theatre practice, Ogunde, in 1946, abandoned the security of a paid job

96 Eburn Clark, *Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1979), 84.

97 Clark, 29.

98 Ngozi Udengwu, “‘The First Actress Party’: Adunni Oluwole and the First Guerrilla Theatre in Nigeria,” in *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Theatre History and Historiography*, ed. Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson (London and New York, 2020), 115.

99 J. A. Adedeji, “The Church and the Emergence of the Nigerian Theatre: 1915-1945,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 6, no. 4 (1973): 394.

100 Bernth Lindfors, “Ogunde on Ogunde: Two Autobiographical Statements,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 28, no. 2 (1976): 240–41.

and took to the road as a professional theatre maker thereby joining the itinerant artistes (*alarinjo*) or the ‘rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars’¹⁰¹ as such itinerant artistes were derogatorily dubbed among the Yoruba (Nigeria) people. This is evidence, perhaps, of the prospects which Ogunde saw in theatre practice. Having taken that plunge, Ogunde de-emphasised religious issues in preference for secular (often contemporaneous) matters.¹⁰² This brings Ogunde’s theatre in alignment with the militant form of political theatre which envisages to catalyse change by addressing perceived contemporary political imbalances.

Between 1945 and 1950, Ogunde wrote many plays which were considered overtly political: *Worse than Crime* (1945), *Strike and Hunger* (1945), *Tiger’s Empire* (1946), *Herbert Macaulay* (1946), *Towards Liberty* (1947), and *Bread and Bullet* (1950). Ogunde’s *Strike and Hunger*, written in 1945 and performed in 1946, was markedly political. It was historically connected to the 1945 general strike embarked upon by an estimated thirty thousand workers belonging to seventeen trade unions who, for about one month, protested against their conditions of service.¹⁰³ The Second World War, the period which preceded the strike, heralded intense pressure on the colonies. The strike was precipitated by a colonial policy which exerted many more hours of work than usual from Nigerian workers in a bid to support the British economy during the Second World War.¹⁰⁴ While many were drafted into the war as soldiers, those left behind were grossly pressed and over laboured to carry the burden of the war. The colonial administration in Nigeria mounted intense propaganda urging ‘everybody to do everything in his power to subdue Hitler’.¹⁰⁵ Workers in key industries were mandatorily made to work 77 hours per week.¹⁰⁶ Inflation made purchasing power low and cost of living high.

These indices which engendered the nationwide strike also foregrounded Ogunde’s *Strike and Hunger*. *Strike and Hunger* is essentially a story of a king’s oppressive treatment of his subjects. In the play, Ogunde dramatises how the authoritarian foreign king, Oba Yejide, arrives from across the sea, subdues the native authorities and spreads his severe rule over the natives.¹⁰⁷ At the inception of his rule, Oba Yejide enjoys the cooperation and support of the natives who have become his subjects. Basking euphorically in their support Oba Yejide takes advantage of the goodwill

101 Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele, “‘Alarinjo’: The Traditional Yoruba Travelling Theatre,” in *Theatre in Africa*, ed. Oyin Ogunba and Abiola Irele (Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press, 1978), 34.

102 J. A. Adedeji and Hyginus Ekwuazi, *Nigeria Theatre: Dynamics of a Movement* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Caltop, 1998), 47–48.

103 Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria*, 32.

104 Wale Oyemakinde, “The Nigerian General Strike of 1945,” *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 7, no. 4 (1975): 695.

105 Oyemakinde, 695.

106 Oyemakinde, 694–95.

107 Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria*, 30.

and generosity of his subjects. Oba Yejide's highhandedness soon takes its toll on the existential realities of the subjects who eventually protest due to their poor living conditions. Oba Yejide senses the threat to his power which the protest represents and agrees to enhance the earnings of his subjects. This helps to quell the protest and restore order.

It has been argued that with *Strike and Hunger* Ogunde established himself as a 'foremost anticolonial dramatist of his time'¹⁰⁸ owing to the fact that the play was based on the Nigerian General Workers' Strike of 1945, an industrial action considered the 'classic example of strike action in a colonial setting'.¹⁰⁹ *Strike and Hunger* 'opens a window on to the way African writers reimagined the unequal world of colonial politics'.¹¹⁰

Ogunde's *Strike and Hunger* is deemed to have been extremely controversial¹¹¹ and to have received both logistic and financial support from many outside the fold of the working class including Oluwole, a dramatist, politician and contemporary of Hubert Ogunde.¹¹² Written during the industrial phase of the nationalist reaction to imperialism,¹¹³ *Strike and Hunger* has enjoyed copious critical acclaim as a result of what is perceived as its nationalistic fervour. Never in the history of Nigeria had a theatrical performance wielded 'such a significant impact on politics'.¹¹⁴ On its only night in Jos, in the northern part of the country, the performance of *Strike and Hunger* ended in a fiasco having been banned by the British colonial government. The ban was widely publicised by *West African Pilot*, a Newspaper owned by Nnamdi Azikiwe which was dedicated to the fight for the independence of Nigeria (and other West African countries) from British colonial rule. The publicity turned Ogunde from 'just the darling of the Yoruba people' to a 'national hero'.¹¹⁵

The positive critical acclaim notwithstanding, *Strike and Hunger* has also been denigrated for what is considered its failure to offer 'any programmatic anticolonial thesis'¹¹⁶ through definitive advocacy for the abolition of colonialism. The play is said to have instead merely favoured the amelioration of the colonial condition. Its reputa-

108 Awam Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 2003, 84, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203495766>.

109 Oyemakinde, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945," 693.

110 Coates, "Hubert Ogunde's Strike and Hunger and the 1945 General Strike in Lagos: Labor and Reciprocity in the Kingdom of Oba Yejide," 167.

111 Coates, 167.

112 Oyemakinde, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945," 704.

113 Oyemakinde, 694.

114 Coates, "Hubert Ogunde's Strike and Hunger and the 1945 General Strike in Lagos: Labor and Reciprocity in the Kingdom of Oba Yejide," 167.

115 Coates, 168.

116 Eburn Clark cited by Coates, 169.

tion as a nationalistic play has been located not textually on the basis of the content of the opera but contextually on ‘Nnamdi Azikiwe’s focus on the national strike as constituting an anticolonial protest contiguous with nationalism’.¹¹⁷ Howbeit, Oliver Coates in his discussion of the relationship between Ogunde’s *Strike and Hunger* and the 1945 General Strike departs from the polemics about the presence, or lack thereof, of a definitive anti-colonial thesis in *Strike and Hunger*. Coates argues that the play represents the Yoruba ethics of reciprocity in which Ogunde makes an ‘impassioned plea for reciprocity that locates organized labor in relation to Yoruba social thought’.¹¹⁸

I argue, instead, that beyond the ethics of reciprocity, and moving away from the confines of Yoruba social thought, Ogunde’s *Strike and Hunger* represents a dramatic renegotiation of a national policy endorsed by the British government. The policy ensured that return on labour was negatively skewed against the actual producers of the country’s wealth and which, at that time, (during the Second World War) was being used to sustain the economy of the British colonisers. I argue that through the play, Ogunde questioned the appropriateness of a policy that demanded such an enormous number of weekly working hours (77) from the workers. Using the play, Ogunde made a clear connection between a British colonial government policy and its effect on the living conditions of the people. By dramatising the effect of the policy, Ogunde exemplified the role Nigerian theatre practitioners played in kicking against laws which were deemed not in conformity with the people’s well-being thereby using theatre as a platform to canvass for the enhancement of the citizens’ quality of living.

My argument is corroborated by the fact that, the supposed lack of a programmatic anticolonial thesis notwithstanding, through their protests the natives place their demand before the King and succeed in making him rescind his inhuman policy. The King further agrees to treat the natives more humanely thereby restoring the social order and ending the protests. Thus, Ogunde dramatises the importance of creating an ambience for (re)negotiation which countenances and utilises input from an aggrieved party in resolving any crisis including policy related crisis.

Ogunde is considered, in a modern sense, the ‘true precursor’ of Nigerian political drama in whose hands the medium of drama became a ‘megaphone for decrying British colonialism and social injustice, and a weapon for a peaceful nationalist struggle’.¹¹⁹ By focusing thematically on the hardship experienced by Nigerian workers who were made to labour compulsorily for 77 hours per week in order to buoy up the British

117 Coates, 179.

118 Coates, 167.

119 Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria*, 25.

economy during the Second World War, Ogunde could be said to have made definitive statement against the oppressive consequences of colonialism.

Bread and Bullet, another play-text which interrogated government policy on, and attitude to, the welfare of workers, was Ogunde's response to the killing, by the colonial police, of eighteen coal miners at the Enugu Colliery during a demonstration for increase in wages that would be commensurate with the high cost of living.¹²⁰ In fact, most of Ogunde's dramas written before Nigeria's independence were critical commentaries on the colonial government which caused the colonial administration embarrassment and in turn made Ogunde and his theatre targets of official harassment.¹²¹

Two notable but contradictory strands of critical opinion exist with regard to the effect which the repression Ogunde's Theatre suffered had on his career. One trajectory claims that those inhibitions 'never deterred him',¹²² and pays tribute to him for not sparing 'his rod on any uncharitable organisation and situation'.¹²³ However, another thread of critical estimation argues that the repressive activities of the authorities against his company might have achieved, eventually, the effect which the various authorities desired. This line of thought argues that starting from the late 1960s into the 1970s, Ogunde's plays lost their 'antagonistic and critical tone'.¹²⁴ While recurrent attacks from the authorities could have been remotely connected with this perceived twist in Ogunde's political commitment, the immediate cause is presumably the clamp down by the regional government of Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola which 'devastated Ogunde's company economically and pushed it to the verge of bankruptcy'.¹²⁵

Also, during the era of oil boom in Nigeria which was characterised both by profligacy and official corruption as well as by a tightening of the noose of military dictatorship, Ogunde is said to have become something of an Establishment figure choosing to deploy his art for the production of commercially oriented theatrical works 'whose main themes proposed a more stable Nigerian society despite the obvious political misadventures perpetrated by the military and civilian governments'.¹²⁶ Awam Amkpa is unequivocal in his assertion that under the military administrations of the 1980s, Ogunde became a prominent supporter of the military governments and began to

120 Eburn Clark, "Ogunde Theatre: The Rise of Contemporary Professional Theatre in Nigeria 1946-72," in *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria: A Critical Source Book*, ed. Yemi Ogunbiyi, Second Edn (Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria: Tanus, 2014), 377.

121 Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria*, 29.

122 Adedeji and Ekwuazi, *Nigeria Theatre: Dynamics of a Movement*, 49.

123 Nobert Oyibo Eze, "The Evolution and Development of the Modern Nigerian Theatre: From Colonialism to Independence," *Nsukka Journal of Humanities* 12 (2002): 159.

124 Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 90.

125 Amkpa, 90.

126 Amkpa, 90.

produce 'safe' plays in order, seemingly, to avoid the possible danger of sliding into bankruptcy.¹²⁷ I note that in this submission, Amkpa is specific in his reference to Ogunde's works under the military dictatorship of the 1980s. Notwithstanding Amkpa's arguable position, suffice it to state that the scope of my interest in Ogunde in this dissertation is mainly in regard to plays written between the 1940s and 1969. However, with reference to the period covered by this dissertation in relation Ogunde's works, Ogunde's *Keep Nigeria One* appears to suggest an ambivalence in his political vision. Ogunde wrote *Keep Nigeria One* in 1968 during the Nigerian Civil War, a war essentially between the Hausa/Fulani of northern Nigeria and the Igbo of southern Nigeria. The evident anti-Igbo quality of *Keep Nigeria One* elicited protest from *Nigeria Daily Times*, a national newspaper that had hitherto fully supported the Nigerian federal government. In compensation, the federal government approved Ogunde's *Keep Nigeria One* along with other plays for a tour to London (1968-9) as part of Nigerian government's public relations exercise during the civil war.¹²⁸

Notwithstanding the charge of an ambivalent political vision on account of *Keep Nigeria One*, the majority of Ogunde's theatrical output written during the period covered by this research left appreciable impact on the interface between the theatre and the struggle for a better Nigeria. Ogunde is said to have thrown his professional theatre career, from its inception, into the vanguard of nationalistic struggles and demonstrated his sensitivity to certain happenings in Nigeria which call for questioning.¹²⁹ More importantly Ogunde also left his mark on the interface between theatre and law in the fight against repressive rule in Nigeria. Ogunde's plays discussed in this chapter eloquently attest to this claim. With specific reference to *Strike and Hunger*, Ogunde demonstrated theatre's potential in providing a platform on which extant policies can be interrogated in the interest of the citizens.

Ogunde's theatre was sufficiently critical to have attracted the wrath of the government. His theatre provides an early instance of government's 'intervention' in theatre practice in Nigeria under the British colonial government; an 'intervention' that was indeed meant to gag the theatre. Sir Arthur Richards was the colonial governor of Nigeria during the period (1943-1948) while Sir John Robert Patterson was the Chief Commissioner of the northern region (1943-1947). The duo were at the helm of affairs when Ogunde suffered brutalities on account of both *Strike and Hunger* and *Tiger's Empire*.

127 Amkpa, 90.

128 David Kerr, *African Popular Theatre: From Pre-Colonial Times to the Present Day* (Oxford, UK: James Currey, 1995), 93.

129 Adedeji and Ekwuazi, *Nigeria Theatre: Dynamics of a Movement*, 48.

Timeline for the first brush was 1946 and the setting was Jos, in the northern part of Nigeria. Ogunde and his team were on tour with *Strike and Hunger*. Ogunde recalls that half an hour into the show a police constable entered the stage through the dressing room and pointing at Ogunde announced, 'This is the organizer, I arrest you'.¹³⁰ About forty other constables invaded the hall, 'scattered the audience, broke down the stage and marched Ogunde and five members of his party to the station'.¹³¹ Thus, Ogunde and his men 'were arrested and locked up in cells'.¹³² Ogunde, who thought it was 'a dream' woke up to the reality of being charged with inciting 'His Majesty's subjects to disorder'¹³³ for which he was found guilty and made to pay a fine of £125. To elucidate, Ogunde's real 'crime' was the colonial administration's anxiety that the performance might awaken the political consciousness of the hitherto complacent northerners into confirmed pro-independence agitators, hence the need to squash the performance.¹³⁴ This attests to the anti-colonialist impact of Ogunde's theatre in Nigeria's march to freedom from British colonial rule.

Ogunde was undeterred by this experience and his troupe continued their tour to Kano, another major city in northern Nigeria. While the police in Jos had waited for the commencement of the performance before swooping on Ogunde and his team, the Kano police summoned Ogunde soon after his arrival to Kano and promptly halted the performance of his play, an action that was meant to ensure that Ogunde and his team did not exercise 'bad'¹³⁵ influence on His Majesty's subjects. Although Ogunde's skirmish with the police at Kano over *Strike and Hunger* did not lead to arrest, the narrative was not quite the same when, during a performance of *Bread and Bullet* in the same city (Kano) few years later, the colonial police interrupted the performance, arrested and detained Ogunde for the second time in his career. Consequently, *Bread and Bullet* was proscribed. The thematic thrust of *Bread and Bullet* based on the killing of miners at the Enugu Colliery by the police was apparently provocative to the colonial administration. To permanently rid northern Nigeria of Ogunde's 'bad' influence, a ban on future shows was placed on Ogunde and his team throughout the entire northern region.¹³⁶ Also, on account of *Tiger's Empire*, Ogunde was to have been charged, at one time, with 'inciting the people'¹³⁷ against the colonial government but for lack of evidence.

130 Clark, "Ogunde Theatre: The Rise of Contemporary Professional Theatre in Nigeria 1946-72," 299.

131 Clark, 299.

132 Lindfors, "Ogunde on Ogunde: Two Autobiographical Statements," 244.

133 Lindfors, 244.

134 Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 88.

135 Lindfors, "Ogunde on Ogunde: Two Autobiographical Statements," 244.

136 Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 88.

137 Clark, *Hubert Ogunde: The Making of Nigerian Theatre*, 85.

Ogunde's effort during the same period, precisely in 1946, to travel to the UK in company of his partner, Clementina Ogunbule, in order to acquire more knowledge about theatre was met with stiff opposition by the colonial administration. The denial of their applications for passports and visas sparked a new confrontation between Ogunde and the colonial administration. Ogunde took advantage of the camaraderie between his theatre company and the *Daily Comet* by bringing the refusal to the knowledge of the Newspaper. It took the wide publicity given to the denial by the Newspaper, which the Immigration Office must have considered bad press, for the passports and visas to be issued to Ogunde and his partner.¹³⁸

Few years into Nigeria's self-rule, Ogunde was in another broil this time not with the colonial police but with an indigenous government 'in so-called independent, even democratic times.'¹³⁹ The immediate context of the clash was Ogunde's *Yoruba Ronu!* (Yoruba Think!), a play based on the political squabble between two prominent Yoruba leaders. They were Chief Obafemi Awolowo, founder of the Action Group (AG), a predominantly Western Nigeria political party, and leader of the opposition in the federal parliament, and Chief Samuel Ladoke Akintola, Premier of the Western region, both of whom were factional leaders of the AG at that time.

Superficially, *Yoruba Ronu!* appears to merely recount the defection, in the nineteenth century, of Field Marshal Afonja of Ilorin from the authority of the Alafin of Oyo, Oba Fiwajoye. The history of the defection of Field Marshal Afonja has attained transcendental value among the Yoruba people, thus arguably acquiring the status of a myth. The rebel, Afonja, aligns with the invading Fulani from the North. In protest, the people of Ilorin kill Afonja thereby retaining the authority of the Alafin over Ilorin. This seemingly innocuous mythic dramatic representation was in fact a thinly veiled allegorical depiction of post-independence politics in Western Nigeria in which Chief Akintola defected from the Chief Awolowo-led Action Group and, in alliance with Northern and federal politicians, formed a splinter party: Nigerian National Democratic Party.¹⁴⁰ Thus, by deploying a seemingly purposeless mythic account, Ogunde conveys a strong political message. This, as I argue, is one of the ways by which the concept of play features in the works of the dramatists being studied in this dissertation.

Yoruba Ronu! was Ogunde's way of calling attention to the potential political damage the discord was capable of inflicting on the Yoruba people within the Nigerian polity. Notwithstanding that *Yoruba Ronu!* is considered 'a scathing attack against the dis-

138 Clark, "Ogunde Theatre: The Rise of Contemporary Professional Theatre in Nigeria 1946-72," 299-301.

139 Wole Soyinka, "Twice Bitten: The Fate of Africa's Culture Producers," *PMLA* 105, no. 1 (1990): 112.

140 Kerr, *African Popular Theatre: From Pre-Colonial Times to the Present Day*, 92.

unity, bickering and opportunism displayed by the political leaders of the (Western) region',¹⁴¹ as political art, Soyinka classifies the play as 'quite moderate'.¹⁴² In other words, in Soyinka's estimation Ogunde's *Yoruba Ronu!* was not sufficiently politically caustic to have earned for Ogunde's Theatre its proscription in the entire Western region.

This proscription in the region that provided the strongest audience base was presumably devastating for Ogunde's Theatre thereby forcing the company to the brink of bankruptcy. I have noted the opinions of critics who suggest that the repressive hold of the various governments on Ogunde's theatre foisted on him an ambivalent political vision. In fact, some critics have dug deeper in their charge and have located Ogunde's ideological 'ambivalence' in the writing of *Strike and Hunger* (1945) which they claim 'revealed its architect's ambivalence toward the European presence in Nigeria'.¹⁴³ To such critics Ogunde's ambivalent political vision preceded the clamp down on his company after the performance of *Yoruba Ronu!* Notwithstanding, Ogunde's Theatre often ran sufficient critical commentary on Nigeria's political realities to have earned him the wrath of both the British colonial and the independent, democratic governments in Nigeria.

Thus, Ogunde's theatre provides a mix between myth, play and law. Ogunde finds myth as a practical device with which to question the effects which some British colonial laws had on Nigerians during the colonial era. I argue that the seemingly inconsequential manner in which Ogunde employs myth in his cryptic treatment of political matters, and the messages therein contained, are relatable to the apparent purposelessness which Brown associates with the concept of play.¹⁴⁴ Thus, myth facilitates a *playful* commentary on otherwise contentious political issues.

1.3.1.1. Ogunde's Contemporaries

Prominent among Ogunde's contemporaries was Duro Ladipo who, following Ogunde's venture into itinerant professional theatre practice, set up his own professional theatre company. Whereas there is some degree of certainty about the month and date (December, 18th) of Ladipo's birth, inconsistency exists about the year and place with possibilities hovering between 1931 and 1932 as the year, and also Osogbo and Ilobuu, as the place of birth.¹⁴⁵ It is undisputed, however, that Ladipo was born

141 Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 90.

142 Soyinka, "Twice Bitten: The Fate of Africa's Culture Producers," 112.

143 Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 87.

144 Stuart Brown, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul* (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), Chapter 2.

145 Abiodun Duro-Ladipo and Gboyega Kolawole, "Opera in Nigeria: The Case of Duro Ladipo's 'Oba Koso,'" *Black Music Research Journal* 17, no. 1 (1997): 101; Oludare Olajubu, "The Sources of Duro Ladipo's 'Oba Ko So,'" *Research in African Literatures* 9, no. 3 (1978): 332.

into a lineage of drummers who were firmly rooted in traditional African (Yoruba) religious worship. His early exposure to Yoruba cultural practices, along with a level of Western education and his later conversion to Christianity, left their imprint on Ladipo in a dual cultural outlook that was fused in his theatre practice.¹⁴⁶ Ladipo's theatre found its uniqueness in the theatrical expression of Yoruba philosophy, religion and folklore. This, understandably, earned it wide acceptability among the Yoruba-speaking people. Ladipo is thought to have broken with the conventional theatrical preferences of the Ogunde school, both in thematic predilection and staging, thereby developing 'an invigorating style that is recognisably Yoruba with a kind of piquancy that is at once satisfying'.¹⁴⁷

Elijah Kolawole Ogunmola, another Ogunde's contemporary, was regarded as one of Africa's most brilliant actors during the 1950s and 1960s. Ogunmola was born in November, 1925, in the Western part of Nigeria. Like his two contemporaries (Ogunde and Ladipo), Ogunmola's theatre practice was influenced by his Christian belief. On the platform of his troupe, 'Ogunmola Theatre Party', Ogunmola produced folk operas which were a fusion of Christian themes and traditional folklore enriched with music and dance. His opera, *Reign of the Mighty*, is partly based on his Christian convictions.

Prior to his professional theatre practice, Ogunmola had a short stint in the teaching profession. Thus, he apprehended the import of education and utilised his theatre as an 'effective instrument of campaign for adult literacy and mass education in the villages and rural communities'.¹⁴⁸ On the distinguishing features between Ogunde's theatre and his, Ogunmola remarked that Ogunde's theatre catered for the entertainment need of enlightened city dwellers while his was primed to address and hopefully tackle the social development needs of rural communities.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, with respect to political depth, only Oluwole's theatre is comparable to Ogunde's.

Adunni Oluwole substantially shared with Ogunde the objective of using drama as a platform for political conscientisation. A pioneer female dramatist in Nigeria, Oluwole recognised the potency of drama for sensitisation and mass mobilisation.¹⁵⁰ She was a famous rights activist who supported the struggle for workers' welfare espe-

146 Duro_Ladipo and Kolawole, "Opera in Nigeria: The Case of Duro Ladipo's 'Oba Koso,'" 102; Olajubu, "The Sources of Duro Ladipo's 'Oba Ko So,'" 332.

147 Adedeji and Ekwuazi, *Nigeria Theatre: Dynamics of a Movement*, 53.

148 Adedeji and Ekwuazi, 49.

149 Adedeji and Ekwuazi, 49.

150 Onyeka Iwuchukwu, "Nigeria: The Challenge of (and for) the Female Playwright," *Critical Stages/Scenes Critiques*, 2017, http://www.critical-stages.org/15/nigeria-the-challenge-of-and-for-the-female-playwright/?fbclid=IwAR3zc8lJmwaCL_BP8mxeBzRmbRkxRw3iBfLtJUjkmzLvGs2YsdFbXT0.

cially during the Nigerian general strike of 1945.¹⁵¹ Although her theatre practice was short-lived, she made her mark as the first Nigerian woman to set up her own theatre troupe, The First Actress Party.¹⁵² The incorporation of the word ‘first’ was Oluwole’s deliberate move to assert herself as the first actress and the first female theatre leader in Nigeria.¹⁵³

Oluwole seems to have blazed the trail in many ways. Ngozi Udengwu who defines guerrilla theatre as not just a theatre which offers political challenge but does so through ‘elements of surprise, utilizing a stripped-down theatre aesthetics and taking place in unlikely locations’¹⁵⁴ gives to Oluwole, not Soyinka as previously held, the credit for the inception of guerrilla theatre in Nigeria.¹⁵⁵ Udengwu describes Oluwole’s theatre as a ‘one-woman show’ in which she was the only actor with a speaking role supported by two or more actors playing minor roles.¹⁵⁶ Oluwole had a unique manner of passing across her political messages. Dressed in a prisoner’s uniform with handcuffs, Oluwole would walk through the streets with two or three fierce-looking men who acted as though they were flogging her. This would expectedly draw the attention of the public with a crowd consequently following her as she moved along the streets. Oluwole would intermittently stop to address the crowd on the political situation of the country. She insisted that her prisoner’s attire and handcuffs were emblematic of the future awaiting Nigerians if they allowed the emerging crop of politicians to take the reins of leadership from the colonial administrators.¹⁵⁷ Oluwole believed that the kind of leaders springing up at that time was an indication of Nigeria’s unpreparedness for self-rule.

Oluwole soon became unsatisfied with expressing her political views through drama and consequently disbanded her drama troupe for a full political career. She, again, became the first Nigerian woman to establish a political party, Nigerian Commoners Liberal Party, with which she continued her political sensitisation and mobilisation. Oluwole found a full political carrier as a preferred platform for her unorthodox stance of canvassing against the agitation for Nigeria’s independence in the immediate. She premised her campaign on what she termed ‘the hypocrisy in indigenous politicians as they paid lip services to the welfare of the people’.¹⁵⁸ In her assessment, the emerging Nigerian political leadership had abused the degree of responsibility

151 Emmanuel Okogba, “Adunni Oluwole Warned Against This Independence,” Vanguard News, 2018, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/01/adunni-oluwole-warned-independence/>.

152 Iwuchukwu, “Nigeria: The Challenge of (and for) the Female Playwright.”

153 Udengwu, “‘The First Actress Party’: Adunni Oluwole and the First Guerrilla Theatre in Nigeria,” 115.

154 Udengwu, 112.

155 Udengwu, 112.

156 Udengwu, 117.

157 Udengwu, 118.

158 Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria*, 43.

they had already secured and should therefore not be saddled with more. Her anti-independence campaign earned for her political party the alias 'Egbe Koyinbo Mailo' ('The-Whiteman-should-not-go' Party).¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately she died prematurely in 1957 due to a tetanus infection.

Ogunde, Ogunmola, Ladipo and Oluwole each carved a niche for themselves on the Nigerian stage. Although Ogunmola and Ladipo's theatres did not completely jettison political issues, Ogunde and Oluwole's theatres were more 'closely allied to the political situation'.¹⁶⁰ However, despite manifesting discernible political propensity, they both differed significantly. While Ogunde arguably lent his practice to the fight against colonial rule, Oluwole, on the other hand, took a surprising tangent that canvassed against the call for independence at that time. Oluwole saw independence as a matter for the future when, the political leaders through their conduct, would have demonstrated their preparedness for Nigeria's self-government.

1.3.2. Nigerian Political Theatre in the Hands of University Scholars

Departing from the above, another wave of political ferment in the Nigerian theatre began to spring up around 1960; the year Nigeria gained political independence from British colonial rule. This time, the ferment sprang forth from the Nigerian academic community. A look at the creative oeuvre of these dramatists shows a preference for the appropriation of myth in communicating their intended messages. Myth, as noted earlier, is 'the affirmation of history and reality as informed by beliefs, customs and events which have attained such unquestionable, absolutist and transcendental value';¹⁶¹ those values, in consequence, become engrained in a people's worldview. Thus, being at the core of the communal realities of a people, myth often becomes a ready source from which creative minds draw in articulating their artistic imaginations. This evidently applies to Nigerian dramatists.

Tess Onwueme identifies two approaches to the application of myth in the Nigerian modernist drama: the mythopoeic and the revolutionary approaches. According to Onwueme, the mythopoeic approach mystifies history, custom, past heroes and traditions by according them the status of the sacred. Contrarily, the revolutionary unbundles the sacredness and plants the myth within a domain that could tend towards the profane.¹⁶² Onwueme notes that the mythopoeic approach tends to handle mythology with greater level of fidelity to the mythic account but the revolutionary approach takes the liberty to deconstruct the myth often for subversive and liberational purposes.

159 Okogba, "Adunni Oluwole Warned Against This Independence."

160 Ukpokodu, *Socio-Political Theatre in Nigeria*, 29.

161 Onwueme, "Visions of Myth in Nigerian Drama: Femi Osofisan versus Wole Soyinka," 59.

162 Onwueme, 59.

1.3.2.1. Nigerian Political Theatre and University Scholars: Wole Soyinka as Paradigm (1960-1996)

Wole Soyinka's works have, undoubtedly, received enormous critical attention. However, I deviate from existing scholarship on Soyinka by specifically examining his critique of some Nigerian laws during the period of military dictatorship. I also examine Soyinka's use of myth in his demonstration of political unorthodoxy. Soyinka's dramaturgy aligns significantly with the mythopoeic approach to the application of myth in which fidelity to the mythic account is a major feature. Fidelity in Soyinka's craft does not, however, amount to an insipid rendering of mythological accounts.

On his return to Nigeria in 1960 after his studies in the United Kingdom, Soyinka staged *A Dance of the Forests* (henceforth *A Dance*) as part of the Nigerian independence celebrations in that year. In *A Dance* Soyinka crafts into contemporary relevance the Yoruba Ogun mythology by appropriating it into the thematic thrust of the text thus demonstrating that myth could serve as facility in the expression of political nonconformity. Soyinka presents the cyclical destructive-creative paradox of Ogun as something to be heedful of in the new political dispensation.¹⁶³ The cyclical reality which Soyinka saw in Ogun informed his foreboding that the abuse of power might not feature only in the past under the British colonialist administration but could become a contiguous reality under indigenous Nigerian leaders who were taking over the reins of power after Nigeria's independence. While the Nigerian nation was collectively revelling in the ecstasy of freedom from British colonial domination, Soyinka goes 'against the grain of celebration to foreshadow and disturbingly evaluate the presence of neo-colonialism in the newly "liberated"'¹⁶⁴ Nigerian state. Thus, Soyinka expressed similar views with Oluwole on the nature of the emergent Nigerian leadership at the time of independence.

In *A Dance*, Soyinka (de)constructs the period of Nigeria's independence as not a moment for jubilation but as a juncture for deep reflection and presages the burgeoning gap between aspirations at independence and what the author foresaw as the emerging post-colonial reality.¹⁶⁵ In the midst of a collective consciousness sedated, metaphorically speaking, into euphoric ecstasy, Soyinka sees no meaningful difference between a colonial and a neo-colonial state as both are, essentially, semantic signifiers describing 'an absolutist state'¹⁶⁶ (a state in which there is an absolute cessation of motion or change).

163 Neloufer de Mel, "Myth as History: Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*," *Wasafiri* 9, no. 18 (1993): 27.

164 Mel, 27.

165 Mel, 31.

166 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1998), 14.

Soyinka employs the Ogun myth in order to demonstrate his persuasion that the quality of leaders who were settling into positions of power, and the glib optimism of the populace, underscored the remoteness of the possibility of change.¹⁶⁷ Thus, using the Ogun myth as tool, Soyinka cautioned that the rapture of independence should be tempered with the reality of the repetitive nature of eternal history as, in his view, the emerging rulers ‘were going to behave exactly like their forebears’.¹⁶⁸

Using the Ogun myth, Soyinka expresses his concern that the withdrawal of the British colonialists would not automatically translate to good governance given the crop of leaders who were emerging in Nigeria during the period of independence. As indicated earlier, I argue that through the adoption of myth the concept of play often features in the works of Nigerian playwrights. In this instance, through the application of the Ogun myth in *A Dance*, Soyinka demonstrates the ‘apparent purposelessness’¹⁶⁹ of play in the sense that while entertaining the audience with a seemingly inconsequential historical account, Soyinka makes critical comments about the political situation of Nigeria at the time of independence. This manner of application of myth becomes a *playfully serious* engagement. Thus, through the interplay of the concepts of myth and play in *A Dance* Soyinka attests to his commitment to seeking good governance beyond the ceremonial trappings of political independence. For Soyinka’s works which engage more directly with some provisions of the law in Nigeria, I turn first to *From Zia With Love*.

Soyinka’s *From Zia With Love* (henceforth *From Zia*) premiered in Sienna, Italy, in 1992 and was published the same year. *From Zia*, the stage version of *A Scourge of Hyacinths*, a radio drama, is set in a Maximum Security Prison in Lagos, Nigeria. Like the city of Lagos, the play’s physical locale is surrounded by lagoons clogged with water hyacinths. *From Zia*’s thematic compass revolves round three prison inmates Miguel, Detiba and Emuke charged with various infractions. For instance, Miguel, a Lagos business mogul is being incarcerated for a not too clearly stated business deal. Miguel’s participation in the transaction for which he is charged hovers between real and imagined. The indeterminacy of the circumstances surrounding the incarceration of the victims is set against the backdrop of a regime, led by the Commander-in-Chief, which is promising the citizens a fresh new dawn. There is the patriotic propagandistic call to the citizens to ‘Tighten your belt. Redemption may be sooner than you think. No citizen is beyond redemption. Cultivate vigilance. Report anything suspicious. Play a role in preserving our sovereign integrity’.¹⁷⁰

167 James Gibbs, *Wole Soyinka* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 54.

168 Gibbs, 63.

169 Brown, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul*, Chapter 2.

170 Wole Soyinka, *From Zia, With Love* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Fountain Publications, 1992), 88.

However, despite the seemingly patriotic call the regime is, in reality, a dictatorship that has entrapped the citizens. The author employs the dramaturgic device of play-within-a-play to accentuate the difference between the preachments of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime and the lived realities of the citizens. Instead of offering moral rehabilitation, the prison becomes an accurate representation of the deprivation occasioned by the reigning absolutist order,¹⁷¹ in which the citizens have become inescapably trapped by detestable decrees. Soyinka portrays this entrapment through the fate of Miguel, Detiba and Emuke.

Notwithstanding this circumstance and given the extant legal provisions, it seems reasonably probable that the inmates, particularly Miguel, will be released and expectations are rife in this regard. On the day set for the last court session, Miguel, Detiba and Emuke, expectant of a favourable court session, are optimistic of walking out of the prison into their freedom. But three days prior, there had been a new decree which makes the infractions of the trio punishable by death through firing squad. The decree is applied retroactively. Thus, instead of walking into their freedom, Miguel, Detiba and Emuke walk into a waiting firing squad and are executed.

In light of actual historical events which occurred during the Buhari/Idiagbon military dictatorship of December, 1983 to August, 1985, *From Zia's* connection with reality is apparent. Upon seizing the reins of political power on December 31, 1983 the Buhari/Idiagbon military junta in a calculated ploy to regulate public life and punish offenders (real or imagined), enacted many decrees and set up special tribunals saddled with the responsibility of convicting offenders. In the same way that the inmates of the Maximum Security Prison are surrounded by the lagoon rendered unnavigable by water hyacinths, the Buhari/Idiagbon regime circumscribed the very existence of Nigerians with intolerable decrees and special tribunals thus making the prison a metaphoric representation of Nigeria. The assurances about an envisaged better society as was touted by the government through its public orientation campaign tagged War Against Indiscipline (WAI), was incongruent with the lived realities of the citizens. Soyinka asserts that the insufferable measures of the Buhari/Idiagbon regime had a singular purpose; 'to place Nigerians on notice that they were now under an iron, inflexible rule, under governance by fear'.¹⁷²

The killing of Miguel, Detiba and Emuke is reminiscent of the execution of three Nigerians: Lawal Ojuolape (30), Bernard Ogedengbe (29), and Bartholomew Owoh (26) convicted under Decree 20 of 1984 a section of which provided that 'any person who, without lawful authority deals in, sells, smokes or inhales the drug known as

171 Adeoti, "The Military in Nigeria's Postcolonial Literature: An Overview," 30.

172 Frisky Larr, *Nigeria's Journalistic Militantism* (UK: AuthorHouse, 2011), 324.

cocaine or other similar drugs shall be guilty under section 6 (3) (K) of an offence and liable on conviction to suffer death sentence by firing squad'.¹⁷³ This decree was non-existent at the time the trio committed the infractions. Upon its promulgation, the decree took retroactive effect and one of the three, Ogedengbe, was executed for a crime that did not carry a capital forfeit at the time it was committed.¹⁷⁴ Soyinka described the execution as an 'unconscionable crime'.¹⁷⁵

The view that Soyinka's *From Zia* is one of his works which display 'a cautious faith in the ability of the urban poor and disenfranchised to liberate themselves from their degraded, intolerable conditions of existence'¹⁷⁶ is crucial in its resonance with the objectives of this research. It suggests that given the right circumstances the citizens could wield sufficient power to liberate themselves from oppression. It also typifies, as I claim, the role which Nigerian theatre practitioners played as the citizens' voice of protest against the oppressive tendencies of the rulers which, in this instance, manifested in the interrogation of the insufferable decrees which characterised the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime.

Also, through *From Zia*, Soyinka reveals the contradictions of the Buhari/Idiagbon military dictatorship. Having seized power from a democratically elected government and making bold claims about its mission of correcting the ills of the ousted government, the Buhari/Idiagbon despotic regime makes a travesty of the very core of any society, the laws. A regime which had proclaimed its mission of cleansing the Aegean stable supposedly created by a past government did the unthinkable by applying a decree retroactively in order to achieve their predetermined purpose.

From Zia is thus an exemplification of punchy satires written by Soyinka in the face of Nigeria's deepening political crisis especially under military rule to demonstrate his disquiet with the problem of politics and 'governance in spite of the people'¹⁷⁷ and his yearning for speedy corrective impact on the ailing Nigerian socio-political structure. The author's ultimate message in *From Zia* has been summed up thus: 'the elimination of repressive forces is a precondition for the emergence of democracy'.¹⁷⁸

On his return to Nigeria in 1975 after five years in exile, Soyinka also wrote revues distinguished for their topicality. This period produced 'not only the most intensely

173 Charles Akujieze, *Nigeria: An Experiment in Nation Building* (UK: AuthorHouse, 2019).

174 Wole Soyinka, "The Crimes of Buhari," Pointblank News, 2013, <http://pointblanknews.com/pbn/articles-opinions/the-crimes-of-buhari/>.

175 Soyinka.

176 Biodun Jeyifo, *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 91.

177 Gbemisola Adeoti, *Literature and the Art of Shaving a Man's Head in His Absence* (Ile-Ife, Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2015), 27.

178 Adeoti, "Literary Drama, Literacy and the Quest for Democracy in Nigeria: An Appraisal," 56–57.

ideological and political of Soyinka's plays, they are also notable in being unambiguously partisan on the side of the disenfranchised masses'.¹⁷⁹ However, divergent critical opinions exist on Soyinka's dramaturgy from this point onward. One school of thought suggests that this period birthed a distinctive 'paradigm shift from the playwright's recurrent Ogunian metaphysical evocations to a more ferocious topicality'.¹⁸⁰ In other words, this view suggests that Soyinka thenceforth began to deal more overtly with topical issues in a manner that was no longer occluded by his hitherto characteristic recourse to the Ogun mythology. Another school of thought engages this argument and blames it on a failure to discriminate Soyinka's two different approaches to the theatrical handling of socio-political malaise. In other words, the Soyinka of the tragic genre in which myth is 'fine, dense and, perhaps, obscure', should be distinguished from the Soyinka of the comic mode in which 'myth becomes mundane and pliable'.¹⁸¹ This school of thought submits that there is no 'movement' or 'departure' from but a consistency of vision and strategy.¹⁸² Soyinka himself claims commitment not to a literary ideology but to a social vision.¹⁸³

With *The Beatification of Area Boy: A Lagosian Kaleidoscope* (1995), Soyinka continued to uncover the filth on the flip side of the compost heap of society. Characteristic of Soyinka's works, *The Beatification* is pithy and dense and implicates many layers of contemporary realities of the time in Nigeria's socio-political history. In particular, the play is the author's artistic response to an inhumane law enacted by the military administration of Col. Raji Rasaki (July 1988- Jan. 1992) which ensured the erasure of Maroko Island from the face of the earth. With that legislation the Ilaje Squatters – a fishing community of very low income earners – were evacuated from their shanties at Maroko Island, without rehabilitation, and the Island was reclaimed and re-allocated to government officials and their cronies. Soyinka's *The Beatification* was therefore the dramatic re-enactment of a law which demonstrates the insensitivity of the military regime to the plight of the citizens.

The Beatification has an interesting history. After securing rehearsal space for its production with plans concluded to commence rehearsals in December 1994 during Gen Sani Abacha's military regime, Soyinka eventually physically commenced rehearsals in Jamaica having been forced to flee the country due to Abacha's dictatorial rule. *The Beatification* later had its world premiere at the West Yorkshire Playhouse from

179 Jeyifo, *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism*, 91.

180 Imo Ubokudom Ben Eshiet, "From Metaphysical Profundity to Ferocious Topicality: The Paradigmatic Shifts in The Beatification of Area Boy," in *Ogun's Children: The Literature and Politics of Wole Soyinka Since the Nobel*, ed. Onookome Okome (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004), 249.

181 Idom T. Inyambri, "The Consistency of Wole Soyinka's Vision in the Beatification of Area Boy..." *A Journal of Theatre and Media Studies* 1, no. 2 (2016): 245–46.

182 Inyambri, 247.

183 Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (London: C. U. P., 1976), 61.

26 October to 25 November, 1995 in Leeds, UK, with the playwright wondering if the production 'would ever be seen by its intended audiences in Isale-eko (Lagos), in Ibadan or St. Peter's',¹⁸⁴ all in Nigeria. Thus, in his conscious fight for a people-oriented democratic setting, Soyinka employed the theatrical mode to interrogate one of the deleterious legislations issued during Nigeria's military dictatorship.

In the course of his practice during the period covered by this study, Soyinka had his brush with the authorities. *The Man Died: Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* is Soyinka's account of his imprisonment by the Nigerian government during the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970). Soyinka spent 90% of the entire period of the war (August, 1967 to September, 1969) in prison custody although he was 'never formally accused, certainly not charged and brought before a court of law, but apparently incarcerated on suspicion of sympathy for the Biafran rebellion'.¹⁸⁵ Another view claims that Soyinka's concern for the Igbo in Nigeria over the treatment meted out on them after the second coup of 1966 'put him on a collision course with the federal authorities'.¹⁸⁶

The incarceration during the civil war marked Soyinka's second imprisonment within the first decade of his return to Nigeria in 1960; the first being in 1965, 'for protesting a corrupt election'.¹⁸⁷ Soyinka was released from incarceration in 1969, and in 1970 he published *The Man Died*, an account of his prison experience. That publication belied any official hope there might have been that imprisonment could dilute the fervency of his political convictions or the firmness of his artistic commitment.¹⁸⁸

The military dictatorship of Gen. Sani Abacha bestowed on Soyinka another experience of clash with authority when his 'unrelenting and outspoken criticism got him into trouble again in the mid-1990s'.¹⁸⁹ Irked by his persistence in critiquing – even criticising – the activities of the military junta, Gen Abacha issued a warrant for Soyinka's arrest. In this instance, however, Soyinka beat the arms of the law by taking leave of the country before he was apprehended. His response to Abacha after his escape came in the form of two literary works; *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis* (1996) and *The Beatification of Area Boy* (1996), which

184 Wole Soyinka, "From Ghetto to Garrison: A Chronic Case of Orisunitis," *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 4 (1999): 18.

185 Robert W. July, "The Artist's Credo: The Political Philosophy of Wole Soyinka," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 19, no. 3 (1981): 478.

186 Ali A. Mazrui, "Wole Soyinka as a Television Critic: A Parable of Deception," *Transition* 54 (1991): 174.

187 Henry Louis Jr Gates, "Wole Soyinka: Mythopoesis and the Agon of Democracy," *The Georgia Review* 49, no. 1 (1995): 187.

188 July, "The Artist's Credo: The Political Philosophy of Wole Soyinka," 478.

189 Oyekan Owomoyela, "West African Literature A-Z," in *The Columbia Guide to West African Literature in English Since 1945* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2008), 167.

thematic trajectory I have discussed. These instances aptly demonstrate that very often in Africa theatres are in *contretemps* with governments.¹⁹⁰

Through the examined texts, I have discussed the manifestation of Soyinka's political nonconformity during the years of Nigeria's military dictatorship. With *A Dance*, I have shown Soyinka's recourse to the use of myth as a shield in the passage of critical political messages. Using *From Zia* and *The Beatification*, I discussed Soyinka's denunciation of repressive laws and its connection with his desire for a democratic society. These, as I argue, exemplify the Nigerian theatre practitioners' participation in the struggle for the end of military dictatorship in Nigeria.

1.3.2.2. Nigerian Political Theatre and University Scholars: Femi Osofisan as Paradigm (1970s and 1980s)

The second phase of creative writing in Nigeria saw the emergence of notable writers such as Bode Sowande, Kole Omotosho, Tess Onwueme, Zulu Sofola among many others. Femi Osofisan is easily the most notable among these writers. The writers addressed numerous economic, social and political issues in Nigeria. Just like Ogunde and Soyinka, Osofisan drew from myth, with his peculiar inflection, in the construction of his plays.

Femi Osofisan deployed myth extensively in his political theatre during Nigeria's military rule. Departing from existing scholarship on Osofisan's works, in this dissertation I am specifically interested in how the adoption of myth interfaced with the interrogation of laws in some of his plays. With his subversive approach to the adoption of myth, Osofisan's dramaturgy seems to redirect thoughts and attention from certain concepts and values (e.g. fidelity to mythic account) endorsed by the older (Soyinka's) generation of Nigerian dramatists. To Osofisan, myth serves as a tool with which to assert that social reconstruction is both possible and achievable by rejecting and changing existing history and oppressive rulership, and by the critical reinterpretation of traditional values.¹⁹¹ To rephrase, Osofisan's treatment of myth is premised on the disposition that fidelity to mythic account amounts to an uncritical endorsement of the societal dynamics (re)presented in the myth. Subverting the account, therefore, underscores the necessity, and possibility, of transforming the society.

In reflecting on Osofisan's rendezvous with Nigerian political drama, some elements of his personal history resonate with some critical phases in Nigeria's political history. First, Osofisan was born in 1946 when Nigeria 'stood poised at the threshold of

190 I Peter Ukpokodu, "Plays, Possession, and Rock-and-Roll: Political Theatre in Africa," *The Drama Review* 36, no. 4 (1992): 28.

191 Onwueme, "Visions of Myth in Nigerian Drama: Femi Osofisan versus Wole Soyinka," 60.

decolonization'.¹⁹² As a young man, Osofisan witnessed and presumably revelled in the optimism with which Nigerians embraced independence. Also, the year 1967 in which Osofisan commenced his studies at the University of Dakar, Senegal, coincided with the commencement of the Nigerian Civil War. After his studies, Osofisan returned to 'a nation which had undergone a terrible bloodbath, and was now subsumed under military might';¹⁹³ a country which was paradoxically booming with an economy dependent on petroleum.

Thus, in a time of paradoxical riches, this nation of myriad paradoxes,¹⁹⁴ where the military with its characteristic ambience of decrees and sirens and military jackboots had shot itself into power,¹⁹⁵ 'provided the backdrop for the work of my generation when we came to young adulthood and began to write seriously in the early 1970s'.¹⁹⁶ Osofisan describes the lived realities of postcolonial Nigeria as the turmoil which construct his plays, and against which his plays are constructed.¹⁹⁷ Put explicitly, Osofisan saw manifestly that the hopes which attended the independence celebrations had begun to wane significantly, if not altogether gone into extinction. This, perhaps, explains the passion for the Nigerian nation clearly discernible in his works, a passion which reverberates with preference for a politically committed theatre demonstrated partly in its engagement with the Nigerian laws.

Osofisan observes that the vocation of the dramatist as an agent of progress is to pitch his camp with the common people against the formidable agents of the ruling classes. This is crucial considering, especially, that the various governments in post-colonial Nigeria, with their characteristic treachery and travesties, have engendered, as Osofisan puts it, a Nigerian theatre condemned to be political.¹⁹⁸ Osofisan notes that the dramatist must remain true to his calling. In consequence, the dramatist's quest for Relevance is met with Terrorism in which the agents of State become, for the writer, potential executioners.

Given the situation, Osofisan observes that the dramatist almost invariably has to choose between avoiding an art that challenges nobody and no authority and which reinforces oppression by massaging the egos of the ruling classes, on the one hand, or going into exile in order not to be wasted, on the other hand. As a way to avoid both extremes, Osofisan finds an alternative in the form of a radical 'aesthetics of possibility' which is 'progressively creative in the vastly unfavourable political climate of our

192 Amkpa, *Theatre and Postcolonial Desires*, 46.

193 Osofisan, "The Revolution as Muse: Drama as Surreptitious Insurrection in a Postcolonial, Military State," 13.

194 Osofisan, 13.

195 Osofisan, "Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary," 4.

196 Osofisan, "The Revolution as Muse: Drama as Surreptitious Insurrection in a Postcolonial, Military State," 13.

197 Osofisan, 12.

198 Osofisan, "Reflections on Theatre Practice in Contemporary Nigeria," 83.

times'.¹⁹⁹ Osofisan's other phraseology for the aesthetics of possibility is 'surreptitious insurrection'.²⁰⁰

Surreptitious insurrection, according to Osofisan, is a 'covert and metamorphic system of manoeuvring'²⁰¹ which he employs in his artistry in order to safely wade through 'official reprisal in the form of censorship or even direct elimination'.²⁰² In view, therefore, of the volatility concomitant with creative endeavour within the Nigerian political space, and the fundamental commitment which he, as an artist, has made to ply his trade in favour of the victims of the corrupt State, Osofisan adopted surreptitious insurrection as a means of creating political awareness and, importantly, of securing his safety as well as that of his players. On the flip side, Osofisan considers theatre-going an inauspicious moment to present the audience, whose lives are patently negatively impacted by government's misrule and who often view theatre as a place of momentary escape from the harsh realities of living, with blatant political or religious propaganda.²⁰³ Osofisan's *Once Upon Four Robbers* (1980), a play which interrogates the appropriateness of the law on execution of robbers, serves both as a good example of this method of praxis and of the interface between Nigerian theatre and law.

In crafting *Once Upon Four Robbers*, (henceforth *Four Robbers*) Osofisan draws from a Yoruba folklore: The Tale of the Tortoise and the Market Women. Set in the marketplace, the play features, among others, the foursome: Hasan, Angola, Major and Alhaja, the wife of Alani, the recently executed leader of the robbery gang. After witnessing the public execution of their leader and while still in mournful mood, the members of the gang resolve, against public expectation, not to refrain from armed robbery but, on the contrary, to embark on more deadly operations. They encounter Aafa, a Muslim cleric who, at their behest, gives them a magic boon designed to enable them to successfully carry out their robbery expeditions without violence while singing a song.

The song works by exerting a soporific effect on the victims and numbing them to sleep thereby ensuring that the robbers execute their operation effortlessly safe from the long arms of the law. All goes well until the occasion when Major, one of the robbers, points his gun on the other robbers and attempts to help himself too generously to the loot after a successful operation. The ensuing argument prolongs their stay at the robbery scene and consequently leads to their arrest. The play ends with an

199 Osofisan, 83–85.

200 Osofisan, "The Revolution as Muse: Drama as Surreptitious Insurrection in a Postcolonial, Military State," 17.

201 Osofisan, 11.

202 Osofisan, 17.

203 Osofisan, 17–18.

invitation to the audience to decide the fate of the robbers. Osofisan's decision to place the fate of the robbers in the hands of the audience after revealing the culpability of different arms of the society serves as a subtle indictment which mocks the society's (audience's) presumed righteous indignation.

In *Four Robbers* the playwright makes critical comments, albeit surreptitiously, about the Nigerian State in order to avoid being killed by the government. For the purpose of my research, I note two significant features of *Four Robbers*. First, the play is Osofisan's response to the Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 47 of 1970 promulgated during the military regime of Gen. Gowon which stipulated death by firing squad i.e. public execution of armed robbers.

By inviting the audience to act as jury in deciding the fate of the robbers, Osofisan underscores the need to integrate the citizens into the lawmaking process. This is akin to the Legislative Theatre methodology in which citizens are incorporated into the process of lawmaking. However, in Osofisan's *Four Robbers* the invitation which integrates the audience into the process of making a decision about what fate should befall the robbers, ends as a theatrical gesture which, in concrete terms, yields no perceptible or tangible results outside the confines of the performance venue. Thus, Osofisan's *Four Robbers* falls short of galvanising the citizens into taking an enforceable position with respect to the fate of robbers within the larger society.

Osofisan's main thesis as espoused in the play is the ineffectiveness of death penalty as deterrence against armed robbery in a society characterised by deprivation and abject poverty. The playwright sought to counter the simplistic notion that the widespread high scale armed robbery, as was then the case, was a result of personal greed, envy, sloth, recalcitrance or mere penchant to harm others.²⁰⁴ Osofisan was concerned to demonstrate that the robbers, though repellent in their act, were themselves victims of an unjust socio-economic structure in which the rest of society is implicated in some form or other of public looting, covertly yet definitely.²⁰⁵ Death penalty, therefore, can hardly serve as deterrence against armed robbery in a socio-economic setting characterised by hunger, poverty, lack of gainful employment, bribery, profligacy by the ruling class; a structure skewed in favour of a privileged few against a less privileged majority.

The Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 47 of 1970 which stipulated public execution of armed robbers was the military government's reaction to the increase in armed robbery which started after the Nigerian/Biafran civil war

204 Osofisan, 19–20.

205 Osofisan, 20.

(1967-1970). The first execution took place in July 1971 at the Lagos Bar Beach.²⁰⁶ The choice of the Bar Beach for the 'show' is instructive. Prior to this time, the Beach was associated with a flurry of religious activities where prophets of the white garment Christian sect pray for people seeking one form of divine help or the other.²⁰⁷ The playwright notes that the Bar Beach Show, a euphemism for the public execution by firing squad, 'soon turned into a regular carnival',²⁰⁸ which were sometimes presided over by state governors and other government officials.²⁰⁹ The executions were carried out in front of television cameras, with a large crowd which included drummers and ringside gamblers.²¹⁰

The Beach was also a prominent location for social outings by families and friends. Thus, the preexisting atmosphere of the Beach lent it to fun and entertainment and helped to draw more people to the public executions. Consequently, instead of creating a mood for thoughtful reflection over the public execution of armed robbers, the location and spectacular nature of the events, and the drumming helped to create an ambience reflective of theatrical performance. Here I sense an uncanny connection between law and theatre in that the public execution, a legal stipulation backed by Decree 47 of 1970, was realised under a theatrical setting which, instead of serving as deterrent to armed robbery as the government apparently envisaged, entertained the audience and numbed the public to the horrors of death by public execution.

The playwright demonstrates to the audience that they are morally 'superior' only considering that they have been more covert in their looting and therefore undetected. In essence, they (the audience) are essentially not different from the robbers who they love to hate and condemn. The play challenges both the government and the larger society to adopt a more holistic, systemic and humane approach to a problem which causative factors circumstantially implicate all strata and arms of society. *Four Robbers* is undoubtedly not an endorsement of armed robbery by Osofisan. Instead, Osofisan's critical message in the text is that the systemic structures of government, as well as the social dynamics that produced the robbers, are all culpable. *Four Robbers* was therefore Osofisan's call for a revision of the Armed Robbery and Firearms (Special Provisions) Decree 47 of 1970.

The introduction, into Nigeria, of Western dramatic forms and conventions by dramatists who had been exposed to Western education did not accommodate the typical

206 Ayomide O. Tayo, "The First Public Execution in Nigeria," Pulse.ng, 2017, <https://www.pulse.ng/gist/pop-culture/bar-beach-show-the-first-public-execution-in-nigeria/r6g1k0j>.

207 This is the ambience which informed Wole Soyinka's *Jero Plays*.

208 Osofisan, "The Revolution as Muse: Drama as Surreptitious Insurrection in a Postcolonial, Military State," 19.

209 Osofisan, 19.

210 Osofisan, 19.

exuberance and boisterousness of the traditional African theatre. African theatre leaves no place for boredom due to prompt audience reactions which (quickly) nullify dull moments.²¹¹ For that reason, African dramatists schooled in the Western theatrical canons apprehended the exigency to establish simple and basic communion with the community for which the performances are primarily produced.²¹²

To facilitate the necessary connection between Western and African dramatic conventions, African dramatists began innovating with new forms with the intent, ultimately, of producing an essentially African theatre. Osofisan's *Four Robbers* exemplifies the playwright's intervention in this regard. In line with that purpose, the play opens with a call and response (*aaalo-o! / aaalo!*) between the narrator and the members of the audience, a typically African theatrical convention. This breaks the aesthetic fourth wall which separates the actors from the audience. The play also makes use of both integral audience (members of cast who mingle in the audience and take their cue from there) and integrated audience (real audience members who are drawn into the performance).

The audience's participation in *Four Robbers* could be considered gauged and measured and perhaps a far cry from what obtains in the traditional African setting, yet it points to the direction of 'accentuating the position of the audience in modern African theatre'.²¹³ Audience participation in *Four Robbers* is amplified when, towards the end of the play, members of the audience are invited to decide whether the robbers are guilty and what penalty should, in consequence, be inflicted on them. In essence, this means that the end of the play could pan out in more than one trajectory. The playwright designed the 'end' to be determined each night by the audience which serves as the 'jury'.

As stated earlier, Augusto Boal's Legislative Theatre is fundamentally concerned with the involvement of citizens in the process of lawmaking. Given that premise, a weighty legislation which stipulated public execution of armed robbers by firing squad should have been availed the opportunity of harnessing the robust input of the citizens. Osofisan's *Four Robbers*, through the pseudo-parliamentary session that converts audience to jury, is symbolic of the possibility of participatory involvement of citizens in the lawmaking process. With *Four Robbers*, Osofisan subjects decrees enacted through military fiats to interrogation and underscores the importance of

211 Abdullahi S. Abubakar, "A New Concept of Actor/Audience Interaction and Audience Participation in Modern African Dramatic Theater: An Example of Osofisan," *Research in African Literatures* 40, no. 3 (2009): 177.

212 Adebayo Mosobalaje, "Readers of Wole Soyinka's Political Drama and Theatre," *The African Symposium: An Online Journal of the African Educational Research Network* 11, no. 1 (2011): 168.

213 Abubakar, "A New Concept of Actor/Audience Interaction and Audience Participation in Modern African Dramatic Theater: An Example of Osofisan," 180.

collective decision making over issues that have bearing on the lives of the citizens. *Four Robbers* prefigures a democratic ambience that harvests the people's collective input before vital decisions are reached.

The participatory involvement of the audience notwithstanding *Four Robbers* ends as a theatrical gesture with no material facility beyond the confines of the theatre building. The lacuna thus created accentuates, in my view, the need for the Legislative Theatre mode of theatre practice in which theatre practitioners will not only simulate the act, but would in reality, journey with the audience in the bid to make definite input into legislations. Nevertheless, *Four Robbers* eloquently attests to Osofisan's displeasure with an obnoxious law which prescribed capital punishment for armed robbers without a humane consideration of the underlying stimuli that turned armed robbery into an industry.

Osofisan's *Morountodun* is also thematically preoccupied with a government policy. The play fuses the story of Moremi, a Yoruba legendary figure, with the historical account of the 1969 riots embarked upon by peasants in the Nigerian Western region in protest against the unbearable tax regime placed on their farm produce and the effects thereof on their standard of living. Among the Yoruba people in Nigeria, Moremi is a venerated legendary woman of privileged birth who, having observed the devastation suffered by her settler community (the Yoruba) in a war between the Yoruba and the indigenous Ugbo community at Ile-Ife, allowed herself to be captured by the Ugbo in order to unravel the source of their invincibility. This was in the 12th century. Moremi's success in her mission led to the eventual routing of the Ugbos.

Osofisan fuses the 12th century hostilities and Moremi's display of bravery during the war with the 1969 Agbekoya Uprising by farmers into a theatrical piece. In *Morountodun*, Titubi, the daughter of Alhaja Kabirat, the leader of the market women, in like fashion as Moremi, allows herself to be captured by the protesting peasants. While in captivity, Titubi, whose mission is to apprehend the strengths and weaknesses of her captors, experiences regeneration. Unlike Moremi whose intervention was in favour of the privileged class, Titubi emerges from captivity as an exponent of the cause of the peasants. Osofisan's heroine transforms from 'a saucy, callow defender of common sense, of the way things are, to a contemplator of, indeed a fighter for, the way things should, could and ought to be'.²¹⁴ Thus, Osofisan unbundles and deconstructs the Moremi myth and utilises it for the purpose of liberation. Osofisan enunciates his dramaturgical motive coherently thus, 'in the quest for an alternative to all this parasitism, I turn official historiography and mythopoesy on their heads, insisting on their

214 Tejumola Olaniyan, "Femi Osofisan: The Form of Uncommon Sense," *Research in African Literatures* 30, no. 4 (1999): 78.

hidden partisan agenda, and offer a dialectical counter-narrative, in which history is seen from the lower side, from the perspective of those who are society's victims'.²¹⁵

Despite the outstanding success of *Morountodun*, it has been argued that the 1969 Agbekoya Uprising which Osofisan claims as the basis of his play bears no historical correlation with the heroic impetus of Moremi and its context in Yoruba legend and that the time-lapse between the two epochs (12th and 20th centuries) is sufficient to underpin differing modes of political constitution and belief systems.²¹⁶ Nevertheless, I argue that the play demonstrates the playwright's theatrical engagement with an unpopular policy and underscores the position that unpopular policies and legislations could and should be interrogated by those on the lower wrung of the social strata and who often bear the brunt of the misrule of the ruling class. *Morountodun* interrogates an insufferable policy. It does not, however, afford the opportunity for audience(s) to participate concretely in the process of making new laws in the interest of those affected by extant policies. This is in contradistinction to the possibilities derivable from a Legislative Theatre session which crosses into the world of politics and makes legislative intervention by the citizens a foreseeable possibility.

Unlike Ogunde and Soyinka, Osofisan has had no record of arrest by any Nigerian government despite the political pungency of his artistry. Osofisan claims that this is attributable to the fact that he constructs his dramas in the form of questions rather than as prescriptions.²¹⁷ Osofisan suggests that this feature of his dramaturgy might have kept him beyond the reach of the law. Realising that dramatists often have to make the hard choice between silence and connivance, on the one hand, and resistance, suffering, even death, on the other hand, Osofisan charted a tenable middle course by adopting what he termed surreptitious insurrection.

At the peak of military subjugation when it appeared expedient to escape into exile, Osofisan resolved to remain in the country and join the resistance against the military. His approach was covert through the use of metaphors. According to him, plays are metaphors which no government has yet succeeded in arresting.²¹⁸ Thus, although there has been attempts to arrest him, Osofisan suggests that the metaphorical nature of his plays, under which the political criticisms lie hidden, has left successive authorities without sufficient reason(s) to incarcerate him.

215 Osofisan, "The Revolution as Muse: Drama as Surreptitious Insurrection in a Postcolonial, Military State," 16.

216 Dele Layiwola, "The Radical Alternative and the Dilemma of the Intellectual Dramatist in Nigeria," *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 19, no. 1 (1991): 68–69.

217 Sandra L. Richards, "Nigerian Independence Onstage: Responses from 'Second Generation' Playwrights," *Theatre Journal* 39, no. 2 (1987): 227.

218 Osofisan, "Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary," 9.

The above discourse demonstrates the manner in which Nigerian theatre practitioners, spurred by the desire to see democracy enthroned in Nigeria, interrogated Nigerian laws between the 1940s and 1999. As Adeoti submits, the goals of enthroning good governance and a stable democratic order that will be based on the principles of freedom, open and collective participation in governance are demonstrably articulated in the Nigerian drama (textual and performative) since independence.²¹⁹ My analysis shows that these impulses predate Nigeria's independence. The discourse also shows that myth played a significant role in regard to the playwrights' interrogation of laws and that the playwrights often had to treat their chosen themes in ways reminiscent of the 'apparent purposelessness'²²⁰ which Brown associates with play. The concept of play, as I theorise it with regard to the Legislative Theatre, will be explored more extensively in the course of this dissertation. In the next section I will give more depth to the interaction between myth and political intervention in laws and policies in the pre-1999 Nigerian modernist drama.

1.4. Myth, Political Theatre and Intervention in Nigeria's Policies and Laws Before 1999

As already noted, the representative works of the dramatists studied in this chapter evidence the significant role myth plays in the Nigerian political theatre. The dramatists saw theatre as a veritable tool with which to kick against perceived injustices especially in relation to extant laws which they thought were oppressive. Notwithstanding that they apprehended the utility of theatre as a platform of protest against repressive laws, the dramatists sometimes preferred to apply caution in their dealings with the State, hence the recourse to the use of myth. Thus, working under the guise of myth in a manner which I associate with the concept of play, the dramatists sought to pass across their political messages without incurring the wrath of the State. However, this approach was, as already noted, not sufficient in all cases to keep the dramatists safe from the arms of the law.

The dramatists adopted myth in probing the socio-political life of the nation. With their nuanced applications, the dramatists employed mythology 'as fertile grounds for the siting of a vibrant lyrical modernism that is, at once, politically engaged with the local and the immediate'.²²¹ In other words, whether the dramatists kept faith with the mythic account or revolutionised it, they were unanimous in adopting myth as a historico-theatrical tool utilisable in addressing contemporaneous challenges. For

219 Adeoti, "Literary Drama, Literacy and the Quest for Democracy in Nigeria: An Appraisal," 60.

220 Brown, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul*, Chapter 2.

221 Gates, "Wole Soyinka: Mythopoesis and the Agon of Democracy," 188.

the dramatists, myth served as ‘a mediated plane that speaks directly, simultaneously, and eloquently to the human condition’.²²² Through the application of myth, the playwrights engaged with political concerns exposing, in one way or another, the deleterious effects of British colonial rule and of indigenous civilian or military dictatorship in Nigeria.

As Osofisan observed, Nigeria’s colonial past and the treachery and travesties of the indigenous ruling class bestowed on Nigeria a theatre condemned to be political.²²³ As previously noted, politics, in Rancière’s conceptualisation which I adopt in this dissertation, differs from passive equality (which Rancière designates as police) and occurs when the traditional mechanisms of what are usually called ‘politics’ are stopped in their tracks and put into question. This is democratic politics which necessitates decisive action and differs from mainstream political philosophy. In Rancière’s view, the non-passive politics, that is, democratic politics, is action taken by the ‘uncounted’²²⁴ in order to recalibrate the source and course of power. This is exemplified by the works of the playwrights which I have examined.

As reflected in the discourse on the works of the dramatists, political theatre is a viable tool for the disempowered to acquire the voice and power to function as political members of the society. The dramatists often achieved this through the adoption of myth as a dramaturgical tool. In essence, the dramatists employed theatre to question the subsisting policies or laws during the British colonial period as well as the post-independence era. Ogunde’s *Strike and Hunger*, as I argue, was a theatrical renegotiation of the conditions of service and the welfare of the workers. This is prefigurative, as I hypothesise, of the role Nigerian theatre practitioners could conceivably play through the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology in securing better quality of life for the citizens through the citizens’ incorporation into the lawmaking processes.

Also, Soyinka’s *From Zia With Love* and *The Beatification of Area Boy*, and Osofisan’s *Once Upon Four Robbers* and *Morountodun* are all interventions which engaged the abuse of power by various Nigerian governments. *From Zia With Love* challenged the retroactive application of a decree and subsequent execution by firing squad of some Nigerians whose crimes were not known to the Nigerian law as at the time the infractions were committed. *The Beatification of Area Boy* questioned the forceful evacuation of a fishing community, the Ilaje Squatters of Maroko Island, and the reallocation of the Island to government officials and their cronies. With *Once Upon Four Robbers*

222 Gates, 188.

223 Osofisan, “Reflections on Theatre Practice in Contemporary Nigeria,” 83.

224 Todd May, *The Political Thoughts of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 40, 52–53.

and *Morountodun*, Osofisan criticised respectively the Decree 47 of 1970 by Gowon's regime and the heavy taxation imposed on farmers during Nigeria's First Republic.

Thus, through their theatre practice spanning from the British colonial period through the years of sporadic civilian rule and the long years of military dictatorship, Ogunde, Soyinka and Osofisan exemplify how Nigerian theatre practitioners engaged with Nigeria's socio-political misrule at the various levels of government. Specifically, the dramatists challenged the uncharitable policies of various governments, the abuse of the legal system and the travesty of justice by the formal government, traditional institutions and individuals often through the adoption of myth. Although it might be difficult to definitely evaluate the impact of the interventions, it could be conjectured, for instance, that the post-1945 politics in Nigeria which 'featured constitutional conferences and round-table discussions where conflicts were resolved and the way to independence paved in relative peace'²²⁵ benefitted, however remotely, from Ogunde's *Strike and Hunger* and the wide publicity given it through the newspaper, *The West African Pilot*.

Many such constitutional conferences were either earnestly canvassed for or held during the years of military dictatorship. The conferences along with the works by Nigerian dramatists criticised military incursion into politics as an aberration. For instance, Soyinka's *From Zia With Love* uses the incongruity of characters, exaggerated actions and ridiculous costumes to delineate military incursion into politics as 'virulent and inimical to the growth of a democratic culture'.²²⁶ In this way, Nigerian dramatists joined in the debate and struggle for the return of Nigeria to a civil, democratic rule. These attainments notwithstanding, since the end of military rule in Nigeria in 1999, there seems to have been a major shift in the political engagement of the Nigerian drama/theatre. In the next section, I examine the post-1999 Nigerian political theatre to buttress the point.

1.5. Contemporary Nigerian Political Theatre (1999-2019): An Overview

I foreground my discussion of post-1999 Nigerian Theatre with the assertion made by Charles Nnolim, a notable Nigerian literary critic, about the twenty-first century Nigerian literature. Nnolim is unequivocal in his assessment of post-1999 Nigerian literature in which he labels the writers as members of the 'fleshy school' who lack

225 Oyemakinde, "The Nigerian General Strike of 1945," 694.

226 Adeoti, "The Military in Nigeria's Postcolonial Literature: An Overview," 29.

the ‘fiery, vituperative and caustic commitment’²²⁷ of their predecessors. Although Nnolim’s pronouncement is essentially about literary texts, it bears relevance to this discourse. Nnolim avers that both old and new Nigerian writers had, at the end of the 20th century, ‘reached a point of exhaustion’²²⁸ having dissipated the ‘ebullience and revolutionary spirit of the 1960s and 1970s’.²²⁹

According to Nnolim, Nigerian writers of the 21st century do not have the big issues of colonialism, cultural rejuvenation and military dictatorship to contend with as was the case during previous epochs in the evolution of the Nigerian State. Nnolim makes a somewhat reductive claim that the writers have succumbed to a focus on ‘wine, women, club and fun’²³⁰ in their thematic preoccupations. I argue that every epoch in human history presents its own ‘big issues’, therefore the fact that colonialism and military dictatorship have been overcome in Nigeria does not equate to an end to grave socio-economic and political challenges that demand the thoughtful attention of cultural practitioners.

Dan Izevbaye, another notable Nigerian critic, writes in the same vein as Nnolim thus; ‘The Soyinkas and the Achebes were dealing with a period in history that was spectacular; they were dealing with things that were big’.²³¹ According to Izevbaye, such big issues as self-consciousness and independence which the Soyinkas and the Achebes dealt with carried weightier historical significance and made taxonomy and periodisation of Nigerian literature easy to handle. Izevbaye’s arguable position is that the present generation of writers has acquired something a bit less momentous.²³² As I stated above, every era in human existence presents its own momentous challenges thus exerting the same demand from writers.

Nnolim and Izevbaye’s critical positions have been contested by critics from various standpoints with some claiming that sexuality has, from inception, been a feature of Nigerian literature. One of such opposing critical opinions suggests that there has not been a loss of focus on the big issues as Nnolim and Izevbaye charge, rather there has been a widening of the creative canvas of the Nigerian writer. It further argues that a

227 Agatha Njideka Nwanya and Chris C. Ojemudia, “Gender and Creativity: The Contributions of Nigerian Female Writers,” *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 9 (2014): 50.

228 Charles E. Nnolim, “African Literature in the 21st Century: Challenges for Writers and Critics,” *New Directions in African Literature* 25 (2006): 2.

229 Nnolim, 3.

230 Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu, *21st Century Nigerian Literature: An Introductory Text* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books, 2009), 100.

231 Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, 101.

232 Onukaogu and Onyerionwu, 101.

departure from a monolithic outlook should not be equated with a loss of focus on the part of the contemporary Nigerian writer.²³³

While it could be argued that Nigerian literature and theatre have, from inception, expressed themselves in forms other than the overtly political and might not, in contemporary times, necessarily have experienced quantum decline, there appears to be a preponderance of creative works which do not engage sufficiently, decisively and eloquently with current political realities. Thus, I hold the view that theatre practice in Nigeria seems currently to be blossoming in ways that have not paid sufficient critical attention to the political happenings in the country. In other words, cultural practitioners seem to be content with the mere fact that Nigeria has returned to the ballot box system without due consideration of the degree to which the extant system equates to a vibrant democracy.

As I mentioned earlier, the context of the above assertive submissions, especially Nnolim's, might seem to resonate more specifically with fiction writing although its applicability to the entire corpus of Nigerian creative writing and culture praxis irrespective of the generic mode may not be successfully contested, altogether. Howbeit, in a seeming gesture to erase any doubts about the applicability of the claims to theatre practice, Femi Osofisan, in his account of the state of the Nigerian literary theatre 'after the generals', that is post-1999, homes in on Nigerian theatre practice and in doing so corroborates Nnolim's and Izevbaye's assertions.

Osofisan is flustered that contrary to his expectation, the years of 'creative ebullience'²³⁴ in the Nigerian theatre have had more to do with the years of brutal suppression under colonial and military rule than with the years of apparent freedom under democratic rule. Wole Soyinka corroborates Osofisan's position with regard to the flowering of creativity during the years of military despotic rule by observing that under the military dictatorship of Gen Abacha (November 17, 1993 - June 8, 1998), playwrights were 'being locked up, or prevented from putting their plays on in the national theater – and yet there are still plays being staged'.²³⁵ In other words, the stranglehold of military dictatorship could not, at that time, successfully squelch agitative theatre.

Osofisan's 'after the generals', refers to the period 'after the notorious dictatorships of the later (sic) half of the last century in Africa south of the Sahara'.²³⁶ Osofisan laments what he describes as the draining out of creative energy from the post-1999 Nigerian

233 Terhema Shija, "The Nigerian Fiction Tradition in the 21st Century and Its Postmodernist Imperative," *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics* 14 (2015): 7.

234 Osofisan, "Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary," 17.

235 Ojewuyi and Garrett, "A World of Amusement and Pity," 67.

236 Osofisan, "Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary," 4.

stage. Osofisan had expected that after the transition to a democratic dispensation, when creativity would no longer be circumscribed by a climate of fear, creative ebullience on the Nigerian stage ‘would explode like a hundred flowers’.²³⁷

The pith of Nnolim’s ‘fleshly school’ and Osofisan’s ‘after the generals’ undoubtedly share affinity with Wole Soyinka’s ‘war weariness’²³⁸ which promotes the exaggeration of the feats accomplished through struggles and in which audiences display preference for performances that gravitate towards an adulation of the good things of life. With specific reference to the state of political theatre in the USA after both the Vietnam War and the Black liberation struggle, Soyinka notes the audience’s abandonment of ‘theatre which provokes them towards a new consideration of existing contradictions in society’ in preference for ‘entertainment, fantasy, and escapism’.²³⁹ In other words, and in relation to the Nigerian situation, it would appear that after the ‘war’ against military subjugation, Nigerian theatre has displayed a predilection for personal pleasures as substitute for grave matters of national concern. The above submission by Soyinka suggests that the absence of politically potent theatrical interventions, as evidenced in the Nigerian situation, could be the direct effect of perceived gains after a long period of political struggle.

Discussing further this turn of events within the Nigerian artistic space Osofisan notes, among other concerns, that in terms of quality, the new scripts that have found their ways to the contemporary Nigerian stage are ‘neither-nor’.²⁴⁰ Put differently, with respect to direct engagement with contemporary political goings-on on the Nigerian stage, Osofisan concludes that ‘there isn’t much’.²⁴¹ Osofisan is concerned that his generation of dramatists appears to be ‘with no visible heirs’.²⁴²

The overall import of Nnolim’s ‘fleshly school’, Osofisan’s ‘after the generals’ and Soyinka’s ‘war weariness’ appears to be an apparent necessity for a politically vibrant theatre to ensure that, as Soyinka notes with respect to the USA, the Nigerian society does not tilt ‘towards an even keel’.²⁴³ I argue for a theatre which is not content with the mere existence of ballot box ‘democracy’ but one which, in recognition of the critical place laws should occupy in a democracy, interferes in *what* and *how* laws are made.

237 Osofisan, 17.

238 Ojewuyi and Garrett, “A World of Amusement and Pity,” 63.

239 Ojewuyi and Garrett, 63.

240 Osofisan, “Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary,” 17.

241 Ademola Adesola, “Nigerian Drama and the Issue of Contemporaneity,” in *Black Dionysos: Conversations with Femi Osofisan*, ed. Olakunbi Olasope (Ibadan, Nigeria: Kraft Books, 2013), 222.

242 Osofisan, “Literary Theatre after the Generals: A Personal Itinerary,” 19.

243 Ojewuyi and Garrett, “A World of Amusement and Pity,” 63.

The premise of Nnolim's, Osofisan's and Soyinka's assertions is the view that Nigerian culture practitioners have the responsibility to use the resources of their trade to canvass for necessary political changes.²⁴⁴ It is also the accepted position that the culture practitioners were actively involved in the struggle against colonialism and military dictatorship, and thereby contributed to Nigeria's return to democratic rule. The culture practitioners were notable not only for the inclusion of political themes in their works, but the harmonious cooperation between culture practice and politics had, at one point during the course of Nigeria's nationalistic struggle for independence, presented the culture practitioner and the politician as two 'rolled into one'.²⁴⁵

This synergy was the premise of the recognition and acclaim which the *West African Pilot*, a newspaper founded by a foremost nationalist, Nnamdi Azikiwe, accorded Ogunde's Theatre for transforming the realm of theatre into a living reality.²⁴⁶ The cooperation between Nigerian cultural practitioners and politicians endured until the practitioners realised that nationalism is not automatically tantamount to positive societal transformation having observed that the national bourgeoisie simply exchanged positions with the colonial masters.²⁴⁷ Thus, the national bourgeoisie confirmed the fears earlier expressed by Oluwole and Soyinka about the unacceptable quality of leadership which emerged at Nigeria's independence. In spite of the stranglehold of the authorities (during colonial rule and under military dictatorship), and the attendant danger to practitioners, theatre practice in Nigeria had in the past closely trailed the contours of the evolution of Nigerian's political development.²⁴⁸

The previous involvement of Nigerian theatre practitioners in Nigeria's political evolution informs Osofisan's bewilderment over the seeming dearth of politically conscious plays on the Nigerian stage 'after the generals'. This view is similarly corroborated by Anigala who, writing also in the turn of the century on the role of theatre practitioners in the democratisation of a nation in crisis, accuses the Nigerian theatre artists of shirking their duty as the conscience of the nation.²⁴⁹ It is therefore evident that Nigerian cultural practitioners are skirting their duty to the Nigerian state. The sense of 'uhuru' (freedom) among artists is palpable and also capable of ruining the gains of the past, hence the need to acculturate a healthier democracy.

244 Anigala, "Democratizing a Nation in Crisis: The Role of the Theatre Artist," 161.

245 Saint E. T. Gbilekaa, "Theatre and Political Change in Nigeria Since Independence," in *Theatre and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Jide Malomo and Saint Gbilekaa, Second (Ibadan, Nigeria: Caltop, 2006), 3.

246 Eze, "The Evolution and Development of the Modern Nigerian Theatre: From Colonialism to Independence," 159.

247 Gbilekaa, "Theatre and Political Change in Nigeria Since Independence," 6.

248 Tola Adeniyi, "Theatre and Politics in Nigeria," in *Theatre and Politics in Nigeria*, ed. Jide Malomo and Saint Gbilekaa (Ibadan, Nigeria: Caltop, 2006), ix.

249 Anigala, "Democratizing a Nation in Crisis: The Role of the Theatre Artist," 163.

1.6. Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I hypothesised that Nigerian theatre practitioners took significant interest in the laws which operated in Nigeria and used their works as an agency for protest against laws and policies. I asserted that at the core of the theatre practitioners' engagement with law was their passion for the return of Nigeria to democratic governance. The discourse in the chapter has demonstrated that the effort of Nigerian theatre practitioners in this regard yielded appreciable results. The arrest, incarceration and other forms of harsh treatment meted out on the practitioners by the State attest to the impact their works had on the polity. Despite the harsh treatment which the practitioners suffered, they remained undeterred from their pursuit. Nigeria's eventual return to democracy is therefore partly attributable to the effort of the theatre practitioners.

Also evident in the analysis of this chapter is the use of myth by Nigerian dramatists in the construction of political drama. Drawing from its rich corpus, the dramatists found myth as a veritable material under which to hide their pungent political messages and criticism of laws. I have argued in this chapter that I find the dramatists' recourse to myth to be a manifestation of the 'apparent purposelessness'²⁵⁰ which Brown relates with the concept of play. I posit that through a seemingly 'purposeless' recourse to myth, the dramatists transmit their strong criticism of repressive laws. This underscores the relationship between myth, play and law in theatre praxis.

This chapter has also discussed the representation of the voice of the people on the Nigerian stage. I argued that in the course of denouncing the oppressive proclivities of the authorities, theatre practitioners were in effect speaking on behalf of the citizens who often have to grapple with the insufferable laws enacted by the authorities. Thus, the citizens maintained a voice in the socio-political arena through the creative oeuvre of the dramatists. Despite the vibrancy exhibited in this regard, I argued that the return to democratic governance saw the waning of that theatre in which the citizens' voice of protest was heard through the works of the dramatists. In its place, Nigerian theatre practitioners began to deploy their art, rather preponderantly, in forms of practice that do not engage sufficiently with matters which directly implicate the polity.

This chapter has established the role played by Nigerian theatre practitioners in the fight for the overthrow of colonialism and military dictatorship through their interrogation of various provisions of laws in Nigeria which were deemed repressive. The underlying stimulus behind the interrogation was for a Nigeria governed on

250 Brown, *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination and Invigorates the Soul*, Chapter 2.

democratic principles. The chapter has demonstrated the playwrights' recourse to the adoption of myth in their denunciation of intolerable laws. I noted that whereas Ogunde employed myth as a tool with which to negotiate for a better quality of life for the people, and Soyinka, who maintained fidelity to mythic account, utilised myth to warn about the dangers of neo-colonialism in the new independent Nigeria, Osofisan presaged revolutionary changes through his subversion of mythic accounts.

Earlier I critiqued the argument that the Nigerian culture practitioners of the 21st century do not have colonialism and military dictatorship to contend with and posited that every phase in the history of a nation comes with its own peculiar glitches which demand the thoughtful engagement of cultural practitioners. Thus, it behoves the cultural practitioners to continue to engage with extant Nigerian laws in their practice as was the case during both colonialism and military dictatorship. This is deemed necessary in order to enhance the strength of Nigeria's democracy.



Chapter 2

**The Mask of Developmentalism in the
Nigerian Theatre for Development
(TfD)**

In this second chapter, I turn to a kind of theatre which I consider different from the theatre studied in Chapter 1. The critical difference, as I argue, lies in the tangent of the allegiance of the theatre practitioners as well as their infrastructures in the form of funding and ties to international humanitarian and development aid. From a commitment to the cause of the citizens as seen in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 focuses on a theatre in which the allegiance of the theatre practitioners tends to have shifted in favour of the State. In other words, instead of being a vent through which the citizens register their discontent with laws, Nigerian theatre practice of the post-1999 era has, as I argue, gravitated to being an instrument of soft power through which government policies are implemented. The type of theatre in question here is the 'Theatre for Development' (TfD). Although TfD in Nigeria has a history that long precedes the return to democratic governance in 1999, it appears, however, that the void created by the apparent feeling of satisfaction after the installation of democratic rule in 1999 led to a preponderance of TfD engagements in Nigeria. Therefore, I will, in this chapter, focus on TfD, a mode of theatre praxis supposedly intended to foster the development of host communities.

The concept of TfD is framed on the premise that countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa, collectively termed the Third World countries, are 'underdeveloped' and are therefore in need of 'development'. Thus, a fundamental aspect of the era of development (a strategic policy direction with global impact which came into being after the Second World War) has been the use of theatre as a vehicle for driving home the development programs of the era. African nations, classified as either Least Developed Countries (LDCs) or as 'developing' countries, consequently became implicated in the development agenda as recipients of 'developmental' assistance or aid.

In this dissertation, my interest in TfD is essentially from the standpoint of the politico-economic impulse of globalisation that birthed the era of development which became the background and context of its emergence and its modus operandi. Thus, the historical perspectives to the emergence of TfD will serve as the take-off point of the chapter. Departing from the historicity of TfD, I will engage in a contextualisation of the concept in the Nigerian instance (with a racy consideration of its connection with the African context) by examining Nigeria's stake in the development discourse and practice. I will necessarily study the specific ways in which theatre takes its place in the 'development' industry.

From the plethora of TfD interventions in Nigeria, I have identified for critical discourse interventionist campaigns on sexuality education (teenage pregnancy), environmental pollution, women empowerment and community 'development', and 'citizenship'/'indigene' statuses. The discourse will examine the impact of the interven-

tions with the intent of determining how effectively they addressed the developmental needs of the benefitting communities.

While the study would appropriately acknowledge the merit of the selected interventions, at the core of the chapter is an interrogation of Tfd's place in democracy and as a tool of governance. The chapter is invested in finding out what Tfd as an instrument of governance reveals about democratic values and principles both on the Nigerian stage and beyond the precincts of the stage. The selected projects would help to make apparent the degree to which Tfd might have been appropriated by the Establishment as a tool to bear subtle rule over the people. To proceed, I briefly probe the historicity of the emergence of the era of development.

2.1. Emergence of the Era of Development

In order to put the emergence of the era of development (or developmentalism) in proper perspective, a brief recourse to the events of the Second World War and the subsequent period of the Cold War is pertinent. The Second World War visited unparalleled levels of death, devastation, privation and disorder²⁵¹ upon the world and left it unhinged economically and otherwise. In contrast to the economic misfortunes which befell other nations during this period, the gross domestic product of the US doubled between 1941 and 1945,²⁵² hence the period ironically witnessed the emergence of the US as not only the richest country in the world but presumably the richest that the world had ever known.²⁵³ Consequently, the US became overly and overtly influential in world politics thereby exerting discernible control over other nations.

While it lasted, the Second World War fostered an alliance among the three world powers: the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. These nations with otherwise differing ideological and policy leanings had the common objective of defeating Hitler and the Axis Powers,²⁵⁴ and were also concerned about the world order that would emerge after the war. However, their conceptions of the post-war world differed considerably. For instance, in terms of trade, America was favourably disposed to a more open approach to international trade. This, America claimed, would mean a more prosperous world which in turn would yield a more stable and peaceful world.²⁵⁵ Thus, during the war America began to canvass for a multilateral economic

251 Robert McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.

252 McMahon, 6.

253 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, "The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment," 2.

254 Max Kuhelj Bugaric, "The Birth of the Cold War," *UCLA: Historical Journal* 25, no. 1 (2014): 39; McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, 16.

255 McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, 9.

regime of liberalised trade with equal opportunities, ostensibly, for all nations, stable exchange rates and full currency convertibility.²⁵⁶ This led to the establishment of two supranational financial bodies: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development otherwise known as the World Bank. The US which was at this time producing 50% of the world's goods and services would indisputably benefit tremendously from the proposed multilateral commercial regime.²⁵⁷ In other words, the proposed open trade supposedly intended to create a more prosperous and peaceful world was, in reality, inextricably imbricated with America's economic and political interests.

Also, the US was concerned about her territorial security especially after the Japanese air strike of 1941.²⁵⁸ The Soviet Union's vision for a post-war order, although differently nuanced, was also tied to her concerns for her territorial security which she associated with territorial expansion.²⁵⁹ Russia reasoned that a critical factor in securing her territory was the exercise of firm political control over her neighbours.²⁶⁰ In the economic and social sphere, the Soviet Union favoured Communism based on Marxism-Leninism ideology which she projected as the panacea for an economically unbalanced world. America was apprehensive that the severe social and economic dislocations occasioned by the war could make Communism more appealing to a war-ravaged world.²⁶¹ The 'big push for development'²⁶² was therefore intended, on the part of the US, to formulate a powerful alternative to Communist ideas which, the US feared, could have considerable traction with non-aligned nations. In essence, America's (and Britain's) Capitalism and Russia's Communism found no common ground on the global stage. Howbeit, based on their individual ideological predilection, the US and Russia each believed in their messianic role to redeem a devastated post-war world.

Therefore, departing from the common objective of defeating Hitler and the Axis Powers, the union of the three world powers was, from the start, riddled with tension, mistrust and suspicion.²⁶³ The alliance began to wane even before the end of the war when the world powers began, individually, to assert their security interests and to adopt various policies to influence the post-war world system. The tussle among the

256 McMahon, 9.

257 McMahon, 9.

258 McMahon, 6–7.

259 McMahon, 12.

260 McMahon, 10–12.

261 McMahon, 27.

262 Christopher B. Balme and Berenika Szymanski-Dull, *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War* (Cham, Switzerland, 2017), 15.

263 McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, 16.

world powers worsened towards the end of the Second World War and the immediate post-war period leading to the emergence of the Cold War.²⁶⁴

The Cold War was mainly an ideological conflict between the US and the Soviet Union in which America saw the Soviet Union as committed to a 'threateningly expansionary ideology'.²⁶⁵ The US perceived Russia as the 'only country in the world with the dynamic power to challenge our own conceptions of truth, justice and good life'.²⁶⁶ In other words, America's conception of global order was intended to benefit the US and therefore did not sufficiently countenance the interests of the rest of humanity. On the other hand, Russia was firmly committed to diluting the spread of Western strength.²⁶⁷ This tussle between the world powers defined the parameters of international relations in the decades following the end of the Second World War.

The modernisation and development impetus of the period led to the global categorisation of the world into First World (the US and its NATO alliance), Second World (the then Soviet Union and China) and the Third World (a 'disparate and amorphous group of over 120 African, Asian and Latin American countries that together account for about seventy per cent of the world's population'²⁶⁸). The rankings were according to their presumed levels of 'development'. Although disparate, the Third World nations were adjudged to have all fallen behind on the development spectrum and their citizens were perceived as living 'in conditions approaching misery'.²⁶⁹ This claim has, in relation to standards of living in the 1940s, been dismissed as not only incorrect but also, perhaps, deliberately misleading.²⁷⁰ Nonetheless, the newly classed Third World nations were, on the strength of that categorisation, perceived as 'underdeveloped' and therefore in need of 'development'. Implicit in the classification is the assumption that the Third World countries would not, or indeed could not, 'develop' from within but would have exogenous developmental ideas thrust upon them by the world powers who, albeit with their dissimilar templates, had hitherto predetermined the parameters of 'development'.

During the Cold War, the world powers devised and employed several strategic means in order to ensure the ascendancy of their ideas. For instance, the European Recovery Program (ERP) otherwise known as the Marshall Plan linked both European

264 Bugaric, "The Birth of the Cold War," 39.

265 John Mueller, "What Was the Cold War About? Evidence From Its Ending," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 4 (n.d.): 609.

266 Life Magazine, 1945 cited in McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction*, 10.

267 McMahon, 64.

268 Jeswald W. Salacuse, "From Developing Countries to Emerging Markets: A Changing Role For Law in the Third World," *The International Lawyer* 33, no. 4 (1999): 875.

269 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, "The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment," 4.

270 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, 5.

reconstruction and the US campaign for multilateralism to a particular model of development in the underdeveloped world.²⁷¹ The brand of 'development' implicated in the Marshall Plan led to many international organisations and initiatives aimed, ostensibly, at supporting the Third World. The initiatives ranged from the many development banks, established around the time, to the Theatre for Development (TfD).²⁷²

The US claimed that the measures were intended to help raise the standard of living of the former colonies and to 'introduce Western models of development to these countries'.²⁷³ These claims seem, however, to run counter to real motives. At a meeting in 1939 at Washington DC, under the aegis of the US Council on Foreign Relations, the US foreign policy professionals and heads of large corporations clarified the underlying objectives of the era of development and discussed 'how the post-war and post-colonialist world economy could best be shaped in order to satisfy American commercial interests'.²⁷⁴ The US 'conceived a political campaign on a global scale to remake the world in America's image'.²⁷⁵ As part of a four-point post-war agenda made known during his inaugural speech, Harry Truman (then US President) announced the intention of the US to 'embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas'.²⁷⁶

Two points from the statements above, when juxtaposed, reveal the ambiguity in the US policy position. On the one hand, the US intended to make the benefits of their scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas of the world. On the other hand, the US concretely embarked on the mission to shape the post-war and post-colonialist world economy in a manner envisaged to satisfy American commercial interests. The ambiguity inherent in the statements is indicative of the world powers' ambivalent attitude to the development of the so-called underdeveloped areas of the world. The US dream of tailoring the world politically and economically in a predetermined trajectory to favour the US commercial interests which were at variance with the Soviet Union's interests also meant a peculiar type of development agenda for African and other Third World countries. Before delving into the concept of TfD, a discussion of the term 'development' is deemed apposite.

271 Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter, *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2005), 241.

272 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*, 15.

273 Marcia Pompeo Nogueira, "Theatre for Development: An Overview," *Research in Drama Education* 7, no. 1 (2002): 103.

274 Edward Goldsmith, "Development as Colonialism," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 6, no. 2 (2002): 21.

275 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, "The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment," 3.

276 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, 3-4.

2.1.1. Conceptualisation of Development

Thus far, the discussion in this chapter makes it evident that ‘development’, a term with notable malleability in conception and meaning, significantly ‘shaped the dominant mentality of the second half of the 20th century’.²⁷⁷ The malleability of the term is evident in the conflicting ideologies of the US and the Soviet Union which birthed the era of development as indicated above. As a concept, development is viewed as ‘multidimensional’ in its scope and as the catalyst of major changes in ‘social structures, popular attitudes ... as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty’.²⁷⁸ Its multidimensional quality makes it relatable to many facets of human life. The wide-ranging applicability of the concept of development is presumably accountable for the amorphous notion of the term defying, as it does, any specific, universally accepted meaning, yet remaining fashionable in public discourse.²⁷⁹ The concept of development is often used in an exclusive economic sense to suggest that the type of economy in operation among any people is an index of other social factors.²⁸⁰ The acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty²⁸¹ all of which manifest in the provision of adequate food, healthcare protection and shelter for as many people as possible are deemed the core indices of development.²⁸² Thus, woven around the concept of development are issues relating to all aspects of living.

Development has also been related with ‘strong, efficient and dynamic economic and political institutions that anticipate the yearnings of their people and respond to them accordingly and promptly’.²⁸³ Development could be apprehended in its tangible form and in the intangible form of ‘consciousness-raising’ which leads ultimately to ‘transformations’.²⁸⁴ Thus, development consists of material and non-material aspects both of which must be complementarily present for real development to occur.²⁸⁵ Development also implies, inherently, a maturation, a process of incremental, managed change that moves tangentially in the direction of a final ideal state.²⁸⁶ Viewed from this perspective development, like democracy, is not to be countenanced in its

277 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, 1.

278 Jeremiah Shola Omotola, “The Challenges of Development in Africa,” *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 14, no. 2 (2010): 27–28.

279 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, “The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment,” 1.

280 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 4.

281 Lane, Jan-Erik & Ersson Svante O. cited in Omotola, “The Challenges of Development in Africa,” 27–28.

282 Omotola, 28.

283 John Shola Olanrewaju, “Understanding Nigerian Development Crisis,” *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences* VI, no. 1 (2015): 4.

284 Frances Harding, “Neither ‘Fixed Masterpiece’ nor ‘Popular Distraction’: Voice, Transformation and Encounter in Theatre For Development,” in *African Theatre for Development: Art for Self-Determination*, ed. Kamal Salhi (Exeter, England: Intellect, 1998), 5.

285 Osita Okagbue, “A Drama of Their Lives: Theatre-for-Development in Africa,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 12, no. 1–2 (2002): 81.

286 Nick Cullather, “Development? It’s History,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 4 (2000): 644.

absolute sense but as a concept which moves on a continuum of more or less development.

Some critical formulations about development are, however, less complimentary. For instance, Syed Jamil Ahmed describes development as 'a virtual jungle of labyrinths'.²⁸⁷ In relation to the Third World nations, Ahmed espouses the view that development has failed to make any 'significant dent on the material condition of the people'.²⁸⁸ As a concept, development derives its essence through the application of 'an evaluative scale'²⁸⁹ of the entire world. In other words, a section of the world is said to be 'underdeveloped' only when evaluated against another section. Thus, development perceives the world from the prism of 'dichotomous concepts'.²⁹⁰ Another opinion on development perceives it as an odd 'mixture of generosity, bribery and oppression'.²⁹¹ This conceptualisation of development raises doubts about the purpose of developmental aids which is a critical feature of TfD.

Development hinges on the discourse of control of one state over another.²⁹² Therefore, the 'development' of the independent state is connected with the 'underdevelopment' of the controlled state. This, essentially, is the control of the Global South (Third World) by the Global North. Alf Nilsen, while citing Sardar, asserts that the concept of development 'continues to mean what it has always meant; a standard by which the West measures the non-west'.²⁹³ Put differently, development is envisioned to function as a tool in the hands of the Global North for the stratification and control of other nations.

Crucial to this study is the fact that development has been associated with democratic institutions as a factor 'necessary to achieve sustainable democracy'.²⁹⁴ This claim aligns with another perception of development which suggests that it holds the promise of a 'blood-less, and revolution-free prosperity to the "developing" nations'.²⁹⁵ Truman strengthened this view by representing development in glowing terms as being

287 Syed Jamil Ahmed, "Wishing for a World Without 'Theatre for Development': Demystifying the Case of Bangladesh," *Research in Drama Education* 7, no. 2 (2002): 208.

288 Rahman 2000 cited in Ahmed, 208.

289 Alf Gunvald Nilsen, "Power, Resistance and Development in the Global South: Notes Towards a Critical Research Agenda," *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 29, no. 3 (2016): 270.

290 Philipp H. Lepenies, "An Inquiry into the Roots of the Modern Concept of Development," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 4 (2008): 202.

291 Sachs cited in Zubairu Wai, "Whither African Development? A Preparatory for an African Alternative Reformulation of the Concept of Development," *Africa Development* 32, no. 4 (2007): 74.

292 Nilsen, "Power, Resistance and Development in the Global South: Notes Towards a Critical Research Agenda," 273; Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 4.

293 Sardar (1999) 49 cited in Nilsen, "Power, Resistance and Development in the Global South: Notes Towards a Critical Research Agenda," 270.

294 Mark T. Berger, "After the Third World? History, Destiny and the Fate of Third Worldism," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2004): 26.

295 Ahmed, "Wishing for a World Without 'Theatre for Development': Demystifying the Case of Bangladesh," 208.

hinged on a democratic ‘fair dealing’ between a ‘developed’ Global North and an ‘underdeveloped’ Global South in which the latter would leverage on the former’s ‘wider and vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge’²⁹⁶ for economic advancement. These seemingly lofty claims notwithstanding, with the end of colonialism, the concept of development became a tool to ‘manage rural livelihoods’ of the former colonies, and ‘to order, control, and compel the progress of their most backward subjects’.²⁹⁷ This suggests an incoherency in the theoretical unity between democracy and development, on the one hand, and the practical reality of their ‘union’, on the other hand. The underdevelopment of the Global South becomes a covert but required condition for the development of the Global North. This brings to question the nature of the sustained interrelationship between the Third World nations and their previous colonisers even after the presumed end of colonialism - an interrelationship which, as Truman claimed, would be founded, supposedly, on ‘democratic fair-dealing’.²⁹⁸ A brief look at Nigeria’s involvement in the development discourse is apposite at this point.

2.1.2. Nigeria and the Development Discourse

Nigeria’s place in the development discourse is necessarily subsumed under Africa’s experience thus necessitating a recourse to the African experience. Opinions are divided with respect to whether Africa should be classified as a poor continent. While mainstream discourse disparagingly suggests that the continent is poor despite its abundant resources, a counterargument upholds the view that Africa is not poor but impoverished.²⁹⁹ Historical records claim that Africa is the original home of man. This implies that Africa would necessarily have been a major participant in the processes in which human groups displayed the innate capacity to extract a living from their natural environment.³⁰⁰ To vary the metaphor, Africans, in the same manner as other people groups, did not require external intervention to apply themselves to, and utilise, the opportunities naturally available to them in their environment. However, despite her historical place as the cradle of human civilisation, Africa has remained developmentally challenged.

The rise in Africa’s profile is claimed to have been truncated through its contact with the ‘outside world’ thus marking its unmaking. Africa suffered, first, the onslaught of the Slave Trade, and later, of colonialism.³⁰¹ While the Slave Trade led to ‘massive

296 Silver and Slater, “The Social Origins of World Hegemonies,” 208.

297 Monica M. van Beukesom and Dorothy L. Hodgson, “Lessons Learned? Development Experiences in the Late Colonial Period,” *Journal of African History* 41, no. 1 (2000): 30.

298 Esteva, Babones, and Babicky, “The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment,” 5.

299 Demba Moussa Dembele, “Africa’s Developmental Impasse: Some Perspectives and Recommendations,” *Africa Development* XXXVII, no. 4 (2012): 181.

300 Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 4.

301 Omotola, “The Challenges of Development in Africa,” 30.

depopulation of the continent³⁰² with its heavy toll on development, colonialism has been described as a ‘massively violent encounter’.³⁰³ To elucidate, speculations on the number of Africans shipped out of Africa under the Slave Trade hover between a few millions and over one hundred million.³⁰⁴ The sex ratio is put at about two men to one woman. These were drawn from an able-bodied young population between the age range of fifteen and thirty-five years with a preference for those in their early twenties.³⁰⁵ This indicates that in the execution of the Slave Trade the productive segment of the African population was specifically targeted.

The end of the Slave Trade did not translate to Africa’s liberation as colonialism soon took over. Scholarly evidence suggests that colonialism was a system which functioned well in the interests of the metropolises,³⁰⁶ not of Africans. Infrastructural developments which colonialism is said to have engendered in Africa were geared either towards the well-being of the European settlers³⁰⁷ or they were intended to facilitate the despoliation of Africa’s natural resources. Thus, while the Slave Trade ravaged Africa’s labour force, colonialism pillaged the economic resources of the continent. These factors, it is claimed, conflated to make the continent developmentally in arrears and consequently a ready object for the supposed developmental measures put in place after Second World War by the Western world.

Following the categorisation of the world, the myth of the underdevelopment of Africa (and of the Third World nations generally) crystalised, with a conceived plan to rescue the ‘people of the poor countries from their poverty’.³⁰⁸ The measures introduced were allegedly intended to make Africa’s development trajectory coterminous with the Western models of development. Development and under-development are thus perceived in a relational dynamic in which the latter represents the exact absence of the former.³⁰⁹ Thus, the undignified condition called ‘underdevelopment’ was something Africa had to escape from.³¹⁰ In order to escape, it was necessary first to *feel* and *accept* that one had fallen into the condition of underdevelopment.

The development discourse stipulates that a major prerequisite in attaining a developed status is to operate ‘an economy integrated into the international industrial-commer-

302 Omotola, 30.

303 Onimode cited in Omotola, 31.

304 Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 96.

305 Rodney, 96.

306 Rodney, 205.

307 Rodney, 207.

308 Cullather, “Development? It’s History,” 641.

309 Olanrewaju, “Understanding Nigerian Development Crisis,” 5.

310 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, “The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment,” 8; Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 14.

cial community’.³¹¹ In other words, cooperation between the ‘developed’ countries and the ‘underdeveloped’ nations was conceived as the fundamental index necessary to pull the ‘underdeveloped’ nations out of the doldrums of retarded development. Speaking from the American perspective, Truman had claimed that the economic co-operation between the US and the Third World countries ‘must be devised and controlled to benefit the peoples of the areas in which they are established’ and ensure that ‘guarantees to the investor must be balanced by guarantees in the interest of the people whose resources and whose labor go into these developments’.³¹² I have earlier established the inconsistency of this claim in relation to other policy pronouncements of the Truman administration.

While the exogenous development course was being designed for Africa, within the continent there were hopes that with the attainment of independence, mostly in the 1960s, the long period of economic despoliation would come to an end, and Africa would be on the path of economic growth and development.³¹³ Such were the expectations which preceded Nigeria’s independence from British colonial rule in 1960. These expectations notwithstanding, it has been claimed that the operations and activities of the colonial authorities had no real potential for Nigeria’s development.³¹⁴ This claim is understandably open to debate as there could be different perspectives to the argument. However, the import and veracity of the claim could, to some degree, be evaluated through the prism of the Nigerian TFD which stands as one of the channels through which not only the erstwhile colonial masters but also other First World nations have maintained their presence in Nigeria.

2.2. African Theatre for Development: Brief Historical Perspective and Praxis

Tim Prentki argues that in every human age and culture theatre has always performed developmental roles by showing the community (its audience) the ways in which it might alter its position on a particular aspect of its social reality and hence put itself in a state of ‘developing’ from one view of itself to another.³¹⁵ Prentki further tenders the view that theatre transcends its readily perceived entertainment value and serves as a tool for every community to envision and strive towards a better form of itself. Similarly, and with specific reference to the African society, Victor Ukaegbu claims

311 Cullather, “Development? It’s History,” 643.

312 Esteve, Babones, and Babcicky, “The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment,” 5.

313 Dembele, “Africa’s Developmental Impasse: Some Perspectives and Recommendations,” 181.

314 Agnes Osita-Njoku, “The Political Economy of Development in Nigeria: From the Colonial to the Post Colonial Eras,” *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 21, no. 9 (2016): 9.

315 Tim Prentki, “Must the Show Go On? The Case for Theatre For Development,” *Development in Practice* 8, no. 4 (1998): 419–20.

that 'traditional African performances straddle sacred-secular boundaries',³¹⁶ and are 'less categorical about distinguishing aesthetic and functional intentions'.³¹⁷ In other words, as well as its entertainment facility, theatre in Africa has from the ageless past been purpose-driven by paying wholesome attention to the existential realities and needs of the society and by so doing serving as a tool for the development of the society.

The above is a cursory representation of the place of theatre in Africa before the advent of the Europeans and the inception of the Cold War. The competition and confrontation engendered by the Cold War were primarily military and ideological. However, it had an undisputable cultural component.³¹⁸ As indicated earlier, the period of the Cold War witnessed the establishment of various international organisations and initiatives aimed, as was claimed, at supporting the Third World. The initiatives included, in particular, the introduction of a mode of theatre praxis designated as the Theatre for Development (TfD) which was regarded as the theatrical wing of developmentalist thinking.³¹⁹

Since its inception, TfD has become a widely used developmental policy tool in developing countries. Tim Prentki makes a case for TfD as 'theatre used for development aims' and as 'a tool available to development agencies which pursue the goals of self-development and an improved quality of life of all people whose material conditions leave them vulnerable to hostile, predatory forces, both natural and human'.³²⁰ Prentki's definition which points attention to self-developmental goals of TfD for the improvement of the lives of vulnerable people strikes a chord of resemblance with Truman's policy on development in which the interest of the investor must be balanced against the interest of the 'people whose resources and whose labor go into these developments'.³²¹ The superficiality of Truman's declaration has been noted previously.

The Cold War period partly coincided with the period of independence for most African countries and witnessed an unprecedented expansion of public funding of the arts, especially the performing arts.³²² An instance was the \$200,000 grant in 1962 by the Rockefeller Foundation to the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, intended for the development of the University's drama program.³²³ The huge public funding of arts during this period was fuelled by the rivalry among the superpowers. Thus, as

316 Ukaegbu, "The Problem with Definitions," 53.

317 Ukaegbu, 46.

318 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*, 1.

319 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, 15.

320 Prentki, "Must the Show Go On? The Case for Theatre For Development," 419.

321 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, "The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment," 5.

322 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, *Theatre, Globalization and the Cold War*, 8.

323 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, 14.

colonised African countries were being released into independence in the 1950s and 1960s, they shifted their dependencies from direct colonial tutelage to new networks of aid from either East (Soviet Union) or West (US and Britain), or both.³²⁴ During this period also Eastern Europe began to export its version of art theatre. Two Eastern European theatre icons were emblematic of this export: Stanislavsky (for an approach to professional acting training) and Brecht (for an anti-naturalistic approach to theatre practice).³²⁵ The Brechtian system, in particular, soon gained traction in the practice of Tfd. Thus, departing from the traditional functional role of theatre within the African society – before and during the colonial era - the dawn of the era of development in the middle of the 20th century occasioned a pragmatic shift in the content of theatre and in the nature of its role in some African communities. The pragmatic shift was purportedly an attempt to drive the developmental programs of the era of development through the use of theatre.

At the core of the economic policy drive for the ‘development’ of Africa and other Third World countries was the resolve to downgrade their traditional cultures to the effect that they may be superseded by a supposedly ‘modern’ culture presumably capable of sustaining a democratic political system.³²⁶ It was claimed that the modernisation approach to development, which manifested in theatre with ‘developmental goals’, would raise a modernising elite which would, *inter alia*, foster democratic conditions considered necessary for the transformation of underdeveloped countries into modern nations. At inception, Tfd was practiced in ways that ‘ignored indigenous social structures, kinship systems, technological skills, languages, and cultural determinants’.³²⁷ Current practice of Tfd claims to have incorporated the hitherto missing cultural components which privileges communication and culture as prerequisites for development. However, it is debatable the degree to which the incorporation of those elements has gone in driving the goals of development in Nigeria and other Third World nations.

Early examples of Tfd initiatives in Africa include Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s Kamiriithu Theatre (Kenya), Michael Etherton’s Chikwakwa Theatre (Zambia), Zakes Mda’s Marotholi Travelling Theatre (Lesotho), Ross Kidd’s (& Co) Laedza Batanani (Botswana), and Oga Abah’s Samaru Theatre (Nigeria). I will be discussing the last two on the list, that is, Laedza Batanani, and Samaru Theatre, in the course of this chapter. I intend to examine these early examples of Tfd from the prism of the promotion

324 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, 13–14.

325 Balme and Szymanski-Dull, 14.

326 David Kerr, “Participatory Popular Theater: The Highest Stage of Cultural Under-Development,” *Research in African Literatures* 22, no. 3 (1991): 56.

327 Roxborough 1979, 20-22 cited in Kerr, 56–57.

of democratic values and self-development as advertised by developmentalism. First, Laedza Batanani in Botswana, Southern Africa.

2.2.1 Laedza Batanani: The Inception of Theatre for Development (TfD) in Africa

Despite the Cold War tussle between the US and the Soviet Union and the competitiveness in art funding in Africa engendered by that tussle, the project widely acclaimed as the seminal TfD engagement in Africa has no known direct connection with either of these two countries. Rather, the project springs from Canada. It could, however, be presumed that the Canadian organisation was aligning with developmentalist objectives conceived for Africa by the US. Funded by the Canadian University Services Organization, Botswana's Laedza Batanani (1974-77)³²⁸ is commonly associated with the inception of TfD in Africa as it represents a seminal collaboration between a foreign organisation and an African government in the use of theatre to pursue developmental goals. Laedza Batanani was aimed at devising a way of motivating Botswanans to participate in development.³²⁹ The project was situated in the Bokalaka area of northern Botswana under the superintendence of a community leader. A total of three adult educators have been associated with the project. They are Ross Kidd, Martin Byram³³⁰ and Petra Rohr-Rouendall.³³¹ The project was an extension programme for farmers in Botswana which aimed at an increase in agricultural output.

Laedza Batanani is significant in the history of TfD in Africa due to the fact that for the first time 'we saw theatre made *with* – though not initially *by* – instead of *for* ordinary people'.³³² Faced with the problem of low grassroots participation in government development initiatives, the government of Botswana sought to tackle the challenge through the Laedza Batanani or 'Community Awakening' project. Foreign input into the programme came not only through funds provided by the Canadian University Services Organization but also through the expertise of the foreign adult educators one of whom was schooled in the Freirian method of education.³³³

Laedza Batanani was a non-formal education project modelled after the pivotal work of Paulo Freire which incorporated theatre as the 'medium for encouraging participa-

328 Chandel Gambles, "Colonialist Theatre Education in Botswana," *Studies by Undergraduate Researchers at Guelph* 3, no. 2 (2010): 5.

329 Ross Kidd and Martin Byram, "Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani," *Community Development Journal* 17, no. 2 (1982): 91.

330 Gaurav Desai, "Theatre as Praxis: Discursive Strategies in African Popular Theatre," *African Studies Review* 33, no. 1 (1990): 72.

331 Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh, "Theatre and Community Education: The African Experience," *Africa Media Review* 1, no. 3 (1987): 59.

332 Jane Plastow, "Domestication or Transformation? The Ideology of Theatre for Development in Africa," *Applied Theatre Research* 2, no. 2 (2014): 109.

333 Kidd and Byram, "Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani," 92.

tion, raising issues, fostering discussion and promoting collective action'.³³⁴ Critical to Laedza Batanani was the goal to draw large audiences through the communitarian spirit of theatre and thereby exploit the platform of a theatrical performance to focus on key local issues raised in the drama.³³⁵ It was a one-week programme that was organised in six villages in the Bokalaka area of Botswana shortly before the commencement of the ploughing period between September and October, a timing significant for an agricultural project.

The preparatory stage of the campaign was broken into two phases: a community planning workshop and an actors' workshop. Traditional leaders, village development committee members, extension workers and leaders of various community organisations formed the participants at the community planning workshop. Working in groups, they identified a list of community problems out of which they selected one or two priority and solvable problems and generated short skits to reflect on the problems. The actors' workshop was a smaller group comprising extension workers and community leaders who devised more polished performances based on the identified problems. The performances were then toured around the villages.³³⁶

Theatrical performances in the mode of TfD, such as Laedza Batanani are perceived 'as a dynamic alternative to media'.³³⁷ They are often preferred over the regular mass media as a result of the impersonal nature of regular mass media in contradistinction to the interpersonal communication engendered by theatrical performances.³³⁸ This informs the preference for TfD which appropriates participatory and popular appeal in its interaction with target populations through the adoption of their cultural heritage and resources such as songs, dance and music.³³⁹

Laedza Batanani performances were held in mid-afternoon at the *kgotla*, the village meeting place. The performances were a mixed programme of two or three drama sketches, a puppet show, and several songs.³⁴⁰ At the end of the songs, the actors move into the audience which is then broken into groups with an actor leading each of the groups for the post-performance discussions. At the end of the group discussions, the entire community would congregate at the *kgotla* to take the reports of the groups after which the chairperson would summarise the major proposals and guide the

334 Kidd and Byram, 91.

335 Kees Epskamp, *Theatre for Development: An Introduction to Context, Applications and Training* (London and New York: Zed Books, 2006), 14.

336 Kidd and Byram, "Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani," 93.

337 Kerr, "Participatory Popular Theater: The Highest Stage of Cultural Under-Development," 59.

338 Charles Emeka Nwadiwe, "Theatre for Development: An Alternative Programme for Reproductive Health Communication in Urban Nigeria," *African Sociological Review / Revue Africaine de Sociologie* 16, no. 2 (2012): 104.

339 Nwadiwe, 105.

340 Kidd and Byram, "Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani," 93.

community to arrive at a consensus.³⁴¹ The project was envisioned to foster cooperation among Botswana's farming community by bringing them together to deliberate on local issues, to jointly agree on changes deemed necessary and 'to take collective action'.³⁴² Specifically, the objective of the extension program was to enable farmers to discuss practice as opposed to having new ideas imposed on them.³⁴³

My purpose for discussing this pivotal TfD project in Africa fairly extensively is to make room for a robust understanding of the operation of the developmentalist program. Notwithstanding the pride of place which this project enjoys as the seminal TfD project in Africa, its fulfilment of the tenets of development and of democratic values is hazy and difficult to apprehend. The choice of the issues handled under Laedza Batanani interventions was often based on the following considerations: 'a modest target which groups can easily achieve, problems that individuals or individual families or groups can solve, problems which require a local response rather than government action.'³⁴⁴ To elucidate, the projects essentially served, not as tools for the development of the individuals and communities, but as instruments with which the ordinary people were made to bear the burdens of executing projects in their communities to the exclusion of the government. This makes questionable the objectives of the development enterprise.

Laedza Batanani evidences an undemocratic imbalance between the voice of the people and that of the government. The project witnessed the strong presence and voice of the authorities instead of the people's voice. This is evident in the composition of participants at the community planning workshop which was made up of 'traditional leaders, village development committee members, extension workers and leaders of other community organisations.'³⁴⁵ The government, having predetermined a preferred approach to farming, employed theatre as a tool of soft power to enforce its preferences without adequately incorporating the views of the people. Theatre was used 'to persuade people to adopt the new practice'³⁴⁶ as propagated by the government. The involvement of the community leaders notwithstanding, the composition of the workshop participants still signifies a grouping of interests within the village which were not representative of those of the majority.³⁴⁷ Plastow's submission that

341 Kidd and Byram, 93.

342 Kidd and Byram, 91.

343 Plastow, "Domestication or Transformation? The Ideology of Theatre for Development in Africa," 108.

344 Kidd and Byram, "Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani," 94.

345 Kidd and Byram, 93.

346 Ross Kidd, "Popular Theatre and Nonformal Education in the Third World: Five Strands of Experience," *International Review of Education* 30, no. 3 (1984): 270.

347 Kidd and Byram, "Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani," 97.

Laedza Batanani was theatre made *with*... ‘ordinary’³⁴⁸ people seems to be contradicted by the composition of the workshop participants.

Also, in the execution of the Laedza Batanani project, the common people who had been denied participation in the workshop, form part of the audience where they sing and dance and participate in the discussion. This kind of participation is notably essentially different from being involved in selecting the campaign issues and structuring how they are to be presented for discussion.³⁴⁹ In other words, singing, dancing and contributing to a discussion which trajectory had been predetermined foretime should not be countenanced as indices of participation. The mode of the execution of Laedza Batanani lent itself more to a one-dimensional approach to communication which conveyed a single partisan idea without creating room for a balanced view of issues.³⁵⁰ This is out of tune with the ground rules of democratic engagement. Developmentalism, as noted earlier, was claimed to be founded on democratic fair dealing. Democratic engagement is normatively characterised by active and robust – not pseudo - participation.

Two instances will suffice to demonstrate the exclusion of the people from participation in selecting campaign issues: the choice to focus on cattle theft, an issue which is ‘clearly not a high priority for the majority of rural families who own no cattle at all’, and the choice of health issues which, as good as it might appear, ‘was clearly influenced by the large and vocal participation of government health workers’.³⁵¹ It is therefore my contention that contrary to claims often advertised in favour of developmentalism, the seminal Tfd engagement, Laedza Batanani, might not have left deep imprints in the core areas of development and democracy.

2.3. Advent of Theatre for Development in Nigeria and the Channels of Intervention

Some years after Botswana through its Laedza Batanani campaigns beat the gong for the action to start in Africa,³⁵² the Tfd music began to reverberate in other parts of Africa including the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. This came through the pioneering efforts of Oga Steve Abah, who obtained his doctorate from Leeds University, UK, and Michael Etherton founder of the Chikwakwa Theatre in Zambia, who, leaving Zambia, had joined the workforce at the Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria.³⁵³

348 Plastow, “Domestication or Transformation? The Ideology of Theatre for Development in Africa,” 109.

349 Kidd and Byram, “Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani,” 97.

350 Kidd, “Popular Theatre and Nonformal Education in the Third World: Five Strands of Experience,” 270.

351 Kidd and Byram, “Demystifying Pseudo-Freirian Development: The Case of Laedza Batanani,” 97.

352 Oga Steve Abah, “Vignettes of Communities in Action: An Exploration of Participatory Methodologies in Promoting Community Development in Nigeria,” *Community Development Journal* 42, no. 4 (2007): 445.

353 Abah, 445.

In Abah's terms, TfD is the form of theatre that addresses community issues and problems by employing the people's language and art forms as the mode of expression.³⁵⁴ TfD celebrates the human person as a being capable of using their cultural forms for individual and societal transformation for the better.³⁵⁵ Abah further claims that the concept of TfD resonated with the emergent radical social discourse of 'power of the people and power to the people'.³⁵⁶ TfD claims to be an instrument for raising the consciousness of both rural and urban people, of both the marginalised and the endowed³⁵⁷ members of society. In line with this, the Ahmadu Bello University Theatre team set for itself the objective to 'relate theatre studies to and draw inspiration from society'.³⁵⁸

With this understanding, in 1980, a group of drama students of the Ahmadu Bello University and their instructors embarked on a theatrical enterprise which drew its resource from the lived experiences of some communities contiguous to the university. Whereas Victor Gomia claims that the Ahmadu Bello University TfD project had its debut at Soba, a village located fifty miles away from the university,³⁵⁹ others like Gaurav Desai, favour the Samaru project as the seminal intervention of the Ahmadu Bello University theatre team.³⁶⁰ A small town near the main campus of the University, Samaru is an infrastructurally underdeveloped, waterlogged area with an erratic electric supply and untarred streets.³⁶¹ Samaru community is occupied mainly by the junior staff of the university whose lifestyle and experiences 'are vastly different from those of the wealthier senior staff of the university'.³⁶² The attempt made by the Ahmadu Bello University theatre practitioners to distinguish the discursive paradigms of the elite from those of the relatively underprivileged Samaru inhabitants signified a major move in interventionist theatre practice in Nigeria.³⁶³

The methodology employed in the Samaru project involved familiarisation visits by the students and their teachers to the community in order to 'research the problems

354 Abah, 437.

355 Ifatimehin cited in Jubril Abdullahi and Habeeb Adebayo Salaudeen, "Theatre for Development and Women Empowerment in Northern Nigeria: A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Development Communication Field Experience," in *Literature, Integration and Harmony in Northern Nigeria*, ed. Hamzat I. Abdulraheem, Saheedat B. Aliyu, and Ruben K Akano (Malet: Kwara State University, 2017), 218.

356 Abah, "Vignettes of Communities in Action: An Exploration of Participatory Methodologies in Promoting Community Development in Nigeria," 445.

357 Abah, 437.

358 Victor N. Gomia, "Tracing the Beginnings and the Importance of Development Theatre Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa," in *Re-Writing Pasts, Imagining Futures: Critical Explorations of Contemporary African Fiction and Theater*, ed. Victor N. Gomia and Gilbert Shang Ndi (Denver: Spears Media Press, 2017), 194.

359 Gomia, 194.

360 Desai, "Theatre as Praxis: Discursive Strategies in African Popular Theatre," 78.

361 Desai, 78.

362 Desai, 78.

363 Desai, 79.

of the Samaru inhabitants and to codify these issues in theatrical form'.³⁶⁴ According to Desai the object of the exercise was Freirean in nature, in other words, the codified theatrical performances were to be presented to an open audience of villagers after which it will be decoded with their cooperation thus giving birth to a dialogic theatre form. This theatrical approach in which performances were decoded with the help of the audience made evident the project's indebtedness to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. The performances raised questions about the existential realities of the Samaru inhabitants. The Samaru project exemplified the critical role of communication in development discourse.

As previously noted, regular mass media has been considered inadequate in communicating various developmental ideas and in reaching and persuading target audiences hence the perceived necessity to employ theatre as a means of communication and education in addressing issues such as primary healthcare, HIV-AIDS, voter education, census awareness, school enrolment, religious tolerance, and self-help development initiatives.³⁶⁵ TfD claims to spur 'community renewal in such fields as health, literacy, agriculture or social welfare'.³⁶⁶ This is suggestive of the all-encompassing effect which democracy ought to have in the lives of the people bearing in mind the affinity which development claims with democracy. TfD further claims to address 'the issues and concerns of the marginalized urban and rural poor'.³⁶⁷ The challenge, however, is that due to paucity of financial resources theatre practitioners engaged in TfD often have to rely on government or funding agencies (local and international NGOs) in the execution of theatre projects,

Abah acknowledges the critical roles both national and (in particular) international NGOs play in the execution of TfD projects.³⁶⁸ The projects are often tied to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations and sponsored majorly by foreign private, not-for-profit organisations often in collaboration with (Nigerian) governments, agencies or organisations. The incorporation of theatre into the execution of the projects is premised on the argument that theatre is a veritable means of communication needed for the realisation of the MDGs.³⁶⁹ The communication of

364 Desai, 78.

365 Charles. Nwadiuwe, "Meet Us at the Other Side of the River: Performance Venue and Community Education among Migrant Fishermen in Nigeria," *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* 12, no. 1 (2007): 65.

366 David Kerr, "Community Theatre and Public Health in Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15, no. 3 (1989): 471.

367 Abah cited in Abdullahi and Salaudeen, "Theatre for Development and Women Empowerment in Northern Nigeria: A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Development Communication Field Experience," 218.

368 Abah, "Vignettes of Communities in Action: An Exploration of Participatory Methodologies in Promoting Community Development in Nigeria," 446.

369 Nwadiuwe, "Meet Us at the Other Side of the River: Performance Venue and Community Education among Migrant Fishermen in Nigeria," 65.

these initiatives through regular mass media is said to be progressing only slowly hence the need for the adoption of the TfD as theatrical praxis necessary in ‘the moulding of the audience in a desired direction (or mood)’.³⁷⁰

This objective of ‘moulding the audience’ in a particular direction, however, raises the question about consistency with the core objective(s) of TfD as a people-centred theatre supposedly founded on democratic tenets. Abah argues against the often-held notion that the amateurs of TfD projects ‘always go into communities with an open mind and without prejudging anything’.³⁷¹ Abah asserts that behind the declaration of innocence there is a pervading belief that something is fundamentally wrong. This belief, according to him, is always complemented by the corresponding assumption that ‘we have the solution, even if only in part’.³⁷²

Abah’s contention seems to have ignored the fundamental objective of applied theatre as theatre specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies. Thus, I stake the claim that applied theatre essentially operates with the fundamental consciousness that an issue needs to be addressed within society or among a people. However, a negation of the principles of applied theatre in general, and TfD in particular, would be when interventionists operate with a preconceived solution to the problem. Thus, applied theatre recognises the existence of glitches in communities but does not - or should not - operate with a predetermined notion of the solution(s) to the problems facing communities. Herein lies the challenge, as I noted earlier, of theatre becoming an instrument in the hands of the oppressor to bear rule.

Osita Okagbue avers that some practices engaged in by TfD practitioners seem to defeat the fundamental aim of TfD which, according to him, is to provide ‘the communities with a forum, a context or a platform upon which they can, on their own but with some help from catalysts, address issues about themselves’.³⁷³ Okagbue stresses that adherence to this approach will create the needed setting for the communities to catalyse the solutions to their problems without having the solutions come to them in a centre-to-periphery/top-to-bottom model. The above contentions raise the question about the interest of donor agencies in the development enterprise. To address the question, I will henceforth review various interventions sponsored in Nigeria by some donor agencies.

370 Nwadiuwe, 66.

371 Oga S. Abah, “The Dynamics of Intervention in Community Theatre for Development,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 12, no. 1–2 (2002): 59.

372 Abah, 59.

373 Okagbue, “A Drama of Their Lives: Theatre-for-Development in Africa,” 80.

2.3.1. Analysis of Selected TFD Interventions on the Environment

Since the 1980s the concept of ‘development’ has been increasingly linked to the protection of the environment in developing countries.³⁷⁴ Living Earth Nigeria Foundation’s (LENF) community theatre intervention in Cross River State, Nigeria, represents one of such interventions which claim to have a strong bias for the protection of the environment. Liwhu Betiang, a cultural animator in the LENS projects avers that community participatory theatre is ‘the most popular of all environmental education approaches’³⁷⁵ and states that the objectives of the LENS projects in Cross River State, Nigeria, were *inter alia* the establishment and training of community-based troupe members in the process of theatre preparation, production and performance.³⁷⁶

Executed in six communities within Cross River State (Ifumkpa, Bendeghe-Afi, Abontakon, Iso-Bendeghe, Danare and Okiro) between 1999 and 2004, the project was carried out under the aegis of LENS Community Theatre Initiative; LENS is an affiliate of Living Earth Foundation, in the UK. LENS was set up as a private not-for-profit organisation to supposedly support community people in resolving their environmental and development related challenges through environmental education and development projects. The vision of the organisation, as it claims, is ‘to have communities leading their own development process, using the natural resources at their disposal to create wealth in a self-sustaining manner’ and be ‘able to seek out the outside help they need’.³⁷⁷ To achieve this, LENS established community theatre troupes in the six communities. The project was thematically centred on the conservation of the environment.

In line with the traditional practice in TFD projects, the methodology adopted by the LENS Community Theatre project included community research which involved problem identification and prioritisation. The project claimed affinity with Boal’s Newspaper Theatre on the premise that it afforded rural peoples the opportunity to make theatre as active agents thereby eliminating the ‘artist-spectator duality’.³⁷⁸ The claims to affinity with the ideals of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, a bottom-up approach to theatre practice specifically designed to empower the voiceless in society, is common among theatre practitioners in Nigeria. However, the degree to which these practices tally with the core ideals of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed is debatable.

374 Salacuse, “From Developing Countries to Emerging Markets: A Changing Role For Law in the Third World,” 875–76.

375 Liwhu Betiang, “Theatre of Rural Empowerment: The Example of Living Earth Nigeria Foundation’s Community Theatre Initiative in Cross River State, Nigeria,” *Research in Drama Education* 15, no. 1 (2010): 59.

376 Betiang, 64.

377 Betiang, 63.

378 Betiang, 62.

The participants were trained in the development of 'play scripts' and in post-performance audience management to enable them to address identified community problems. As part of the training, the participants were made to put their newly acquired skills into practice by researching and identifying the problems in their local community after which they prioritised the issues and created simple scenarios based on identified community problems.³⁷⁹ Betiang the consultant-animator notes that the plays were 'often deliberately stopped at cliff-hangers'³⁸⁰ that is, at dramatic moments that raise unresolved questions thus creating suspense. This technique, like Boal's Forum Theatre methodological approach, was adopted in order to initiate audience interaction. However, audience interaction, in this case, did not accommodate spectators on stage as obtains in Boal's Forum Theatre.

The community research carried out in the six typically rural and agrarian communities noted above showed that the communities had neither access to functional health facilities nor electricity. Only one of the six communities (Abontakon) had an access road. The communities were thus alienated from their neighbours. Also, the communities' only access to portable water was from natural streams in some cases. The only government presence in the communities 'was often a primary school and a community secondary school; and in rare cases ill-equipped and poorly manned health centres'.³⁸¹

The project claimed a 'bottom-up participatory approach to development/advocacy' by, according to Betiang, devolving theatre to the people and equipping the rural communities with the skill to 'embark on meaningful development projects'.³⁸² According to the consultant theatre animator, the six community-based theatre groups 'became the arrow-heads for local development'.³⁸³ I will, shortly, critically examine how this played out in reality. The LENF Community Theatre Initiative later conducted a short-term post-intervention follow-up exercise to assess the impact of their intervention. The follow-up exercise revealed that some of the community-based theatre troupes had designed and staged performances without the assistance of the LENF Community Theatre Initiative. The performances took, as their thematic focus, the problems being faced by the various communities and galvanised the communities into taking practical measures for self-help as upheld in the development discourse.

379 Betiang, 63–64.

380 Betiang, 69.

381 Betiang, 65.

382 Betiang, 59.

383 Betiang, 59.

I argue that the six community-based theatre groups which, according to the consultant-animator became ‘arrow-heads for local development’³⁸⁴ were, in all practical purposes, equipped for ‘the instrumentalization of theatre as a tool of soft power over impoverished rural communities’.³⁸⁵ This creates a paradox in which communities ‘develop’ at their own expense. For instance, Betiang reports that in Abontakon the local troupe’s *Shit Palaver* aroused the community to the ‘need to revamp and refurbish an earlier abandoned colonial dug-out well as a means (of) providing alternative clean drinking water for the community instead of drinking from the polluted streams’.³⁸⁶ The performance also prompted some members of the community to build sanitary toilets also at their expense.

An increase in the number of enrolments of both males and females at the local Federal College of Education was linked to the performance of *Asi Asang* in Okiro community where a nursery school was also established to cater to the needs of pre-school children. Again, this placed financial burden on members of the community. Another ‘developmental’ or ‘empowering’ impact claimed by the project is the video recording of the performance which required ‘bit by bit shooting of the plays on location’.³⁸⁷ The project further claims that this ‘exercise afforded the local troupes an opportunity to participate in another dimension of drama and theatre’ and ‘broadened their histrionic and production skills and gave them a more holistic understanding of theatre as tool for empowerment, development and entertainment’.³⁸⁸

The era of development, as previously noted, was purportedly envisioned, *inter alia*, to make the scientific advances and industrial progress of the First World countries available for the improvement and growth of ‘underdeveloped’ areas. I also noted that development is deemed a necessary requisite to the achievement of democracy.³⁸⁹ Similarly, LENF claimed to have operated with the objective of supporting communities to resolve their environmental and development related challenges through environment education and development projects. It is therefore in line with these advertised objectives that I appraise, as follows, the LENF’s projects in Cross River State, Nigeria.

The play, *Asi Asang*, in Okiro Community presumably played a role in the increase in the number of enrolments at the local Federal College of Education at Obudu. Also, at Iso-Bendeghe, *Over My Dead Body* is given credit for the initiation of reconciliatory

384 Betiang, 59.

385 Sruti Bala, *The Gestures of Participatory Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 34.

386 Betiang, “Theatre of Rural Empowerment: The Example of Living Earth Nigeria Foundation’s Community Theatre Initiative in Cross River State, Nigeria,” 72.

387 Betiang, 72.

388 Betiang, 72.

389 Berger, “After the Third World? History, Destiny and the Fate of Third Worldism,” 26.

efforts in the feud involving two chieftains in the community. These two examples are perhaps the closest the projects came to Frances Harding's concept of intangible development having seemingly conscientised the members of Okiro and Iso-Bende-ghe communities to the benefits of education and peaceful communal co-existence, respectively. However, it remains doubtful how strongly the above 'benefits' weigh against Truman's declaration that the development drive will enhance the transference of scientific knowledge from the 'developed' to the 'underdeveloped' countries.³⁹⁰

Further examination of the purported impacts of the projects raises additional questions about the claimed objectives of the development drive. The LENF project, contrary to the objectives of making the scientific advances and industrial progress of the First World available to the communities, imposed financial burden on the people. Also, it is unclear how the video recording of the performances could amount to empowerment and development in a concrete and sustainable manner. Furthermore, the move by one of the communities (Abontakon) to revamp a colonial dug-out well as a source of 'alternative clean drinking water' to serve as a substitute to the polluted streams seems to cast further doubt about what could be categorised as development. One of the indices of development is the availability of clean drinking water from convenient home taps.³⁹¹ It is doubtful how 'clean' water from a dug-out well could be and how 'convenient' it is to depend on a well as a source of drinking water. Interventions such as this tend to lend credence to the assertion that 'what purports to be TfD is often in fact a reactionary practice intended to domesticate rather than transform the lives of African subjects'.³⁹² Meaningful development should be grounded, sustainable and sufficiently impactful to ensure the institutionalisation of systems and structures that will curb urban migration and bestow to the youth a future to anticipatorily envisage.

There are two critical points to note with regard to the LENF project; the project's contribution to democratic ideals is hazy having not sufficiently incorporated the community members in the decision-making processes. The project discountenanced the people's voice thus being markedly different from the kind of theatre treated in Chapter 1. Also, the project's conformity with the objectives of development as espoused in the developmentalist thinking appears rather tenuous.

Another TfD intervention with a focus on the environment is the Safe Earth Foundation project at Osamala, a Niger Delta community in the Ogbaru area of Anambra State, Southeast Nigeria. Ogbaru lies within the Anambra Basin where oil prospecting

390 Silver and Slater, "The Social Origins of World Hegemonies," 208.

391 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, "The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment," 2.

392 Plastow, "Domestication or Transformation? The Ideology of Theatre for Development in Africa," 109.

has been in existence since the colonial era.³⁹³ The Safe Earth Foundation project was executed with the support of the Anambra State Ministry of Environment. The Foundation's programme tagged 'Drama for Environmental Education Project' (DEEP), was a 'dramatic campaign to enlighten migrant fishermen to adopt safe and environment-friendly fishing methods and practices'.³⁹⁴ Migrant fishermen are apparently one of the most marginalised, economically precarious sections of the Nigerian population.³⁹⁵ This presumably informed the attention given them by the Safe Earth Foundation through the DEEP programme.

With the stated objectives the facilitators, through the community heads, gained entry into, and acceptance by, the target community after which they embarked on data collection in order to establish a correlation between the fishing methods of the migrant fishermen and water pollution. It is noteworthy that prior to contact with members of the fishing community, the project had already clearly mapped out its objectives. The 'flooding' method of data collection which entailed repeated visits to the target community and their fishing settlements was employed as well as the setting up of focus groups in order to optimally gather data.

Although not originally intended, the performance eventually took place as a site-specific performance at the shore of the river. This was on account of occupational exigencies prompted by a chance high tide in the river forcing the fishermen to move to another location. On arrival at the community square for rehearsal, the facilitators were disappointed to discover that the fishermen had moved with the tide and had posted a message to them through a young boy which read: 'We have gone fishing and will return on the next market day, to move again thereafter. Meet us at the other side of the river. We can do the play there'.³⁹⁶

This unanticipated shift in the performance location is indicative of the power a people could and should wield in a democracy. By that shift, the fishermen inadvertently asserted their voice in the choice of the performance location thus making it imperative for the facilitators to accede to their demand if they wanted the continuation of the project. It demonstrates the possibility that citizens could regain their democratic agency in order to effectuate positive changes favourable to them.

393 Chidozie Izuchukwu Princeton Dim et al., "Analysis of Petroleum System for Exploration and Risk Reduction in the South-Eastern Inland Basins of Nigeria," *Petroleum and Coal* 60, no. 2 (2018): 305.

394 Nwadiwe, "Meet Us at the Other Side of the River: Performance Venue and Community Education among Migrant Fishermen in Nigeria," 68.

395 Nwadiwe, 67.

396 Nwadiwe, 70.

The riverbank accentuated the impact of the performance and made possible the incorporation of the 'riverside spaces including the makeshift quay and anchored canoes' as part of the set and members of the audience were seated on 'stumps, improvised stands, moored boats and canoes' as well as on the ground.³⁹⁷ Where the action called for it, some of the performers practically rowed their boats or swam onto the stage and flowed into the dramatic action thereby fusing space as representational with space as real. Thus, as Charles Nwadiuwe notes, the fusion of the fishermen's occupational ambience (the riverside) with the local idioms such as songs, music, dance and a boat carnival procession summed up to a feeling of verisimilitude and created a strong impact on the audience.³⁹⁸ The impact was further heightened by the genuineness of the story which was in tandem with existential realities as they dramatised the effects of water pollution on the people's health as well as on the environment.

Apart from the economic well-being of the fishing community, the river also has deep spiritual significance for the community as the people 'venerate the metaphysical powers, believed to inhabit the sea, as a source of spiritual essence of their existence'.³⁹⁹ The community heads led the post-performance discussion thus lending credibility to the performance and making the community members apprehend the exigency of the issues raised. The presence and active participation of the community heads elicited a positive response to the message embodied in the performance. The effect was evidenced by the suggestion proffered by some of the villagers that 'ritual sacrifice be offered to placate the River Goddess whom they reasoned had been offended by human activities on the sea'.⁴⁰⁰

Nwadiuwe reports that the post-performance discussions generated vital information regarding the concerns of the migrant fishermen about water pollution and sustainable fishing methods. Key questions raised during the post-performance discussions include the possible health risks to human beings associated with the use of harmful chemicals for fishing as opposed to fishes, and the abject poverty which, in the first instance, give impetus to the choice of the harmful chemicals. Other critical issues which the community engaged with during the discussion include the unfair competition posed by rich fishing conglomerates who use trawlers as opposed to fishing nets for their fishing, the community leaders' lack of power to sanction offending fishermen and the need for potable water and other amenities for coastal communities.⁴⁰¹

397 Nwadiuwe, 71.

398 Nwadiuwe, 71.

399 Nwadiuwe, 71.

400 Nwadiuwe, 72.

401 Nwadiuwe, 73.

As noted earlier, oil prospecting in the Anambra Basin precedes Nigeria's independence in 1960. The adverse effect of oil prospecting in the region was one of the crucial subjects which emerged during the post-performance discussions. Significant in this wise was the brazen attitude displayed, and the impunity enjoyed, by oil prospecting companies which result in oil spills and water pollution.⁴⁰² This is deemed critically important in consideration of the fact that when compared to the damage done by the oil prospecting companies, the activities of the fishermen would pale in significance thus raising the question about who the campaign for the protection of the environment and conservation of biodiversity should have been directed to. This lays bare the power dynamics implicated in the execution of TfD projects and lends credence to my contention that current TfD practice in Nigeria does not represent the voice of the people. Rather, it is being used to actualise the interests of the authorities thereby discountenancing the voice and interest of the people.

Like the LENF program examined above, the DEEP project also propels a revisiting of Truman's inaugural presidential speech in which he stated that the era of development was supposedly fashioned to make the benefits of America's scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. This expresses the presumed global modernisation impetus of the post-WW2 era which was supposed to usher in development for African countries. The LENF and DEEP projects shore up the contradictions inherent in Truman's development discourse and demonstrate the undemocratic use of theatre as a tool for soft power. The Osamala project was targeted at natives who, as migrant fishermen, barely eke out a living from fishing but was mute on the expansive activities of the expatriate oil prospecting companies such as Shell Petroleum and the oil spillage therefrom with its attendant deleterious effect on both biodiversity and human lives. It is imperative to note that the environmental degradation and threat to life occasioned by the oil prospecting activities of Shell Oil Company in various parts of Nigeria led to the formation of activist groups such as the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) whose leader, Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa, was hanged on November 10, 1995.⁴⁰³ Ken Saro-Wiwa's only 'crime' was that he organised the Ogoni people to protest against the biodegradation caused by the activities of the conglomerates.

This, again, underscores the power dynamics and politics underlying the practice of TfD in Africa. Roxborough, as Kerr cites, notes that the development drive fosters capitalism. The LENF and DEEP projects seem to negate Roxborough's position that the development drive can engender conditions necessary for the transformation of

402 Nwadiigwe, 73.

403 Ide Corley, Helen Fallon, and Laurence Cox, *Silence Would Be Treason: Last Writings of Ken Saro-Wiwa*, ed. Ide Corley, Helen Fallon, and Laurence Cox, New and Ex (Quebec, Canada, 2017), xxvi.

underdeveloped countries into modern nations.⁴⁰⁴ Rather, they validate Plastow's worry that studies into the practice of TfD in Africa have preponderantly tilted towards *how* with less emphasis on *why* the projects are executed. According to Plastow, it is pointless to evade the question of ideology and of the political undercurrents of TfD practice in Africa 'in a world where all development aid spending is highly politicized'.⁴⁰⁵ The locus of interest of the projects lends itself to Plastow's argument that the *why* of TfD projects calls for critical scholarly attention.

The DEEP project ended with post-performance discussions which 'yielded a corpus of information regarding the feelings of migrant fishermen with regard to the problem of water pollution and sustainable fishing methods'.⁴⁰⁶ This seems to be a backhand affirmation that the preliminary research conducted at the commencement of the intervention was limited to the gathering of information to the exclusion of the views of the migrant fishermen about their existential realities, a component which ought to have served as the commencement point of the intervention. To illuminate, the opinions of the fishermen were not sufficiently (if at all) incorporated into the construction of the story that formed the performance. To ensure a bottom-up/periphery-centre approach to the intervention the story should have been told from the point of view of the fishermen. Only during the post-performance discussions were members of the community afforded any opportunity to express their views after, notably, being made to imbibe the messages preached at them.

The apparent failure of the DEEP project to incorporate the views of the fishing community into the performance and the project's expectation that the community members will imbibe the messages preached at them is illustrative of the non-involvement of Nigerian citizens in the making of the laws by which they are made to live. It exemplifies the gulf between the conduct of the representatives in government and, the yearnings and aspirations of the electoral populace.⁴⁰⁷

DEEP's intervention laid emphasis on creating awareness for the fishermen on the effects of harmful chemicals on the environment thereby calling for attitudinal change on the part of the migrant fishermen but failed to seek to understand and countenance, *ab initio*, the reason(s) the fishermen resort to the use of harmful chemicals. One of the essentials of any development is the increasing need to harvest and utilise the

404 Kerr, "Participatory Popular Theater: The Highest Stage of Cultural Under-Development," 56.

405 Plastow, "Domestication or Transformation? The Ideology of Theatre for Development in Africa," 115.

406 Nwadijigwe, "Meet Us at the Other Side of the River: Performance Venue and Community Education among Migrant Fishermen in Nigeria," 73.

407 Okoli, Nebeife, and Izang, "The Deficits of Democratic Mechanisms and Instruments in Nigeria's Fourth Republic," 27.

opinion of the people who are most affected by the development.⁴⁰⁸ This is a critical point of convergence between development and democracy. Only during the post-performance discussions did the intervention apprehend, among others, ‘the issue of abject poverty which tempts some fishermen to use harmful fishing chemical’.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, although the intervention acknowledged the challenges posed by dragging the people out of their daily livelihood in a continent plagued by abject poverty and several existential problems,⁴¹⁰ it failed to provide alternatives for the fishermen. In essence, therefore, the DEEP program does not seem to have sufficiently represented the voice of the Osamala community neither does it adequately evince other democratic values.

2.3.2. Tfd Interventions on Sexuality Education (Teenage Pregnancy)

Critical among the indices of development outlined by Truman is access to at least 12 years of schooling.⁴¹¹ Beyond the provision of physical infrastructure, it is equally highly essential to ensure that neither social nor cultural barriers are allowed to obstruct access to education for any child irrespective of their sexes. A critical factor which often impedes access to education of the girl-child is teenage pregnancy and consequent attrition therefrom.⁴¹² Teenage pregnancy is attributable to a number of factors including: the absence of sex education in schools, persistent gender and sexual biases against women, and patriarchal norms.⁴¹³ Parents and school authorities who combine to deny adolescents access to sexuality education are also quick to blame adolescent girls when pregnancies occur.⁴¹⁴ These factors have diverse social and health consequences for teenage girls who often resort to procuring abortion by patronising quacks. The factors also affect the education and total well-being of adolescent girls hence the need to pay close attention to them.

In this regard, Samuel Kafewo and his team elected to explore the potency of drama in addressing adolescent sexuality issues in Zaria, Kaduna State, in northern Nigeria. The year was 2005 and the project was titled ‘For Tomorrow’, in other words, taking the right decisions/actions today in order to ensure a secure tomorrow. Knowing that the challenge of teenage pregnancy implicates not only adolescents girls who often take the blame but also different arms of the society, the title of the project ‘For Tomorrow’ appears to be a wake-up call to everyone concerned in various capacities to take right actions today in the interest of young girls in order to ensure a better tomorrow.

408 Frances Harding, “Theatre and Video for Development,” in *PLA Notes 29*, ed. Andrea Cornwall (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 1997), 38.

409 Nwadiwe, “Meet Us at the Other Side of the River: Performance Venue and Community Education among Migrant Fishermen in Nigeria,” 73.

410 Nwadiwe, 74.

411 Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky, “The Birth of Development and Underdevelopment,” 2.

412 Samuel Ayedime Kafewo, “Using Drama for School-Based Adolescent Sexuality Education in Nigeria,” *Reproductive Health Matters* 16, no. 31 (2008): 203.

413 Kafewo, 203.

414 Kafewo, 203.

In partnership with two local non-governmental organisations, Nigeria Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA) and Second Chance Organization of Nigeria (SCO), Kafewo and his team executed 'For Tomorrow' as a means of sexuality education for adolescents. The divergency in mission of the NGOs made the synergistic collaboration between them more robust. Founded in 1989 with headquarters in Zaria, NPTA is a voluntary, non-partisan alliance of theatre artists, performers, and cultural and development workers with interest in using theatre for development purposes. NPTA emphasises communication and development through the use of popular theatre and other participatory methodologies. SCO is committed to the promotion of girls' education through organising programmes which pay attention to traditional and social biases in favour of boys, unwanted pregnancies and the need for the re-integration into the educational system of girls who had dropped out of school.⁴¹⁵

The project which Kafewo reports on in his study was executed in 2005 at the Government Secondary School (Senior) Dogon-Bauchi, an all-girls school in Zaria. According to Kafewo, the project was carried out in cognisance of not only the need for participation of the people in the development process to achieve sustainability but in recognition that the manner and nature of participation should both be determined and acted upon.⁴¹⁶ The team therefore adopted a participatory approach which will ensure that the adolescents involved in the project are allowed to air their views and not made to feel irrelevant or inconsequential in the scheme of affairs. The team considered crucial the input of the adolescents themselves into the intervention bearing in mind the precarity of the emotional sensibilities of adolescents.⁴¹⁷

A baseline study conducted by the team revealed a high rate of teenage pregnancy in the schools leading to a high attrition rate. Most communities in northern Nigeria operate a patriarchal system which culturally hinders access to education to many girls. The non-inclusion of sex education in the school curricula makes the situation more precarious for girls who are 'lucky' enough to be enrolled in schools due to the possibility of dropping out of school on account of becoming pregnant. Crucially, the team sought to ascertain what policy the schools had in place for girls who became pregnant or were victimised through sexual violence and abuse. The study did not, however, indicate similar interest in what policies were in place as measures against boys (or men) who sexually abuse the girls thereby getting them pregnant.

Relevant topics generated from groups of participating students included teacher-student relationship, homosexuality, premarital sex, teenage pregnancies as a result

415 Kafewo, 202–3.

416 Kafewo, 202.

417 Kafewo, 202.

of sexual abuse by teachers, abortion, among others. The participants identified two areas of great concern with respect to sexuality issues; being illegal in Nigeria abortion is unsafe thus forcing women to seek underground means of procuring it. The health implications of unsafe abortion are manifold. On the flip side, a strong social stigma is attached to pre-marital pregnancy on the part of the girls while the boys or men responsible for the pregnancies do not suffer the same social scorn. These two indices aggregate to lives and careers being truncated due to unwanted pregnancy.⁴¹⁸

Two scenarios based on teacher-student relationship and homosexuality were generated by the students. Kafewo claims that homosexuality is 'frowned upon culturally',⁴¹⁹ and by the two major religions (Christianity and Islam) represented among the students. This, Kafewo observes, leads to a discriminatory attitude against homosexuals. Due, perhaps, to the prevailing cultural and religious bias, the students unanimously agreed to explore the subject of teacher-student relationship. The story that emerged was titled 'Chidesco and the Teacher'.

While introducing himself and his subject (biology) to the class on his first day, Mr. Okoronkwo the new teacher, is evidently distracted by Chidesco, a beautiful and intelligent girl who (inadvertently) catches his amorous attention. On the teacher's request, some of the students define biology and although Chidesco's definition is clearly one of the best, the teacher rebukes her for not offering an intelligent definition. At the end of the class, the teacher gives the students a take-home assignment and asks Chidesco to meet him in his office. Mr. Okoronkwo then storms out of the class in feigned infuriation.

Another student African Queen, not Chidesco, is the first to arrive Mr. Okoronkwo's office. Mr. Okoronkwo, still feigning anger, quickly dismisses her. Then arrives Chidesco at the sight of whom Mr. Okoronkwo instantly begins to beam with smiles. There in the office, Mr Okoronkwo attempts to take sexual advantage of Chidesco. However, without allowing sufficient time for Mr. Okoronkwo to physically molest her, Chidesco runs out of the office in shock while Mr. Okoronkwo pours invectives on her.

As punishment for purportedly performing poorly in an assignment, Mr. Okoronkwo makes Chidesco to cut grass manually. A female teacher sees Chidesco cutting grass and asks to know her offence. Chidesco says she does not know. The female teacher then meets Mr Okoronkwo but her attempt to ascertain Chidesco's offence yields no good result as Mr. Okoronkwo only babbles and claims that Chidesco is 'rude, lazy

418 Kafewo, 205.

419 Kafewo, 206.

and dull'.⁴²⁰ The play ends with Mr. Okoronkwo storming out of the class after his encounter with the female teacher. He locates Chidesco and tells her to meet him immediately at the school gate in her own interest.

In attendance during the performance were students, parents, teachers and the principal. Most of the students, however, expressed dissatisfaction with the major female character Chidesco for failing to report to the school authority or, at least inform her friends and/or parents. One student quipped, 'How are we sure Chidesco does not want this relationship? How can she miss every opportunity to free herself from this embarrassment?' Another student proffered the view that Chidesco is probably unable to predetermine the reaction of the female teacher and might have suspected that she will take sides with her colleague, Mr. Okoronkwo. This student, however, blamed Chidesco for not confiding in her mother, at least.⁴²¹

The school's counselling mistress who sat enthralled during the workshop stage declared; 'so this is why when our students serve punishments, neither they nor the male teachers punishing them will explain what it is they have done...!'⁴²² The declaration stands in contradistinction to the comments by the student-members of the audience which seem to negate the thesis of the existence of the problem within the school. It could also be inferred that although affected students might not have been making official reports about being sexually harassed by male teachers, some of them might have spoken in confidence to female teachers, their friends and/or their parents. This conjecture raises the question about why the school's authority had not taken any definite action particularly considering the fact that there had been known cases of 'girls getting pregnant and never disclosing the name of the person responsible'.⁴²³

According to Kafewo the intervention developed the capacities of the Guidance and Counselling teachers who 'gained new approaches for dealing with adolescents' behaviour instead of using the traditional method of demonising anyone who makes a mistake as a bad element'.⁴²⁴ Other successes attributed to the intervention include encouraging girls to freely talk to one another on issues bordering on sexual harassment, negotiate sexual relationships and practice safe sex. The opportunity granted the adolescents to speak to the situation during the workshop and performance is consistent with the democratic tenets of popular sovereignty and equality. However, participation should transcend the mere leave to speak. Productive participation

420 Kafewo, 207.

421 Kafewo, 207–8.

422 Kafewo, 206.

423 Kafewo, 208.

424 Kafewo, 209.

implies that the opinions harvested from the participants should be made to count perhaps through a binding policy or regulation.

Beyond inviting the state Ministry of Education to witness ‘the final performances’,⁴²⁵ no concrete steps seem to have been taken to ensure that sexual predators are punished according to the laws. Kafewo claims that the intervention was meant to find out what policies the school had in place for students who became pregnant during the course of their study. Despite flagging this objective from inception, the project did not specify what extant laws were in place for the punishment of sexual predators. Also, the project did not indicate any suggestions made in this regard.

My interest in the project, ‘For Tomorrow’, stems largely from its connection with my experimental Legislative Theatre project on sexual harassment of female undergraduates which I will discuss in the next chapter. ‘For Tomorrow’ lays some foundation in the discussion of the systemic obstacles that could hinder female students from making official reports about sexual harassment and from achieving their academic goals. Kafewo’s project also demonstrates that theatre practitioners could function as gatekeepers in the interrogation of existing laws.

2.3.3. Tfd and Nigeria’s Citizen/Indigene Debacle

Perhaps one of the forms of intervention at the core of the existence of Nigeria as a corporate entity which has been addressed using the Tfd form is the anomalous dichotomy in status between ‘citizens’ and ‘indigenes’ in Nigeria. The ‘indigene’-‘settler’ phenomenon in Nigeria is both a practical and constitutional one. The operative Nigerian constitution (the 1999 Constitution) under section 147 (3) uses, without properly defining, the term ‘indigene’. The constitution, however, makes no mention of ‘settler’.⁴²⁶ Thus, the term ‘settler’ is hazily derived as a contrast to the term ‘indigene’.

An indigene is an original inhabitant of a place. By implication, the population of every state and Local Government Area (LGA) in Nigeria is differentiated between ‘indigenes’ and ‘settlers’; the settlers are mostly Nigerian citizens who are indigenous or autochthonous to other parts of the federation. This slippery misnomer enables states and local officials to be discretionary in the allocation of public resources such as land, schools and government jobs within their boundaries.⁴²⁷ In other words, the mere fact of being a Nigerian citizen is not sufficient, at some crucial moments, to guarantee that a Nigerian obtains the full measure of accruing benefits. Kafewo ap-

425 Kafewo, 209.

426 Aaron Sayne, “Rethinking Nigeria’s Indigene-Settler Conflicts,” *US Institute of Peace* (Washington, 2012), 2.

427 Sayne, 2.

appropriately describes the matter as absurd when he writes, 'Nigeria must rank as one of the few countries of the world where, even if you are born in a state or have lived and worked there all your life, so long as it is not classified as your state of origin, you are deemed a foreigner, and so discriminated against in the provision of access to education, and other basic entitlements'.⁴²⁸

According to Chief Obafemi Awolowo, one of Nigeria's foremost nationalists, Nigeria is 'a mere geographical expression'.⁴²⁹ Awolowo's sentiments are more graphically captured by Jenkeri Okwori thus, 'what we have in Nigeria is a collection of ethnicities bounded together by the force of politics which was created and instituted by the British'.⁴³⁰ Okwori further avers that Nigeria is 'no more than a patchwork of colonial creation', a reality which according to him, 'underscores the crisis of citizenship, participation and accountability that bedevils the republic'.⁴³¹

As a country carved merely by British 'political fiat' Nigeria has been bereft of 'any attempt at creating an organic unit'.⁴³² This 'veritable mosaic of nationalities'⁴³³ is yet to witness any meaningful cohesion more than six decades after independence and over two decades of uninterrupted democratic rule. Thus, Nigeria has been functioning as a 'landscape of citizens at war with each other'.⁴³⁴ Kafewo puts it succinctly thus, 'the seeds sown earlier by the colonial masters, watered by the politicians at independence and the generations following, have continued to ensure that the conflict between the "foreigner" and the indigene persists among citizens of the same country'.⁴³⁵

The 'indigenes' and 'citizens' differentiation was the focal point in the collaboration between Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, and the Institute of Development Research of the University of Sussex, UK in a project tagged, 'Citizenship, Participation and Accountability'.⁴³⁶ In executing the project, Ahmadu Bello University Theatre for Development team further partnered with The Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA), a Zaria-based NGO. As Kafewo notes, the collaboration during 2001 and 2002 'sought to draw out the issues of identity, belonging, entitlement, governance, and resources that underlie questions of citizenship in Nigeria'.⁴³⁷ It was aimed at ex-

428 Samuel Ayedime Kafewo, "Discussion, Intervention, Processing: Theatre and Citizenship in Nigeria," *New Theatre Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2009): 183.

429 Awolowo 1947: 47 cited in Samuel Ayedime Kafewo, "Giving Voice: Instigating Debate on Issues of Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability," *Development in Practice* 19, no. 4/5 (2009): 679.

430 Okwori cited in O.S. Abah, *Geographies of Citizenship in Nigeria* (Zaria: Tamaza, 2003), 1.

431 Okwori cited in Abah, 1.

432 Kafewo, "Giving Voice: Instigating Debate on Issues of Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability," 679.

433 Okechie-Offoha 1996 cited in Kafewo, "Discussion, Intervention, Processing: Theatre and Citizenship in Nigeria," 182.

434 Kafewo, 183.

435 Kafewo, 183.

436 Kafewo, 178.

437 Kafewo, 178.

ploring different people's understanding of citizenship and the various ways in which citizenship could determine rights and privileges in Nigeria. The objectives were expanded to include the examination of citizenship in light of factors such as location/space, ethnicity, gender, religion, and the legal/formal context, among others.⁴³⁸

Among the interventions implemented under the partnership were two situated in the southern Kaduna (Zango Kataf) area of Kaduna State. The assortment of ethnic groups in Kaduna State in which some lay claims to indigeneity and classify others as 'settlers' predisposes the state to violent eruptions. Among the ethnic groups are the Fulani found in the Sudan fringes of West Africa with about half of their population in Nigeria.⁴³⁹ The Fulani are regarded as expert herdsmen who, as nomadic pastoralists, frequently undertake transhumance in response to seasonal and spatial variations in rainfall⁴⁴⁰ in order to have access to pasture (land) for the grazing of their cattle. The other ethnic groups represented in Kaduna State are predominantly farmers. Thus, among other issues land ownership is at the root of the contention in the state.

The intervention dwelled on factors which hinder the members of the communities from exercising their franchise as part of their citizenship responsibilities. The communities expressed concern that deficiency in the number of polling booths appears prevalent in the entire southern Kaduna region thus giving their northern Kaduna counterparts undue numerical advantage over them during elections. The communities therefore requested better 'delineation of polling booths to ensure that those of voting age are not disenfranchised'.⁴⁴¹ To the community members, the facilitators were 'messiahs' who would, on their behalf, take their plight to the government. A community member summed up the feelings of the community this way, 'You have now heard our problems and I see you as people of government even though you said you are not. But please help us to let them at the top know what our problems are'.⁴⁴² In making the above plea, the community member inadvertently struck at a core principle of Tfd practice which is to create an avenue for communities to interface with authorities. In an inverse manner, his plea expresses the bottom-up/periphery-centre approach to Tfd interventions without which Tfd as a mode of praxis loses its essence.

438 Kafewo, 181.

439 A.G Adebayo, "Of Man and Cattle: A Reconsideration of the Traditions of Origin of the Pastoral Fulani of Nigeria," *History in Africa* 18 (1991): 1.

440 de Mirjam Bruijn and van Han Dijk, "Changing Population Mobility in West Africa: Fulbe Pastoralists in Central and South Mali," *African Affairs* 102, no. 407 (2003): 288–89.

441 Kafewo, "Giving Voice: Instigating Debate on Issues of Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability," 683.

442 Kafewo, 685.

Whereas the first intervention dwelled on the challenges of co-existence among the different ethnic groups that form Kaduna State, the second intervention examined the same contentious issue of citizenship within an interstate context, that is, a clear case of 'settler' versus 'indigene'. As I have previously noted, only when Nigerians live and operate within their own 'states of origin' could they expect to receive all accruing benefits of citizenship. This feature of Nigeria's reality appears particularly severe and more firmly entrenched in northern Nigeria where the 'northernization'⁴⁴³ policy which held sway before Nigeria's independence is still a palpable contemporary reality. The policy clearly expressed strong preference for Nigerians of northern extraction to benefit from employment opportunities in the northern region. This, in practice, often meant that expatriates were preferred above Nigerians from other parts of the country and in some cases, 'a certified Muslim from Niger Republic may be preferred to a Christian or an animist from the Middle Belt'⁴⁴⁴ or any other part of Nigeria.

The above was the contextual background within which the storyline of the second intervention executed by Kafewo and his team was framed. Kafewo notes that the project set out to interrogate the role of TfD interventions in building new perspectives on citizenship issues and to ascertain whether these new ways of seeing can lead to action both within the fiction and in reality.⁴⁴⁵ The story is set in the office of the local council chairman during a crucial meeting. During the meeting, Chairman intimates the councillors with the agenda for the meeting and enumerates several projects slated for execution by the council all of which are evidently for the selfish benefit of Chairman. This elicits grumbling from many of the councillors. Few are however in support of Chairman. Chairman, who is aghast over the negative reaction from some of the councillors, retorts; 'I bought both the electorate and you councillors – how do I recover my money?' This is an unpleasant yet veritable commentary on the preponderantly negative role money plays in Nigeria's politics.

In the course of the confusion, Contractor, Chairman's sponsor and political godfather, walks in. On seeing Contractor, Chairman interrupts the meeting, declares a recess, and goes into a private meeting with Contractor. Chairman and Contractor discuss the allocation of resources. A greater portion of the budgetary allocation for the execution of infrastructural projects in the local council is shared between Contractor and Chairman. The duo assign the remaining portion of the allocation unequally to the councillors according to the perceived intensity of their allegiance to Chairman. The 'dividends of democracy' are packaged, and the councillors return to find their parcels neatly labelled and laid on the tables for them.

443 Kafewo, "Discussion, Intervention, Processing: Theatre and Citizenship in Nigeria," 183.

444 Kafewo, 183.

445 Kafewo, 181.

The thrill elicited by the parceled ‘dividends of democracy’ quickly fizzles out when the councillors discover the disproportionate yardstick with which the ‘dividends of democracy’ have been distributed among them. While the meeting is embroiled in a boisterous and disorderly atmosphere triggered by the unequal distribution, Agaba, a ‘settler’ in the community, storms in brandishing a cutlass. Agaba is closely followed by his wife and child. Agaba’s combative mien immediately alters the mood of the gathering. Agaba’s grouse is that his child has been labelled ‘non-indigene’ and is consequently being denied access to education in the public education system. This raises a contentious argument among the councillors. While many posit that Agaba should return to his village if he wants to lay claim to citizenship and the accruing rights, some are of the view that Agaba has a cogent point which should be addressed. On hearing that he cannot lay claims to any rights in the community, Agaba poses a critical question to the gathering, ‘If I don’t belong here, where do these children belong?’ Agaba’s question alludes to the fact that his children were born in the community. In fact, Agaba is married to an indigene of that community. None of these, however, guarantees Agaba’s rights as a citizen of Nigeria residing in a community located outside his ‘state of origin’.

The above scenario clearly raises many questions about the workings of political mechanism within the Nigerian polity. Coincidentally and significantly, the performance takes place in front of the local mosque after the weekly time of prayers. Thus, Agaba’s question, ‘If I don’t belong here, where do these children belong?’, resonates with meaning at various levels. Agaba is ‘othered’ in the community not only as a result of his ancestral source but also on account of his religious inclination as a non-Muslim. The discussion which followed the performance flowed from these diverse socio-political as well as religious underpinnings. This type of intervention resonates with Harding’s position that development could be visually imperceptible in form.⁴⁴⁶ Instead of placing premium on the provision of physical structures and amenities, the interventions sought to sensitise and educate the people on citizenship and other cognate matters.

By focusing on the ‘citizenship’ and ‘indigene’ contention the intervention brought to the fore the incongruity which persists in the relationship among citizens of the same country, Nigeria, and the yawning need for cohesion. In addition, the interventions laid bare the disconnect which exists between the ordinary citizens and their leaders. For a matter as simple as placing a demand for more polling centres to ensure adequate representation in the electoral (democratic) system, the community leaders seem unaware of the proper avenue(s) through which to channel their agitations. This

446 Harding, “Neither ‘Fixed Masterpiece’ nor ‘Popular Distraction’: Voice, Transformation and Encounter in Theatre For Development,” 172.

resonates with what Lani Guinier conceptualises as ‘electocracy’, that is, ‘a political environment that defines itself by sacred moments of choice’⁴⁴⁷. In other words, ‘electocracy’ is beneficial only to the extent that it produces elected officers who occupy positions of responsibility but is bereft of the ambience that enhances the actual discharge of the responsibilities of the elected towards the electorate.

The interventions also provided an avenue for citizenship education for the participants. Kelly Howe clearly articulates her argument that avenues such as provided by applied theatre interventions should facilitate the generation and circulation of knowledge particularly as it relates to citizenship education.⁴⁴⁸ In the course of the argument about his status in the community, Agaba voices a critical question; ‘If I don’t belong here, where do these children belong?’ Agaba’s arguably defeatist posturing is reflective of the seeming helplessness of the average Nigeria who tends to believe that the ‘citizenship’-‘indigene’ debacle which subsists within the Nigerian polity is an intractable challenge. This ingrained debacle, difficult as it may appear, provides added impetus for Nigerian theatre practitioners to participate in the building of healthy democratic culture and values.

These projects used TfD methodologies which incorporated popular art forms such as storytelling, dancing, singing and mime in order to liberate the voices of the people and to give vent to the internal tensions that fuel crisis in the state. In line with Boal’s Simultaneous Dramaturgy in which actors and the audience co-create the drama piece, community members had the leave to contribute to the content and form of the drama. As previously noted, Kafewo and his team sought to ascertain whether the new ways of conceptualising citizenship could lead to action both within the fictive and the real world. To this end, community members addressed concrete existential issues drawn from the performance and drew up Community Action Plans (CAPs).⁴⁴⁹ This is an instance of the many windows of opportunity by which theatre practitioners could explore the potential of the Legislative Theatre methodology. This will help to ensure that interventions such as this are employed as avenues to possibly translate the yearnings of the people into concrete legislative provisions.

447 Guinier, “Beyond Electocracy: Rethinking the Political Representative as Powerful Stranger,” 2.

448 Kelly Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2009): 240, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930903017216>.

449 Kafewo, “Giving Voice: Instigating Debate on Issues of Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability,” 681–82.

2.3.4. Tfd: Women Empowerment and Community Development Interventions

Another noteworthy strand of Tfd practice in Nigeria is the attempt at using theatre as a tool for women empowerment and for catalysing sundry community development projects. The use of theatre for the empowerment of women falls within the larger drive for women empowerment - an important aspect of the global development initiative. The term 'empowerment' is associated with the capacity which individuals, groups or communities have to exercise control over their circumstances and goals, and exercise power over the processes by which (individually and collectively) they are able to help themselves and others to maximise the potential quality of their lives.⁴⁵⁰ Drawing from that premise, women empowerment refers to the strengthening of the 'social, economic and educational powers of women.'⁴⁵¹ The imperative for women empowerment is premised on the argument that the achievement of sustainable development might be a mirage if women were to be side-lined.⁴⁵² Tfd interventions in Nigeria have also demonstrated significant connection with various community 'development' projects.

Continuing with its tradition of engagement in Tfd, the Department of Theatre and Performing Arts of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, embarked on a project at Kuyambana in Kuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State in 2015. Various Community Based Organisations (CBOs) helped in facilitating the fieldwork. Along with Tfd methodologies, other methodological approaches adopted by the project included Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) which is an approach for learning about and engaging with communities.

Within the framework of the developmentalist thinking, theatre, as I have previously noted, has become a tool in the hands of development agencies in galvanising communities for 'self-development' and for the pursuit of a presumed improved quality of life. In this instance, the facilitators of the Kuyambana project perceived theatre as a tool to, in Prentki's terms, address the material conditions that leave Kuyambana women as prey in the hands of hostile, predatory forces that are both human and natural.⁴⁵³ The follow-up and evaluation visit to Kuyambana claimed the following as part of the impact of the intervention: 'Most of the households had started digging soak-away pits for their toilets; some formerly uncovered wells were now covered; some of the villages have met and deliberated on how to reconstruct a primary health-

450 Adams referenced in Abdullahi and Salaudeen, "Theatre for Development and Women Empowerment in Northern Nigeria: A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Development Communication Field Experience," 215.

451 Abdullahi and Salaudeen, 215.

452 Abdullahi and Salaudeen, 214.

453 Prentki, "Must the Show Go On? The Case for Theatre For Development," 419.

care centre'.⁴⁵⁴ Also, the project noted that some of the women had used the banana and palm kernel seedlings donated to them by the facilitators to establish banana and palm kernel plantations.

The above projects were evidently not for the exclusive benefit of the women of the community but riding on the crest of such initiatives the facilitators claimed to seek to enhance the social, economic and educational power of the women and, as they claimed, break the culture of silence of the Kuyambana woman. TfD is fundamentally an engagement which seeks to influence people's cultural behaviour. Nwadiwe, notes that more than the regular mass media, TfD could serve as a tool to persuade communities to adopt innovations or attitudinal changes.⁴⁵⁵ The executors of the Kuyambana project saw the cultural requirement of silence on the part of the women as an impediment to development and perceived theatre as a tool that could break that culture.

Women empowerment in this instance is countenanced not in tangible but more in the intangible form of providing the platform for the women to give expression to their hitherto unspoken agitations. Thus, although the Kuyambana project did not address problems exclusive to women the facilitators claim that the workshops created an ambience sufficiently conducive for the participatory involvement of women in order to express their innermost concerns. Against the backdrop of a culture that has for ages upheld the silencing of women, the women's participation, intangible howbeit, is countenanced as 'a form of empowerment because it gives them a free space to express themselves by voicing out their deplorable condition'.⁴⁵⁶ But the supposed feat of breaking the silence of the women as claimed by the Kuyambana project is contestable.

In a critique of the social construction of silence Robyn Fivush makes a distinction between *being silent* and *being silenced*. While *being silent* could be an act of one's volition and could be indicative of power, Fivush in contrast conceptualises *being silenced* as 'imposed' and could signify 'a loss of power and self'.⁴⁵⁷ 'Silencing', Fivush claims, 'occurs at the cultural level for experiences that do not fit the culturally dominant narrative'.⁴⁵⁸ Women's experiences do not usually fit into dominant cultural narrative hence the need to celebrate the tokenistic extension to the Kuyambana women of a

454 Abdullahi and Salaudeen, "Theatre for Development and Women Empowerment in Northern Nigeria: A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Development Communication Field Experience," 223.

455 Nwadiwe, "Meet Us at the Other Side of the River: Performance Venue and Community Education among Migrant Fishermen in Nigeria," 66.

456 Abdullahi and Salaudeen, "Theatre for Development and Women Empowerment in Northern Nigeria: A Study of 2015 Kuyambana Development Communication Field Experience," 224.

457 Robyn Fivush, "Speaking Silence: The Social Construction of Silence in Autobiographical and Cultural Narratives," *Memory* 18, no. 2 (2010): 88–89.

458 Fivush, 91.

platform – the Kuyambana Women Empowerment Initiative - upon which to make their voices heard, even if inconsequentially.

The Kuyambana project is yet another project which raises many questions about what could be considered the indices of development and the role of theatre in the development project. In executing the projects, the Kuyambana women ‘volunteered to support their husbands by providing the roofing sheet, cement, bricks and the toilet heads’ needed for the construction of the public toilets. Curiously, this is reckoned as evidence of their liberation from silence and incorporation into the scheme of affairs in the community. The gesture from the women took the financial burden off their husbands leaving them (the husbands) with only the physical labour needed for the construction of the public toilets. In essence, therefore, the ‘development’ project, by employing theatre as a tool for soft power, brought more financial burden on Kuyambana women.

A similar project was implemented in Kwanga and Mazah communities of Plateau State. Although the date is unspecified the project was executed under the tripartite cooperation of the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA), Women in Nigeria (WIN) and the John D. and Catherine T. Mac Arthur Foundation, a US-based private funding agency as the third cooperant. MacArthur Foundation defines population not from the traditional perception of numerical index. Rather it perceives population issues as diverse and multidimensional encompassing traditional indexes of demographic changes, migration and provision of family planning services as well as broader social and economic circumstances. WIN, an intervenor and moderator in population dynamics, is interested in women’s health and reproductive rights issues while NPTA is an NGO engaged in Participatory Action Research (PAR).⁴⁵⁹ These expertises were conflated in the execution of the projects in Kwanga and Mazah communities.

For its objectives, the interventionists pre-determined to investigate how the living conditions of the villagers might be improved and in that wise to examine the role of the Local Government in the communities’ development. The intervention also explored the possibilities of strengthening the existing cultural and community development associations and women’s cooperatives in their development efforts. More fundamentally, the project was concerned with the health problems of women in both Kwanga and Mazah communities.⁴⁶⁰

These pre-determined objectives based on information obtained during preliminary visits to the communities were to assume their precise shape after the commencement

459 Abah, “The Dynamics of Intervention in Community Theatre for Development,” 61–62.

460 Abah, 61.

of the intervention. At Kwanga the impassable state of the road during the rainy season as well as the lack of fertilisers for this agrarian community came to the fore. Another major concern for the women was the absence of grinding machines for their grains; a deficiency which compels several kilometres of trekking to the nearest grinding machine. This has a telling effect on the women's health resulting not only in the prevalence of 'fatigue and general body pain' but also in 'forced labour and miscarriages'⁴⁶¹ Many pregnant women in Kwanga community had died in labour due to the non-availability of a means of transport needed for the 25-kilometer journey to the nearest health facility at Jos, the Plateau State capital. The interventions in Kuyambana, Kwanga and Mazah communities attest to the interconnectedness between the availability of basic social amenities and the health of members of the communities, in general, and the women, in particular.

The interventions in the communities identified the deplorable living conditions of the members of the communities. In this regard, the members 'met and deliberated on how to reconstruct a primary healthcare centre'. This is yet another instance of a TfD intervention which resulted in the burden of project costs being placed on the shoulders of the members of the host community. This further raises concern about the nature (and goal) of the 'development' projects in Nigeria and other Third World nations. Also, while the interventions presumably succeeded in breaking the custom-imposed shackles of voicelessness that deny women their right to be heard in society, they reinforced, albeit indirectly, the subjugation of the women. Notwithstanding their paltry income, the women undertook to provide the resources needed for the execution of projects, a gesture that left the men to exert only physical labour.

Most of the developmental ideas propagated by the interventions analysed above were fundamentally exogenous having not emanated from the people's conscious perception of their felt needs and preferences. Rather the beneficiary communities or groups were mostly made to buy into ideas sold to them by the interventionists thus leaving the communities at the mercy of the funding agencies. This buttresses my point that the interventions serve largely as instrument of soft power with which the agencies/governments bear rule over the people. The quantum of TfD interventions in Nigeria, in my estimation, have not engendered the expected results with respect to appreciable positive impact on the quality of life of the benefitting communities. This necessitates not only the introduction/application of another tool or technique to complement the practice of TfD - Legislative Theatre, as I argue - but also a pragmatic shift in the methodological approach that is decidedly bottom-up, thereby potentially giving room to the beneficiary communities to drive the projects in accordance with their preferred priorities.

461 Abah, 62.

2.4. Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that with Tfd Nigerian theatre practitioners shifted their allegiance from the citizens to the government and tended to have become a tool in the hands of the government to implement laws, policies and goals which do not sufficiently represent the thoughts and aspirations of the people. Consequently, I argue that while the political imperatives of the Nigerian theatre before 1999 largely delineates it as political theatre, the post-1999 Nigerian theatre, as far as the practice of Tfd is at issue, could, in line with Rancière's terms, be appropriately tagged a 'police' theatre, that is, a theatre which propagates the interests of the ruling class. This is consequent upon the macro-institutional factors implicated in the execution of Tfd which have significantly impacted how theatrical practices engage with and critique institutions.⁴⁶² Thus, rather than provide a platform for the people to articulate their positions on issues critical to their existence, Tfd aligns itself more to the yearnings and goals of those who bear the rule.

I examined the incongruence between, on the one hand, the claims that the development enterprise, through its cultural arm – the Tfd - will aid the realisation of the development agenda and, on the other hand, the nature of the 'development' programs being executed. I posited that the programs do not carry with them the germs of meaningful development which should be grounded, sustainable and sufficiently impactful to ensure the institutionalisation of transformative systems and structures. To borrow Plastow's phraseology, development should transform, not domesticate. Development should transcend the ticking of the boxes for international agencies and corporations and should produce strong, efficient and dynamic economic and political institutions that anticipate the yearnings of their people and respond to them accordingly and promptly. Kerr had expressed the same concerns when he noted that this kind of theatre (the Tfd) might in fact be abetting the process of dependency rather than helping to delink African societies from the dominance of the Global North.⁴⁶³ In other words, rather than serve to engender growth and development of African countries as was indicated at the commencement of the Era of Development, Tfd could in reality, inadvertently perhaps, be playing a counter-productive role by strengthening the cords of dependency and underdevelopment in Nigeria.

I share Plastow's concern about the lack of true participatory engagement in works purporting to come under the rubric of Tfd in Africa.⁴⁶⁴ The projects examined in this chapter did not show sufficient integration of the supposed beneficiaries especially

⁴⁶² Bala, *The Gestures of Participatory Art*, 35.

⁴⁶³ Kerr, "Participatory Popular Theater: The Highest Stage of Cultural Under-Development," 55.

⁴⁶⁴ Plastow, "Domestication or Transformation? The Ideology of Theatre for Development in Africa," 108.

with regard to pre-performance decisions about the contents of the performances upon which post-performance discussions were based. Thus, the input made by the beneficiaries were mainly circumscribed by the performances to which they had little or no prior input. This raises doubt about the claim that TfD was partly designed to foster democratic principles and perhaps validates the view that democracy is essentially a 'post-colonial institutionalisation of colonial domination'.⁴⁶⁵ It is unclear how TfD, which is the cultural arm of the development drive could, in its present shape, either birth or aid a modern culture capable of sustaining a viable democratic system.

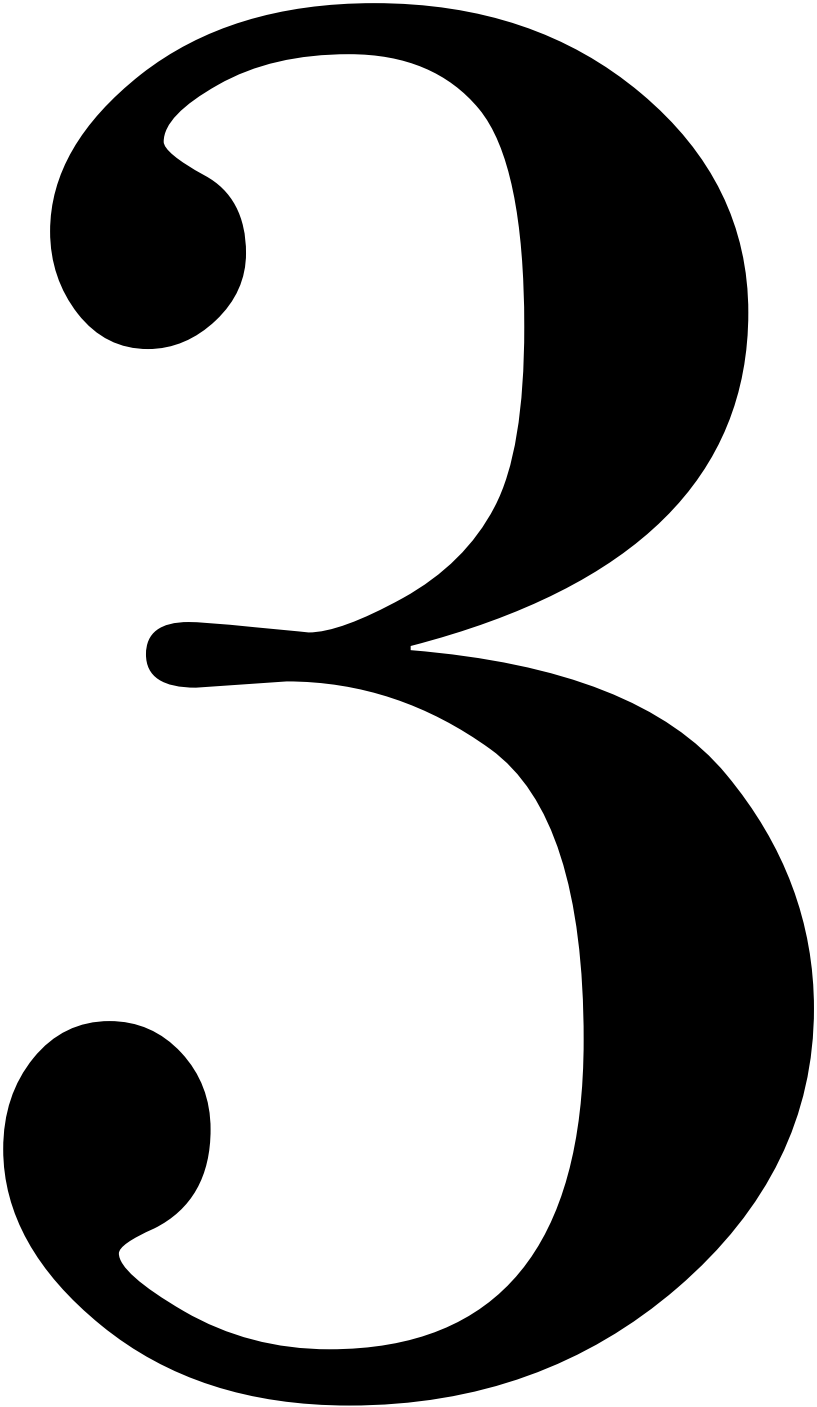
Earlier I observed that TfD practitioners in Nigeria often claim that their practice shares affinity with Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. A cursory look at the mode of practice of TfD in Nigeria tends to suggest that the practitioners borrow from Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed by ostensibly adopting a participatory and interactive approach. However, lack of meaningful participation seems to rob the practice of the spirit and intent of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology. I argued earlier that TfD practice in Nigeria favours a top-bottom/centre -to-periphery approach contrary to Boal's method which is designed to function as a bottom-up approach which seeks societal transformation 'in the direction of the liberation of the oppressed'.⁴⁶⁶ The various interventions studied in this chapter show that rather than seek to, primarily, determine and focus on what transformations the members of the communities clamour for, the interventionists relied more on their community research in line with their previously determined set objectives. The opinions of the community members, where taken into consideration at all, were given secondary as opposed to primary recognition. This indicates that the challenge of non-compliance with the tenets of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed could, in practical reality, be less about the method but more about the application of the method. This is a challenge which Nigerian theatre practitioners should necessarily endeavour to circumvent in the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology in order to record appreciable impact.

Considering, therefore, the professed objectives of the development discourse, the spread of TfD in Nigeria and the need to ensure a more robust democratic culture, I deem it expedient for TfD practitioners to execute their projects from the referential point of the host communities. The stories upon which the performances are based should be told from the viewpoint of members of the host communities. This will move TfD practice closer to the realisation of its set objectives.

465 Marie-Helene Sa Vilas Boas, "The Genesis of Participatory Democracy in Brazil: A Scientific (Re)Construction," *Brazilian Political Science Review* 11, no. 1 (2017): 5.

466 Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 6.

In Chapter 1, I examined a theatre in which the practitioners employed their art in interrogating perceived oppressive laws and policies and in Chapter 2, I studied a theatre in which the practitioners align more with the desires of the government, paying less attention to the yearnings of the people thereby demonstrating that the positionality of the theatre practitioner is critical to the output of the theatre. In the next chapter, I will focus attention on a collaborative possibility between theatre practitioners and citizens, with particular regard to the fashioning of laws. I wish to demonstrate that the kind of theatre in practice is critical to the realisation of democratic principles, culture and values. Thus, the next chapter will exemplify my call to Nigerian theatre practitioners to awake to the consciousness of the role they could play in strengthening Nigeria's democracy through their effective collaboration with the citizens. Mindful that collaboration between theatre practitioners and citizens could ramify in many ways, the chapter will demonstrate it with regard to the involvement of citizens in the making of the laws which determine how they live their lives.



Chapter 3

**Legislative Theatre: Foundation,
Critical Reflections and Seminal
Experiment in Nigeria**

In this chapter, I shift attention to a theatrical possibility by which theatre practitioners could collaborate with citizens to enhance civic participation, facilitate political education and possibly incorporate the citizens in creating laws that are more people-oriented. I propose that Nigerian theatre practitioners should, in collaboration with Nigerian citizens, utilise theatre as a stage – a chamber - from where laws could possibly emanate. This theatre is the Legislative Theatre. I propose the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by Nigerian TfD practitioners. I will, in the course of this chapter, elaborate on why I make this proposal.

Theatrical performances are notable for interpersonal communication,⁴⁶⁷ that being one of the advantages of the theatrical form over other mediums of communication. Also, theatre is a living art form⁴⁶⁸ which comes into being whenever and wherever actors and audience come together. The immediacy and aliveness of theatre are accentuated, in the case of the Legislative Theatre, by the non-existence of the fourth wall which conventionally separates the audience from the actors.⁴⁶⁹ Thus, the exchange between, in this case, the actors and the spect-actors exudes life in the (re)presentation of the lived experiences of the participants. This feature of the Legislative Theatre could potentially impact positively on the legislative inputs that are birthed on the stage as they will be less of a *representation* but more of a *presentation* of existential realities.

Innovated by Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre is a form of theatre which seeks to embed theatrical dialogue and deliberations into democratic, legal processes; a method which, in Boal's words, transforms citizens into legislators.⁴⁷⁰ A compelling consideration in Boal's conceptualisation of Legislative Theatre as an essential component of democracy is the necessity to minimise the deficiencies inherent in representative democracy. Boal argues that the legislator should not be the one who makes the law. Rather he should be the one through whom the laws are made. In other words, through the Legislative Theatre, the citizens themselves make the law.⁴⁷¹

Boal's concept of the Legislative Theatre was inspired by Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in which Freire, against the 'banking' method of education, espouses the problem-posing system of education as a pedagogic process in which people 'come

467 Nwadiuwe, "Theatre for Development: An Alternative Programme for Reproductive Health Communication in Urban Nigeria," 104.

468 Dani Karmakar, "Theatre and Communication: Relation Between Actor and Audience," *Commentary-11 Global Media Journal-Indian Edition* 4, no. 2 (2013): 2.

469 It should be noted that many modern types of theatrical engagements have accommodated the disintegration of the conventional fourth wall. Legislative Theatre is only but an instance.

470 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 15.

471 Boal, 8.

to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process of transformation'.⁴⁷² Fundamentally, the problem-posing form of education blurs the invidious distinction between teacher and student by recognising both teacher and student as partners and co-beneficiaries in the pedagogical process. Inspired by Freire's postulations, Boal wrote the *Theatre of the Oppressed* in which he espouses the Poetics or Theatre of the Oppressed as a theatrical tool that dissolves the distinction between actor and spectator, and makes both parties co-producers of a theatrical piece. In titling the book, Boal sought to pay homage to Freire whose pedagogical theories partly inspired his theatrical practice. Boal further extended the methodology of the Theatre of the Oppressed by inventing the Legislative Theatre as a politico-theatrical tool that would allow 'the electors to give their opinions, to discuss the issues, (and) to put counter-arguments'.⁴⁷³ Boal avers that such politically vibrant exchange and counter-argumentation between electors and their elected representative would make the electors 'to share the responsibility for what their parliamentarian does'.⁴⁷⁴ The kernel of Boal's claim is that this process makes electors not spectators or reactors to what their representative does but active participants exercising their citizenship rights within the ambience of a democratic government.

The examination of how this synergistic cooperation could function within the Nigerian geo-political space will be prefaced with a discussion of the socio-political atmosphere under which the Legislative Theatre methodology was innovated in Brazil. Following the conceptual foregrounding already provided, I will in the next section provide an abridged historical account of its founding and discuss the socio-political context which both necessitated and aided its founding as a politico-theatrical form. I will then discuss the features which distinguish between Legislative Theatre and Forum Theatre (the branch of the Theatre of the Oppressed closest in form to the Legislative Theatre), the seminal example of the Legislative Theatre practice, and the impact of the implementation of this form of theatre within the Brazilian context.

Leaving the seminal experiment, I will cursorily examine selected examples of the adoption of Legislative Theatre in Canada, Afghanistan and the USA. While acknowledging its challenges and limitations, I will argue that the methodology holds potential benefits in regard to assisting in the evolvement of a more acceptable form of democracy. To validate that claim, a crucial layer of the contents of this chapter will be the discussion of the laboratory Legislative Theatre project which I carried out at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The practice-informed research effort was intended to examine how the application of the Legislative Theatre method-

472 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 12.

473 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

474 Boal, 16.

ology could foreseeably unfold within the Nigerian context. Drawing inferences from the experimental project I will extrapolate the conceivable challenges, limitations and benefits of the application of the methodology in Nigeria. Based on that experiment also, I will align my thoughts with Gianpaolo Baiocchi's view that Legislative Theatre's ultimate goal is fundamental socio-political transformation which it achieves through indisputably better legislation realised through the experiential input of the citizens.⁴⁷⁵

Having hinted, in Chapter 1, on what I consider to be the application of the concept of play in the works of Nigerian playwrights, I will conclude this chapter by theorising Legislative Theatre as play. I look beyond the arguments about the 'autotelicity' and the 'purposelessness' of play to theorise Legislative Theatre as a play act with which the interstice between autotelicity and purposefulness could be navigated in order to, possibly, produce tangible results in the form of legislation. Briefly, I give an account of the emergence of Legislative Theatre.

3.1. The Foundation of Legislative Theatre

Legislative Theatre was the invention of the Brazilian theatre activist, Augusto Boal, which came about as a result of his incursion into active party politics. Having been forced into exile in 1971, Boal returned to Brazil in 1986 at the end of Brazilian military dictatorship. The years between 1964 and 1978 were critical for cultural animators in Brazil due to the stranglehold of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Despite being considered less cruel than others of its ilk in the Southern Cone, the Brazilian military junta was sufficiently tyrannical to deny Brazilians such basic rights as the habeas corpus.⁴⁷⁶ During the period, Brazilians were susceptible to arbitrary arrests and imprisonment.

The laws under which the arrests and subsequent imprisonments were enforced were not clearly defined yet many Brazilians were declared criminals against the state under such imprecise laws.⁴⁷⁷ Theatrical engagement during this period brought the practitioners into direct confrontation with the military regime and occasioned the need for ideological and ideational positionality among the Brazilian culture practitioners. Within the theatre community, those with leftist leaning were part of the engage⁴⁷⁸ or

475 Gianpaolo Baiocchi, "Performing Democracy in the Streets: Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil," in *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Theatre and Cultural Politics*, ed. J Cohen-cruz and M Schutzman (New York City: Routledge, 2006), 83.

476 Margaret E. Keck, *The Workers' Party and Democratization in Brazil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 25.

477 Keck, 25.

478 Campbell Britton, "Politics and Performance(s) of Identity: 25 Years of Brazilian Theatre," in *A Boal Companion: Dialogues on Theatre and Cultural Politics*, ed. Jan Cohen-Cruz and Mady Schutzman, 1st Editio (London: Routledge, 2006), 14.

contestation against government's oppressive rule. This group of culture practitioners ideologically 'alienated' other practitioners who chose to adopt a different approach in addressing the Brazilian socio-political disorder.⁴⁷⁹ Augusto Boal was one of the theatre practitioners whose practice was in tandem with the Marxist ideology and it was within the context of the engagé orientation that he rose to prominence.⁴⁸⁰ Boal was critical of the military administration and for his 'anti' Establishment stance, he was arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and forced into exile, a period he spent mostly in Paris, France.

While an exile in Paris, in 1978 Boal founded the Centre of the Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO). On his return to Brazil in 1986 and in an attempt to replicate the success story of CTO Paris, Boal set up the CTO in Rio de Janeiro. But the CTO in Rio had a wobbly start with contracts that either failed at inception or were short-lived. One of such was the CTO's link with the Department of Education and the Integrated Centres for Popular Education (CIEPS) which ended abruptly in 1992. Boal and his team struggled to keep the CTO afloat but their resolve eventually waned and they were willing to rest the dream of the CTO, Rio. This coincided with the period of elections which, in Brazil, 'always have something of carnival about them'.⁴⁸¹ Boal and his team then resolved to bury the CTO Rio with a 'bang not a whimper'⁴⁸² by aligning with a party or a coalition that had the dream of realising a better Brazil. This marked the inception of the CTO's alliance with the Workers' Party (PT).

The alliance with the PT was conceivable because the CTO found that the ideals which informed the establishment of the Centre resonated with the ideologies of the Workers' Party. The CTO was established with the aim of fighting against operational systems and policies that were favourable only to a section of society to the detriment of others (the majority). In practical terms, the CTO recognised the binary distinction between the oppressed and the oppressors and through the Theatre of the Oppressed – in particular, Forum Theatre - methodology, the CTO positioned itself to help the citizens, especially the oppressed, to 'develop their taste for political discussion'.⁴⁸³ Also, the PT emerging as it did from the working class, and being socialist in orientation, demonstrated their inclination towards changes in social and economic policies that would benefit the less privileged.

479 Britton, 14.

480 Britton, 14.

481 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 10.

482 Boal, 9.

483 Boal, 7.

Also, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, leader of the PT averred that ‘a true workers’ party could only construct itself from the bottom up’⁴⁸⁴ if it truly intends to provide the platform for the political participation of those marginalised by traditional politics. Thus, the PT demonstrated their preference for a new concept in politics, that is, the politics of maximal representation and inclusivity that would engender the participatory involvement of sections of the population that had previously been excluded from participation in politics.⁴⁸⁵ These ideological convergences facilitated the synergistic cooperation between the CTO and the PT.

In order to elicit the firm commitment of the members of the CTO, the Workers’ Party proposed that the CTO presented a candidate to run for the election. The CTO accepted the proposal believing it stood no chance of winning any election and presented Boal as their candidate. However, things took quite an unforeseen turn and at the end of the elections, Augusto Boal became one of the 42 *vereadores* or City Councillors elected in Rio de Janeiro out of which six were elected on the platform of the PT. By this victory, Boal was able to employ members of the CTO as either full-time or part-time staff. This marked the entry of an entire theatre company into a legislature and provided Boal the opportunity to make theatre as politics instead of making political theatre. Thus, Boal’s ‘experiment’⁴⁸⁶ with the Legislative Theatre, a platform on which to effectuate a different form of representative democracy took *centre stage*.

3.1.1. Legislative Theatre: Socio-Political Context of its Inception

Like other modes of praxis which comprise Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, Legislative Theatre was a ‘concrete response to a specific problem and context’.⁴⁸⁷ Boal’s concept and methodology of the Legislative Theatre was developed within the context of a conflation of both remote and direct socio-political indexes. Remotely, representative democracy in Brazil had its peculiar glitches. Discussing the genesis of participatory democracy in Brazil, Sa Vilas Boas cites various scholarly sources to note that from its inception in the 19th century, Brazilian representative democracy was perceived in derogatory terms as an ‘imported superstructure’, a ‘failed importation’, ‘a cynical instrument of domination serving the large land-owners’ and therefore an ‘idea out of place’ that is not adapted to Brazilian ‘reality’.⁴⁸⁸ Buarque de Holanda

484 William R. Nylen, *Participatory Democracy Versus Elitist Democracy: Lessons From Brazil* (New York, N. Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 38.

485 Keck, *The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil*, 3.

486 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 14.

487 Jose Soeiro, “Legislative Theatre: Can Theatre Reinvent Politics?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. Kelly Howe, Julian Boal, and Jose Soeiro, 2019, 187.

488 Sa Vilas Boas, “The Genesis of Participatory Democracy in Brazil: A Scientific (Re)Construction,” 4 See Sa Vilas Boas for the sources cited.

denounces it as a ‘lamentable misunderstanding’⁴⁸⁹ which instead of marking an actual end to colonial experience, became a post-colonial institutionalisation of colonial domination. However, from the 1970s there was a shift in perception that no longer saw the representative system as unsuitable for the Brazilian society but rethought it as merely being distorted in practice⁴⁹⁰ and can therefore be remedied. This shift in perception coincided with the commencement of democratisation in Brazil.

More directly, in 1973 the Brazilian military dictatorship under president Ernesto Geisel commenced a process of ‘gradual liberalization’⁴⁹¹ of the political space. As part of the process, the military loosened its grip over political institutions in Brazil in 1985. This move was significant in that it marked the definite commitment of the military administration to, and the actual commencement of, the democratisation process. The otherwise long process of liberalisation was further strengthened in 1988 with the enactment of a democratic constitution⁴⁹² and was eventually concluded in 1989 when the first direct presidential elections were held in Brazil after three decades.⁴⁹³ The new Brazilian constitution, although considered conservative, was sufficiently flexible to accommodate participatory institutions⁴⁹⁴ in their diverse forms.

This shift in the perception of representative democracy birthed an upsurge of civil society organisations in the build-up to Brazil’s return to democratic governance. But the traditional notion of the elitist nature of Brazilian politics lingered. Also, the chasm between the government and the more representative civil society organisations limited the opportunities for utilising the participatory channels.⁴⁹⁵ The PT became the first political party in Brazil to harness the opportunities for participatory involvement of the Brazilian citizens as provided for in the constitution by introducing Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre in 1983.⁴⁹⁶ As I have previously noted, this socialist ideological inclination and grassroots inclusivity of the PT played a decisive role in CTO’s choice of PT as the party to collaborate with during the 1992 elections.

Apart from the above indices that converged to make the CTO’s cooperation with the PT conceivable, other factors were at play on the wider national political sphere.

489 Buarque de Holanda 1936 cited in Sa Vilas Boas, 5.

490 Sa Vilas Boas, 8.

491 Keck, *The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil*, 1.

492 Leonardo Avritzer, “Living Under a Democracy: Participation and Its Impact on the Living Conditions of the Poor,” *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. Special (2010): 167.

493 Keck, *The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil*, 1.

494 Avritzer, “Living Under a Democracy: Participation and Its Impact on the Living Conditions of the Poor,” 166.

495 The government preferred to work with the docile civil society organizations instead of the more representative ones. Heller, Patrick 2012 and Kerk, Margaret 1992 discuss this extensively.

496 Patrick Heller, “Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa,” *Polity* 44, no. 4 (2012): 648.

Brazilian representative democracy of the 1980s was an ‘anomaly’ characterised by patrimonialism and clientelism⁴⁹⁷ in which periods of electioneering campaigns provided the only opportunity for contact between electors and their representatives. As earlier referenced, Lani Guinier conceptualises this anomaly as ‘electocracy’, that is, ‘a political environment that defines itself by sacred moments of choice’.⁴⁹⁸ By implication, within the intervening period between two elections, the electorate typically has little or no contact with their representatives.

With respect to democracy in the Global South, Heller discusses a contestation over the balance of power between the institutions of state and the civil society or common citizens in general.⁴⁹⁹ Chantal Mouffe treats this contestation as the norm and forecloses ‘the possibility of a non-adversarial democratic politics’.⁵⁰⁰ This contestation over the balance of power is another index of the socio-political ambience in Brazil which provoked Boal’s experiment with the Legislative Theatre. Heller suggests that it is contingent upon the subordinate classes to look beyond the framework of electoral politics in order to secure their collective material interests.⁵⁰¹ In this wise, Boal sought to use the theatre in collaboration with the citizens to tilt the balance of power in favour of the less privileged.

To recourse once more to Guinier’s concept of electocracy, Guinier states that in an electocracy, the elected is more important than the electorate. According to her, electocracy undermines the quality and quantity of citizen participation and of collective mobilisation. Guinier holds that elections are necessary but electocracy diminishes democracy. Electocracy, to borrow Tocqueville’s words, turns the elected representatives into ‘powerful strangers’.⁵⁰² A noteworthy instance of both Guinier’s electocracy and Tocqueville’s ‘powerful strangers’ occurred when the then Brazilian president, Jose Sarney, called for elections. Close to the elections, Sarney introduced reforms that improved the economic status of Brazilians. However, a mere three days after the elections, Sarney declared that, ‘[T]hose were provisional measures, now we have to go back to the way it was before’.⁵⁰³ Boal decried this as an act of treason and in one of his election leaflets noted that the voting power is paradoxical given that ‘at the moment

497 Marie-Hélène Sa Vilas Boas, “The Genesis of Participatory Democracy in Brazil: A Scientific (Re)Construction, Brazilian Political Science Review, Vol. 11, No. 1, (2017) 3

498 Guinier, “Beyond Electocracy: Rethinking the Political Representative as Powerful Stranger,” 2.

499 Heller, “Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa,” 648–49.

500 Chantal Mouffe, “Art and Democracy: Art as an Agonistic Intervention Public Space”, *onlineopen.org* 3.

501 Patrick Heller, Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons From Brazil, India and South Africa, *Polity*, Vol. 44, No. 4, Deepening Democracy (October 2012) 644

502 Lani Guinier, “Beyond Electocracy: Rethinking the Political Representative as Powerful Strangers, *The Modern Law Review*, Vol. 71, No. 1, (2008), 3

503 Taussig, Schechner and Boal, 1990, 51

of exercising it, at the moment of voting, this power disappears'.⁵⁰⁴ Boal was therefore averse to a process which recognises and accommodates the voting power of the voter before an election but paradoxically causes that power to whittle away the moment the voters exercise their franchise as was exemplified through President Sarney's action.

The advent of Boal's Legislative Theatre can thus be foregrounded within the context of Heller's concept of the contestation over the balance of power, Guinier's concept of electocracy and Tocqueville's 'powerful strangers' all of which found expression within the Brazilian socio-political milieu of the post-military dictatorship era. Boal innovated the Legislative Theatre, a kind of theatrical enterprise in which, as he claims, a 'citizen is transformed to legislator'⁵⁰⁵ as a way of bridging the gap between the 'powerful strangers' and their constituents. In his innovation of the Legislative Theatre, Boal's objective was to decidedly minimise the deficiencies of the representative system of democracy by making it continuously and progressively participatory, inclusive and a synergistic cooperation between constituents and their representatives. In this way, Legislative Theatre could serve as a tool to move democracy as practically close to popular sovereignty as possible.

3.1.2. The Aims

Given Guinier's and Tocqueville's concepts of electocracy and 'powerful strangers', respectively, as analysed above, Boal's aim in conceptualising the Legislative Theatre was to engender fundamental changes that will ensure that electors would continue to have political agency even after elections. In effect, Boal sought to bridge the gap between the electors and their parliamentarians by giving the electors a voice to ensure that they (the electors) are partners with, not mere spectators of the activities of, the parliamentarians. Boal employed the Legislative Theatre as a way to achieve these aims in order to dynamise the role of theatre in society. Boal examined the central role played by the Greek Tragedy in the socio-political life of the ancient Greeks. Performed in the city centre, the Acropolis, the Greek tragic performances took centre stage not only spatially but also metaphorically by playing a pivotal role in the lives of the Greeks, a role Boal denounced as coercive. Boal, through the Legislative Theatre, conceives of theatrical performances not held captive within designated buildings (as is often the case with conventional theatre in modern society) but one that, metaphorically speaking, returns to the heart of the city. In other words, Boal's intention was to make theatre the centripetal force of the society not in a coercive manner but as a tool for dynamisation of the members of the society.

504 Paul Heritage, 'The Courage to be Happy: Augusto Boal, Legislative Theatre, and the 7th International Festival of the Theatre of the Oppressed' *The Drama Review*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1994, 25

505 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 15.

In discussing the impact of both Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil, Baiocchi reckons with Legislative Theatre as a radical transformation in democratic practice.⁵⁰⁶ With reference to the physical locations (mostly in communities and neighbourhoods) where Legislative Theatre is often performed, Baiocchi holds the view that Legislative Theatre takes place first at the periphery rather than at the centre.⁵⁰⁷ Baiocchi appears to have used the term ‘periphery’ in a geographical sense. Nevertheless, it is indicative of where true democratic power should be found, that is, with the common people. But the physical locations where Legislative Theatre takes place seemed to be of secondary consequence in Boal’s reckoning. It does appear that space, for Boal, was more metaphorical than physical. Thus, Boal’s purpose was to bring theatre ‘back to the heart of the city’ and ‘back into the centre of political action – the centre of decisions’⁵⁰⁸

Therefore, notwithstanding the physical locale where Legislative Theatre performances are held, its overarching objective is to re-conceptualise the ‘centre’ by redefining the source or spring of power within the society and making theatre the political life wire of the society. In a sense, therefore, merely making political theatre could represent the ‘peripheral’ whereas making theatre as politics could represent the ‘centre’ considering that theatre as politics aims at recalibrating the fulcrum of political action. Political theatre, says Boal, ‘comments on politics’ whereas making theatre as politics ‘is... one of the ways in which political activity can be conducted’⁵⁰⁹

Still on Boal’s aim in innovating the Legislative Theatre; while Greek tragedy, through the putative effect of catharsis, sought ‘to tranquillise (sic) them, and return them to a state of equilibrium and acceptance of society as it is’, Boal’s purpose, as he put it, was ‘to produce not catharsis, but dynamisation’.⁵¹⁰ Boal rejected a theatre ideologically premised on a passive ‘acceptance of society as it is’ but one that seeks to elicit in the audience the ‘desire for change’.⁵¹¹ I note, however, that Boal’s equation of spectatorship with passivity has been variously critiqued by scholars, a point I will return to shortly.

Boal’s ideological repositioning of the theatre is noteworthy for two main reasons: (1) it tends to democratise the performance space by giving all participants the opportunity to participate thereby metaphorically reflecting theatre’s putative potentiality for the practice of democracy and (2) speaks to the possible role of theatre and the

506 Baiocchi, “Performing Democracy in the Streets: Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil,” 83.

507 Gianpaolo Baiocchi, “Performing Democracy”, 83

508 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

509 Boal, 16.

510 Boal, 16.

511 Boal, 16.

theatre practitioner in the actual practice of democratic governance. In other words, theatre, through deliberate action by theatre practitioners, has a crucial role to play in democracy. However, Kelly Howe warns against an automatic equation of ‘forum-ing’ (a feature of Boal’s Forum Theatre and Legislative Theatre methodologies) with democracy and democracy with equal access. I reason, therefore, that in the execution of the Forum Theatre or Legislative Theatre projects, conscious precautionary steps should always be taken to navigate the assumption that democratic agency is automatically accessible to every participant.

Boal states rather categorically that the target of the Legislative Theatre is to ensure that laws are both drafted and voted on.⁵¹² This adumbrative statement is perhaps the source of the scholarly disputation as to whether or not a Legislative Theatre project must produce legislation. To instantiate this disputation, while Ben Fink avers that a Legislative Theatre engagement should produce legislation in harmony with the nomenclature, ‘*Legislative Theatre*’⁵¹³, Howe, however, downplays that condition putting more premium instead on the generation and circulation of knowledge within the space of the Legislative Theatre event.⁵¹⁴

I note here that there is, perhaps, the need for distinction between voting on a proposal or a bill as prescribed by Boal and the actual passage of that bill into legislation. In other words, that a draft proposal for legislation is brought before the legislature does not imply its automatic passage into legislation, not to mention the implementation of the legislation in society. The imprecision inherent in Boal’s position stated above is critically significant in that it reveals a disjunctive relationship between Boal’s theoretical postulations and his actual practice and therefore creates room for various interpretations as evidenced in Fink’s and Howe’s standpoints. It further compels, as I argue, the countenancing of both Fink’s and Howe’s criteria in the determination of what constitutes Legislative Theatre. I posit therefore that while the ultimate aim of any Legislative Theatre engagement should be the promulgation and implementation of the legislative proposals by citizens, the import of the knowledge generated and circulated during the process ought not be discountenanced or diminished. I stake the claim that before the promulgation of the laws, the generation and dissemination of knowledge about laws (both the extant and the conceivable) is already a crucial reason for which to embark on a Legislative Theatre project.

Regarding the relational dynamics between the stage and the auditorium, Legislative Theatre, similar to many modern forms of theatre, deviates from the conventional, i.e.

512 Boal, 72.

513 Ben Fink, “Making Space (Literally) for Social Change through Community-Based Theatre—from Soup Kitchen to City Hall,” *Theatre Topics* 21, no. 2 (2011): 204, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2011.0027>.

514 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

proscenium arch theatre, and actively seeks a collaboration between the actors and the spectators. In the case of Legislative Theatre the transitivity inherent in modern theatrical practice is translocated to the arena of active politics where it creates the ambience for exchange between electors and their representatives. In emplacing an integrative form of democracy, Legislative Theatre aims to produce more active, responsible and responsive citizenship in communities. Legislative Theatre shares this aim with Forum Theatre as attested to by Howe who sees citizens in Legislative Theatre as embodied think tanks⁵¹⁵ installed with expertise by their daily lived experiences that make them sufficiently informed to proffer solutions to problems that affect them directly. The inception of Legislative Theatre in Brazil within the context of the transition from a dictatorial government to a democracy notwithstanding, its applicability seems not be confined within such specific boundaries. Other instances of the application of the methodology which I will discuss later in this chapter will attest to this claim. Before then, I discuss next the specifics of Boal's practice of Legislative Theatre.

3.1.3. The Specifics of Boal's Practice of Legislative Theatre

As one of the branches of what Boal termed the Theatre of the Oppressed 'tree', Legislative Theatre budded long after Forum Theatre and other earlier branches of the tree. Thus, it builds considerably on the gains of the other branches of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology. It is closest in form to the Forum Theatre, the immediate substratum of the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology on which the Legislative Theatre rests. Thus, the Legislative Theatre methodology enjoys affinity with the Forum Theatre. Therefore, to understand the methodology of the Legislative Theatre, I will discuss its common grounds with the Forum Theatre in order to make the point of departure explicit.

The Forum Theatre methodology is an exploratory process which commences mainly, but not exclusively, with workshops during which concerns common to the participants are identified. Life experiences which are oppressive in nature often form the nub of drama sketches constructed by workshop participants. As observed by critics of Forum Theatre methodology, life experiences of 'a self-selected or randomly selected or even purposively selected' participants might not always 'provide unmediated access to all that one really needs to know about the issues'.⁵¹⁶ Reliance on life experiences poses an even more significant challenge where the experience is secondary and not personal thereby making it impersonal and mediated. This necessitates the conduct of research in order to afford all participants a richer understanding of the issues involved.

515 Howe, 240.

516 Ines Barbosa, Vanesa Camarda, and Paul Dwyer, "Forum Theatre, A Dramaturgy of Collective Questioning: An Interview Ines Barbosa, Vanesa Camarda, and Paul Dwyer," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, 1st ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 172.

In Forum Theatre, the performance (also called ‘anti-model’) presents a protagonist engaged in a struggle against oppression. The action in the anti-model shows a problem ‘in an unsolved form, to which the audience,..., is invited to suggest and enact solutions’.⁵¹⁷ The practice of conceding the stage for the use of spectators in Forum Theatre contravenes the theatrical convention which (traditionally) allows access to the stage only to actors. It, however, facilitates the democratic use of stage space by both the actors and the spectators alike. The anti-model which is often presented twice is performed the first time in a manner that allows a safe distance between the audience and the actors. In that case, it is during the second presentation that intervention from the audience would be allowed.

The ‘Joker’ or facilitator is neither fully an audience member nor an actor. The Joker ‘has a clearly intermediary, facilitative and analytical function, which demands rigour, practice and experience’.⁵¹⁸ She explains the rules of the game to the audience and invites them, at the appropriate time, to halt the performance at whatever point they have an intervention to make with respect to the protagonist’s dilemma.

With the shout of the transgressional ‘stop’, the performance is halted and a spectator proffers an insight into how the protagonist could overcome the oppression. The spectator is then invited to mount the stage, take on the role of the protagonist – thereby transmuting into a spect-actor (another Boal’s terminology) - and try to drive the action to a different resolution with the other actors (the oppressors) opposing his resolve. By giving room to different spect-actors to intervene, various solutions to the dramatised oppression are enacted as a rehearsal for real-life situations. After various interventions might have been tried out and an agreeable option(s) seems to have been arrived at, the Joker steers the group to take a position by getting them to vote in support of or against the position or to indicate their neutrality. Thus, with the introduction of the voting process and the firm resolutions reached thereafter, a parliamentary ambience is created. In essence, the incorporation of the act of voting and the process of taking collective decision by the participants, and producing legislative proposals are some of the features which move the session away from the typical Forum Theatre to Legislative Theatre.

The transmutation from spectator to actor (spect-actor) is significant in Boal’s theatre for two main reasons. First, it destroys the element of illusion on stage and engenders transitive dialogic exchange between actors and spectators – a process which Boal

517 Translator’s Introduction to First Edition Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, ed. Adrian Jackson, 2nd ed (London: London : Routledge, 2002), xxiv.

518 Sruti Bala and Aristita I Albacan, “Workshopping the Revolution? On the Phenomenon of Joker Training in the Theatre of the Oppressed,” *Research in Drama Education* 18, no. 4 (2013): 390.

calls metaxis.⁵¹⁹ Second, Boal claims that it transforms the spectators from ‘passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action’.⁵²⁰ Herein hinges the entire concept of the Theatre of the Oppressed; Boal argues that it creates a safe aesthetic space within which the spect-actors can rehearse their envisioned change preparatory to taking relevant action(s) in the face of real existential challenges. In effect, Boal avers that until spectators overcome their ‘passivity’ by stepping onto the stage to intervene in the dramatic action – a rehearsal for life - they remain objectified ‘paralysed spectators’.⁵²¹

As I hinted above, Boal’s concept of the passivity of the spectator which essentially connotes that ‘a spectator is...separated from both the capacity to know and the power to act’⁵²² has been interrogated by scholars. For instance, Sruti Bala in discussing the de-stultification of spectatorship in the Theatre of the Oppressed dismisses the distinction between ‘active’ and ‘passive’ spectatorship as not only abstract but also an assumption in view of the fact that ‘the characteristics of each cannot be empirically demonstrated’.⁵²³ Similarly, Jacques Rancière’s ‘The Emancipated Spectator’ challenges the opposition between ‘viewing and acting’ and asserts that ‘[E]very spectator is already an actor in her story’.⁵²⁴

Boal’s assertion that viewing means passivity which can only be overcome by stepping onto the stage to intervene in the dramatic action fails to take into cognisance the thought processes which accompany viewing. These thought processes, irrespective of whether or not they lead to ‘action’ on stage, are, in themselves, actions which the audience performs. Thus, Boal’s spect-actors only continue on stage the actions they had commenced in the audience as spectators.

The Forum Theatre method, as Babbage notes, operates within a community of people unified by their common idiom of oppression the solution to which they rehearse by testing different options.⁵²⁵ As a consequence of sharing the same idiom of oppression they are able to offer alternative solutions, being as they are personally acquainted with the oppression.⁵²⁶ This enhances the weight of the solutions proffered. Boal realised that ‘sometimes the oppression is actually rooted within the law’⁵²⁷ and, therefore, ordinarily outside the scope of the oppressed person’s capability to tackle. These were

519 Alessandro Tolomelli, “Theatre of the Oppressed: Linking Research, Political Commitment and Pedagogical Perspectives,” *INTERthesis: Revista Internacional Interdisciplinar* 13, no. 3 (2016): 46.

520 Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 97.

521 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 11.

522 Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and New York: Verso, 2009), 2.

523 Sruti Bala, *De-Stultifying Spectatorship in the Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. ASCA, 2012, 229.

524 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 17.

525 Frances Babbage, *Augusto Boal* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 24.

526 Translator’s Introduction to First Edition Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, xxiv.

527 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 8.

institutionalised oppressions that would necessitate either the formulation of new legislation or change in existing ones. That realisation gave birth to the Legislative Theatre.

Thus, in its various ramifications the Theatre of the Oppressed, and the Forum and Legislative Theatres especially, seek to set aside conventions that privilege expert knowledge in both social and political life, a point underscored by Howe in her notion of embodied think tanks.⁵²⁸ But the objectives of the Legislative Theatre extend beyond acquiring knowledge and proffering solutions to having direct bearing on the laws that govern a society. Boal noted that ‘law is always someone’s desire...the desire of the powerful’⁵²⁹ the input to which should therefore be democratised to accommodate the yearnings of the common people. Through Legislative Theatre, those desires are codified into proposals of law which are presented to a legal system either as new laws to be promulgated or as amendments to extant laws.⁵³⁰

Boal’s theatre seeks to provoke in its public ‘a certain energy of dissatisfaction’⁵³¹ with the prevailing oppressive system and, in the case of the Legislative Theatre, express that dissatisfaction through the drafting of laws meant to be voted on by the legislature. The outcome of the proposal might not be easy to determine at the outset leading Howe to suggest that the impact of a Legislative Theatre project should not necessarily be measured on the scale of the quantum of legislation that the project produced but instead on its epistemological import.⁵³² This is also the premise of my position that while working towards, and anticipatorily awaiting, the promulgation of the proposed laws, other derivable benefits, including the opportunity for political education, are crucial motivations for embarking on Legislative Theatre interventions.

Operationally, Boal’s Legislative Theatre experiment took its bearing first from his office as *Vereador* which functioned as the Central Directorate. Attached to the Directorate were Jokers and other cultural animators who worked closely with the ‘nuclei’, that is, Theatre of the Oppressed groups collaborating with the Central Directorate in a systematic way. There were nineteen groups in all.⁵³³ A nuclei was either community-based or thematically-based, or a combination of both. The critical index in the formation of the groups was the commonality of oppressive circumstances. Apart from the nuclei, there were also the ‘links’, a group of people from the same community. Working in concert with the links through the Chamber and the Interac-

528 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 239.

529 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

530 Eduardo Salvador Acevedo, “Legislative Theatre: Art for Community Conflict Resolution. From Desires to Laws,” *Journal of Conflictology* 5, no. 1 (2014): 3.

531 Salvador Acevedo, 5.

532 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

533 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 31–32.

tive Mailing list, on the one hand, and through the Theatre of the Oppressed groups in collaboration with the Jokers, on the other hand, Boal's mandate harvested inputs in which the citizens made known their stakes on new legislations to be promulgated or old legislations to be amended.⁵³⁴

The inputs were then tendered to the Metabolising Cell which would sift through the proposals and collate them for voting. During the period of this experiment, Boal could not function as a cultural animator but it was his responsibility to present the proposals at the Chamber of the *Vereadores* for debate and possible approval. In his new capacity, Boal was able to provide employment for fifteen (five as full-time, and ten as part-time) members of his theatre ensemble, the CTO. After Boal's re-election bid fell through, Legislative Theatre re-emerged as what Boal termed 'Legislative Theatre Without Legislator'⁵³⁵, that is, Legislative Theatre in which no member of the theatre company doubled as a legislator. This should not be misconstrued to suggest that Legislative Theatre dispenses with elected members of the legislative arm of government. Legislative Theatre as praxis is a bridge between theatrical practice and legislation, and both are, therefore, interdependent one on another. Following Boal's later example, Legislative Theatre continues to gain wider application in various countries mainly as Legislative Theatre without Legislator. The instances of this will be discussed later in this chapter. In the immediate next section, I examine the impact of Boal's practice of the Legislative Theatre model in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

3.1.4. Impact of Boal's Practice of Legislative Theatre

As Boal states, the fundamental objective of the Legislative Theatre is to engender social transformation by employing the theatrical process to enact performances often based on participants' lived experiences. This process created room for the citizens to broaden the scope of their political awareness and to exploit their pedagogical and political agency as 'embodied think tanks' as Howe puts it. In this section, I examine the impact of Legislative Theatre in Brazil during Boal's tenure as a member of parliament.

Boal's years of doing Legislative Theatre as Legislator in Rio, Brazil, produced a total of thirteen legislations.⁵³⁶ I put the legislations under rough categories as follows: In the health services delivery category, there were four legislations three of which had direct impact on the elderly citizens. One of the legislations provided for doctors specialising in geriatric problems and diseases to be deployed in all municipal hospitals. Another specifically prescribed the provision of beds for geriatric attendance. The last of the

534 Boal, 31–32.

535 Boal, 90.

536 Boal, 81–82.

three allowed friends and relatives of the elderly to keep company with the elderly while they are being rehabilitated in the hospital. The fourth law under the health category prohibited all forms of treatment for the mentally ill that had irreversible consequences such as ‘imprisonment’ in high-security cells, electric shock treatment and any other form of physical or psychological aggression.⁵³⁷ Also, with respect to mental health, another legislation declared ‘The House of Palms’ (Casa das Palmeiras), a mental health facility as ‘public utility’. This granted some legal privileges such as tax exemption to the inmates.⁵³⁸

Another category of two laws sought to reduce the difficulties associated with mobility in public places for people with impaired sight. The laws stipulated that all public telephone kiosks must have raised concrete platforms below to make them easily detectable to the visually impaired who mostly depend on their canes for ease of movement and for safety. For the same reason, all suspended rubbish bin bags were also to have raised platforms.⁵³⁹

In solidarity with the people of East Timor, two legislations were promulgated, one named a Rio State school as ‘Free Timor’ and another declared December 7 every year as Day of Solidarity with the people of East Timor. Three other legislations addressed three social problems: all motels must charge the same price for all couples irrespective of their sexual preferences; all state schools must have crèche facilities for children of teachers, workers and students.⁵⁴⁰ Another legislation made the City Council to supply plastic bin bags to street traders to clean their pitch after a market session. The thirteenth law was two-pronged in its effect; it brought about a constitutional amendment in order to allow for the promulgation of a law that protects the witnesses of crimes. Boal considered this the most significant legislation promulgated under his mandate.⁵⁴¹

In the absence of information about their actual implementation,⁵⁴² the number and nature of the legislations produced under Boal’s mandate within a space of four years are suggestive of the extensive reach of the Legislative Theatre engagements undertaken by his mandate through the ‘nuclei’ and links. A close look at the legislation reveals a tilt in favour of the demographic sections of society that are usually neglected such as the youth, the elderly, and the visually impaired. Thus, both in spread and quantum,

537 Boal, 81.

538 Boal, 82.

539 Boal, 81.

540 Boal, 82.

541 Boal, 82.

542 It is crucial to note that information about the implementation of the legislations could be available, not in English language, but in Brazilian Portuguese and therefore not accessible to me due to language barrier.

the legislations bear a reflection of the legislative leverage achievable through the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology.

However, Baz Kershaw argues that Boal's claim that citizens are transformed into legislators through the Legislative Theatre process is not only 'inflated' but 'manifestly untrue' insisting that in Boal's practice, Rio citizens could only 'suggest'⁵⁴³ laws. Kershaw states that Boal's claim is tantamount to 'proclaiming that a net-maker is a fisherman even though he never goes to sea'.⁵⁴⁴ Frances Babbage extends Kershaw's argument by espousing the view that contrary to Boal's claim, Legislative Theatre 'represents not an advance from Theatre of the Oppressed's early radicalism but a regression'⁵⁴⁵ as, in her estimation, it tends to pander to the whims of the power holders viewed as oppressors within the context of the Theatre of the Oppressed. Boal in conceptualising the Theatre or Poetics of the Oppressed submits that the method seeks 'another poetics!' that would stimulate 'revolutionary action' thus wresting power from oppressive forces within the society.⁵⁴⁶ It is on this premise that Kershaw suggests, and Babbage agrees, that Legislative Theatre is a capitulation to the forces of oppression which the Theatre of the Oppressed was originally set up to contend against.

Kershaw premises his views on the fact that Theatre of the Oppressed upholds the notion of a binary distinction between the 'oppressed' and the 'oppressor'. In this distinction, those who bear the rule are perceived as the oppressors against whom the oppressed must fight to regain their freedom. Kershaw's concern is that instead of vanquishing operation, Legislative Theatre might be perceived as an inadvertent acquiescence and reinforcement of the same by those presumed to be fighting against it. Against Babbage and Kershaw's positions I argue, instead, that rather than being a capitulation or an inversion of the objectives of the Theatre of the Oppressed, Legislative Theatre represents a leap forward in that it is an attempt to take the battle of liberation, as it were, to the actual battleground. Legislative Theatre is a direct engagement with the law which, as referenced earlier, represents a governmental control system⁵⁴⁷ or, to vary the metaphor, represents the forces of oppression. My submission, therefore, is that Legislative Theatre engages with oppressors at the fundamentally crucial point of law which is critically central to the well-being of any group of people.

In line with Kershaw, Babbage also sees the concept of Legislative Theatre as capitulation on Boal's part as it involves a delegation of power by the citizens to the legislators

543 Baz Kershaw, "Legislative Theatre By Augusto Boal," *Theatre Research International* 26, no. 2 (2001): 219.

544 Kershaw, 219.

545 Babbage, *Augusto Boal*, 28.

546 Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 42.

547 Watts and Roberson, *Law and Society: An Introduction*, 6.

which, Babbage notes, is Boal's major criticism against the Brechtian theatre. Boal had criticised Brecht's poetics as one in which the spectator retains his right to think but delegates his power to act to the character.⁵⁴⁸ Babbage sees a similarity between Brecht's poetics and Boal's Legislative Theatre in that although the Rio citizens engage in a thinking process 'albeit on their feet', they ultimately delegate 'the power to act' to the legislators.⁵⁴⁹ In essence, Babbage espouses the view that although Boal is wont to interpret the spect-actor's intervention as 'action', this action does not, in concrete terms, determine the fate of the proposals made by the citizens, consequentially.

On his part, Ben Fink argues that the Legislative Theatre which is aimed at mitigating institutionalised oppression by ensuring the emplacement of more humanistic legislations must necessarily connect directly with the structures of government in order to have the desired effect. Fink is concerned, therefore, that in so doing, Legislative Theatre invariably treads on slippery ground. On that premise, Fink suggests that the 'siege on the castle' aesthetic of retaining the useful elements of confrontation with state power while building public relationships with elected officials in the bid to realise the objectives of the Legislative Theatre calls for caution on the part of the practitioners of the methodology.

Nevertheless, Legislative Theatre is doubtless a move away from the usual trend in a typical representative democracy where legislators operate as 'powerful strangers' oblivious of the lived realities of the electors. The Legislative Theatre approach ensures that, at the point of promulgating laws, the electorate are made 'present again' through their articulated positions presented by their representatives. This makes Legislative Theatre potentially relevant within the Nigerian democratic milieu where the gulf between the elected and the electorate is eminently evident.

Boal's major objective in creating the Legislative Theatre was to change the manner in which political activities are conducted by making the political platform accessible to everyone affected or who could potentially be affected by the provisions of any law to have an input in the contents of the legislation. Beyond using performance to draw attention to a problem, Legislative Theatre elicits solutions to social problems that 'official circles of doctors, politicians, reporters, lawyers, businessmen and other professionals generally do not envision'.⁵⁵⁰ As a branch of theatre, Legislative Theatre serves as a point of convergence in the scenic arts between social responsibility and political commitment.⁵⁵¹ Boal's seminal experiment in Brazil, as I have discussed

548 Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 30.

549 Babbage, *Augusto Boal*, 28.

550 Elizabeth S Hawley, "Art, Activism, and Democracy: WochenKlausur's Social Interventions," *Peace & Change* 40, no. 1 (2015): 84, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pech.12112>.

551 Salvador Acevedo, "Legislative Theatre: Art for Community Conflict Resolution. From Desires to Laws," 3.

above, demonstrates that synergy. To broaden the scope of reference from which Nigerian theatre practitioners could draw in their application of the Legislative Theatre methodology for the benefit of Nigeria's democracy, I will in the next section explore other applications of the methodology.

3.2. Adoptions of Legislative Theatre

I noted in the previous section that following Boal's seminal experiment with the Legislative Theatre, the method has been adopted in various parts of the world mainly, but perhaps not exclusively, as 'Legislative Theatre without a Legislator'. 'Legislative Theatre without a Legislator', as observed, does not mean dispensing with the role of legislators. It only indicates that no member of the theatre company doubles as a legislator as was the case during Boal's mandate. 'Practicing Democracy', a Legislative Theatre project by Headlines Theatre Company in Canada is one example. The project was aimed at using theatre to create a forum for public dialogue and thereby elicit the participation of the public in the creation of policy and law.⁵⁵² Historically, it marked the first adoption of Boal's Legislative Theatre methodology in North America.⁵⁵³

3.2.1. 'Practicing Democracy': Legislative Theatre Debuts in North America

The first significant date was February 27, 2003, when Vancouver City Council 'voted unanimously to endorse the Headlines Theatre's "Practicing Democracy" Project'.⁵⁵⁴ Headlines Theatre's consultation with the City Council had identified for intervention a central issue that would be relevant to Council's agenda in March and April 2004. The identified issue was, 'How can the City of Vancouver respond to the results of the cuts to welfare?'⁵⁵⁵

Poverty as the major aftermath of the cuts in social welfare assistance had resulted in homelessness, insecurity and prostitution. The twenty-minute-long performance was based on the lived experiences of thirty workshop participants. In the performance, Trade, a homeless character, parodies Premier Gordon Campbell's February 2004 speech to the BC Chamber of Commerce: 'We're number one...in job creation; in small business confidence; in consumer confidence; in foreign investments; in housing starts'⁵⁵⁶ as he lays down in the dumpster (his 'house') for the night. Trade

552 Carrie Gallant, "Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project" (Vancouver, Canada, 2004), 1.

553 Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston, "Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics," *Cultural Geographies* 14, no. 1 (2007): 92, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474007072821>.

554 Gallant, "Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project," 1.

555 Gallant, 1.

556 Gallant, 2.

thus emphasises the dissonance between the Premier's speech and the lived reality of Vancouver citizens represented through the performance.

The major question concerned what the Vancouver City council might do to create safety after many years of cuts to welfare and social services. The forum session revealed the jurisdictional dynamic to the question. The cuts which were largely imposed by the federal and provincial governments had an impact mainly in the local municipalities. However, the local municipalities, in this case the Vancouver City Council, had no jurisdiction over welfare policies, hence the jurisdictional dynamic to the question of cuts on welfare.

In specific terms, the reformed policy stipulated a maximum period of 24 months of welfare assistance for employable adults within any given 60-month period. With that, British Columbia became 'the first Canadian province to introduce a benefit time limit'.⁵⁵⁷ With total disregard for 'employment barriers...caused by social exclusion, sexism, racism and classism'⁵⁵⁸ the British Columbia provincial government insisted that '[T]hose who are able to work must do so'⁵⁵⁹ or bear the punishment by way of reduced benefits. Thus, after due consultation with City Council and with Vancouver citizens within her extensive network, Headlines Theatre, through 'Practicing Democracy', asked the question, 'How have years of cuts to welfare and social services created danger in the city of Vancouver?'⁵⁶⁰

In discussing the outcome of Headlines Theatre's 'Practicing Democracy', Howe, as well as Pratt and Johnston, notes that although the project was endorsed by Vancouver City Council before its execution, no direct policy shift could be linked to the project. While I do not equate the absence of any direct policy change with the failure of the project, notwithstanding, it is pertinent to reflect on why the project failed to produce any definite policy shift despite being endorsed by City Council before execution. The reflection is critical to apprehending the challenges which often confront Legislative Theatre projects.

First, on account of jurisdictional ambit, both the Canadian federal and British Columbia provincial governments were implicated in Vancouver City Council's failure to implement the policy inputs which 'Practicing Democracy' birthed. Vancouver City Council lacked the jurisdictional powers to implement the policy changes. Another

557 Chris Schafer and Jason Clemens, "Welfare Reform in British Columbia: A Report Card" (Vancouver, B.C., Canada, 2002), 3.

558 Scott Graham et al., "The Best Place on Earth?: Contemporary and Historical Perspectives on Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs in British Columbia" (Canadian Council on Social Development, 2009), 15.

559 Schafer and Clemens, "Welfare Reform in British Columbia: A Report Card," 3.

560 Gallant, "Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project," 1.

problem, as Howe observes, is that Legislative Theatre deconstructs the hegemonic notions of expertise by conceiving expertise as not always ‘detached’ but ‘embodied’ through experience.⁵⁶¹ In analysing Headlines Theatre’s ‘Practicing Democracy’, Howe asserts that ‘everyday life installs expertise in bodies’.⁵⁶² In other words, experience confers cogent knowledge that could assist in addressing existential problems. This feature of Legislative Theatre put Practicing Democracy at odds with Vancouver City Council as the members of the Council apparently perceived Legislative Theatre as putting a question mark on their competence.

As argued by a Council member, it would smack of failure in the discharge of their duties for Council to implement the input from ‘Practicing Democracy’. In effect, since, in the Council member’s reckoning, Council was creditably acquitting itself in its duties, there was no place for Legislative Theatre. The Council member concluded that it was most unlikely that the project will ‘tell us something that we haven’t already thought of’⁵⁶³ thus dismissing Headlines Theatre’s Legislative Theatre project as a futile venture. This could provide a good idea about how the disposition of the legislature apparently affected the outcome of ‘Practicing Democracy’ and what such attitudinal bent portends for Legislative Theatre projects.

Pratt and Johnston provide another attitudinal dimension to ‘Practicing Democracy’s’ failure to achieve any policy change. According to them, this was partly hinged on Council’s differentiation between ‘rationality’ and ‘emotions’ in their assessment of the ‘Practicing Democracy’ report. Council members insisted that the input made by participants was ‘too simplistic’,⁵⁶⁴ based on sudden outbursts of emotions, lacking in rationality and therefore unworthy of being relied upon in the serious matter of policy formulation. This attitudinal proclivity negatively impacted upon the outcome of the Practicing Democracy project. However, the absence of any definite policy shift traceable to Practicing Democracy does not equate to the failure of the project. Howe observes that the project provided the avenue for ‘communication between participants and a government body that literally legislates citizens’ bodies’.⁵⁶⁵ Also, on the strength of the ensuing report from the project the Council resolved to make provincial and federal governments aware of ‘the extent of the impact of years of social service cuts’.⁵⁶⁶ The Council also resolved to attend to the mental health challenges of urban bush dwellers.

561 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

562 Howe, 241.

563 Pratt and Johnston, “Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics,” 98.

564 Pratt and Johnston, 97.

565 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 251.

566 Gallant, “Practicing Democracy: A Legislative Theatre Project,” 24.

Howe further claims that the report and the ensuing exchanges between Headlines Theatre and Council served to clarify public policy with respect to public buildings that homeless citizens could use for the purpose of registration to vote. More importantly, perhaps, Howe notes that the report serves as a record of protest and documentary evidence of how the Vancouver City Council was failing its citizens at that time.⁵⁶⁷ Howe also suggests that the world-views and future decisions of Council members could reflect incremental, (howbeit) unconscious impact of the project. This view is perhaps corroborated by the fact that some Council members, for sustained impact, mused over the possibility of staging ‘legislative theatre right in the space of the Council Chambers’.⁵⁶⁸ Thus, what ‘Practicing Democracy’ presumably failed to achieve in numerical or quantitative outcome with respect to legislation, it accomplished in qualitative intangible impact.

‘Practicing Democracy’ exemplifies the role theatre practitioners could play in interfacing between citizens and government. Having noted the impact of welfare cuts on Vancouverites and in view of Council’s agenda for the coming year, Headlines Theatre embarked on the project anticipative of addressing the negative impact of the cuts. Also of particular relevance to the Nigerian situation is the jurisdictional question which was identified as one of the factors that hindered ‘Practicing Democracy’ from effectuating definite policy shifts. Similar to the Canadian situation, Nigeria runs a 3-tier system of government. Loopholes in the 3-tier system could be exploited by any arm of government in order to shirk responsibilities to the citizens.⁵⁶⁹ Thus, the ‘Practicing Democracy’ project demonstrates the negative impact which jurisdictional ambit in a 3-tier system of government could exert upon Legislative Theatre interventions.

3.2.2. Legislative Theatre in Afghanistan: Afghan Women’s Voices for Human Rights

The title of the intervention, ‘The Legislative Theatre: Democratizing Women’s Rights’ makes evident its gender-specific nature. Coordinated under the aegis of the Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization (AHRDO), the project was born out of the apprehension that the modicum of gains recorded with regard to the protection of the rights of women during the post-Taliban era could be traded off at the negotiating table between the Afghanistan government and the international funding agencies. Under Taliban rule between 1996 and 2001 women and girls were,

567 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 251.

568 Pratt and Johnston, “Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics,” 109.

569 A notable instance was a notice to motorists once placed by a state government on an extremely bad portion of a Nigerian highway which read ‘Sorry, this road belongs to the Federal Government. Please bear with us’. This was regardless of constant road accidents caused by the bad state of the road.

among other deprivations, banned from attending schools and universities.⁵⁷⁰ The return of the Taliban in August 2021 appears to portend a precarious future for Afghan women and a confirmation of AHRDO's fears.

The AHRDO Legislative Theatre project of 2010 and beyond commenced with the objective of involving 'ordinary Afghan women in the elaboration of suggestions for legislation and public policies that promote and protect women's rights'⁵⁷¹ in Afghanistan. To achieve the set objective, the project adopted three complementary theatrical elements as follows: Playback Theatre, Legislative Theatre Workshops and Legislative Theatre performances. With a total of twenty performances, the project identified and carefully documented the lived experiences of over 100 women. The experiences represented the most dominant forms of violence perpetrated against Afghan women. The ten six-day community-based theatre workshops organised in the five regional centres (Kabul, Bamyan, Herat, Nangarhar and Balkh) provided space for women drawn from all spheres of life to engage critically with women's issues in their regions. The sessions produced five plays, one in each state, developed and performed by workshop participants. In a total of 39 performances, the plays brought together, approximately, about 4,000 audience members made up of high school and university students, members of various Afghanistan women organisations and the general public to deliberate and chart a course for Afghan women.⁵⁷² The project was intended to give voice to the Afghan woman in order to ensure socio-political and/or economic transformation.

Afghan women's rights (or lack thereof) reflect a contention among at least three layers of authority - the central state elites who hold the reins of political power, Islamic *ulama* wary of encroachment from the state into what they consider their rightful territory and the tribal figures 'intent on safeguarding its autonomy'.⁵⁷³ A conflation of these indexes has, from centuries past, made the Afghan woman visible only in her 'almost complete social invisibility'.⁵⁷⁴ The period of near complete invisibility is followed by a checkered history of freedom characterised by 'contention, false promises and failed attempts to reform the deeply patriarchal system'.⁵⁷⁵

The unstable history of the freedom of the Afghan woman continued until the reign of the Taliban (1996-2001) when the deprivations of the past seemed to pale in

570 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), "Afghanistan: Taliban Announce New Rules for Female Students," BBC News, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-58537081>.

571 Khudadad Bisharat, "Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?," 2012, 11.

572 Bisharat, 21.

573 Deniz Kandiyoti, "Old Dilemmas or New Challenges? The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan," *Development and Change* 38, no. 2 (2007): 173.

574 Bisharat, "Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?," 12.

575 Bisharat, 4.

significance in comparison to their lot under the Taliban. The nature of the reforms introduced by the Taliban impacted on the private and public lives of Afghans with an apparently more deleterious effect on women. Juan Cole notes that under the Taliban ‘public punishments of miscreants inscribed the power of the state on the body of the offender’.⁵⁷⁶ This is perhaps a graphic - and gruesome - exemplification of Howe’s statement about ‘a government that literally legislates citizens’ bodies’.⁵⁷⁷

The state of the Afghan woman under the Taliban attracted international criticism in which she was noted as the face ‘behind the burqa’.⁵⁷⁸ This image of Afghan women lingered and, apparently, neither the fall of the Taliban in 2001 nor the so-called liberation efforts of international organisations did much to meaningfully change their experiential realities with regard to forced marriages, mutilation by husbands, rapes and suicide.⁵⁷⁹ These were the fundamental factors that necessitated AHRDO’s Legislative Theatre project for Afghan women.

The politics of the freedom (or denial thereof) of the Afghan woman till after the Taliban dictatorship could lead one to the conclusion that the Afghan woman has circuitously, and perhaps unknown to her, been the force behind the policies that have governed Afghanistan since the beginning of the twentieth century. Thus, beyond creating awareness about the peculiar realities of Afghan women, the Legislative Theatre sessions identified possible solutions to the issues raised and drew up recommendations. The final report was entitled ‘Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?’⁵⁸⁰ It consisted of a total of 24 recommendations classified under two broad categories thus: 12 policy recommendations and 12 legislative recommendations.

The policy recommendations included measures to strengthen women’s political participation, provision of opportunities for women to enjoy their right to higher education through the provision of scholarships in foreign and domestic institutions, and the need for the Afghan government to not only defend women’s rights but institute well-defined mechanisms and policies that would enable women to, in actuality, exercise their clearly defined rights. Also, the recommendations identified an article of the Afghan penal code as ‘inherently crime-generating and provides space for the abuse and violence of women’⁵⁸¹ and therefore recommended its urgent amendment to ensure that accused persons are prosecuted by Afghan judicial institutions instead

576 Juan R.I. Cole, “The Taliban, Women, and the Hegelian Private Sphere,” *Social Research* 70, no. 3 (2003): 781.

577 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 251.

578 Huma Saeed, “Empowering Unheard Voices through ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’: Reflections on the Legislative Theatre Project for Women in Afghanistan-Notes from the Field,” *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 7, no. 2 (2015): 299.

579 Saeed, 300.

580 Bisharat, “Afghan Women after the Taliban: Will History Repeat Itself?”

581 Bisharat, 8.

of being punished by their relatives. With respect to Article 41 of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law, the Legislative Theatre project noted that the law stipulated reparation for victims of criminal acts but was unclear about the reparation amount. The project, therefore, recommended that the precise reparation amount for each criminal act should be clearly stated.

The Afghan women's project claims to have recorded remarkable transformations in the lives of individual participants in the workshops. The project made apparent the ignorance of Afghan women about their rights as enshrined in the extant laws of Afghanistan. As a participant put it: 'I thought women must always stay at home but now I learnt that we have the right to do work outside the house'.⁵⁸² This buttresses my position that knowledge about laws is in itself a good reason to embark on Legislative Theatre projects. Reflecting on the impact of the project, Huma Saeed reports about a participant who became the only woman in her family 'to marry a man of her choice'.⁵⁸³ Specifically, the project left its imprint with respect to clarifying extant laws and this translated into transformation for individual Afghan women. The project portended the possible freedom of Afghan women from the strictures of practices that hinder their involvement in democratic processes in Afghanistan.

Saeed notes, however, that the project did not necessarily lead to 'structural changes in the lives of Afghan women at large'.⁵⁸⁴ Saeed argues that such structural changes would require time as well as investment in the education and provision of employment opportunities for girls and women. Notwithstanding, I posit that the project left a positive imprint in the lives of Afghan women through knowledge about extant laws which the project afforded. The knowledge thus acquired translated into personal transformation for the participants. In anticipating the practice of Legislative Theatre in Nigeria, the Afghan women's project is significant. The many cultural and religious strictures placed on Nigerian women⁵⁸⁵ suggest a possible area of robust intervention through Legislative Theatre. To end the examples of Legislative Theatre interventions drawn from other climes which could enrich the practice of Legislative Theatre in Nigeria, I reflect on the Legislative Theatre engagements of a New York based Theatre of the Oppressed company.

582 Bisharat, 24.

583 Saeed, "Empowering Unheard Voices through 'Theatre of the Oppressed': Reflections on the Legislative Theatre Project for Women in Afghanistan-Notes from the Field," 319.

584 Saeed, 320.

585 Many studies have been carried out in this regard some of which include Josephine Effah, Mbachu Dulue, and Onyegbula Sonny, "Unequal Rights: Discriminatory Laws and Practices Against Women in Nigeria: Constitutional Rights Project" (Lagos, Nigeria, 1995); Teresina V.C. Agunwa, "Bad Widowhood Practices in Nigeria: It's Adverse Effects on Widows," *Journal of Research and Development* 3, no. 1 (2011); Oluchi Joyce Igili, "Widowhood and Attempted Forced Levirate Marriage as Precursors of Female Madness in Julie Okoh's *Our Wife Forever*," in *Schizo: The Liberatory Potential of Madness*, ed. Irina Lyubchenko and Fiona Ann Papps (Oxford, United Kingdom: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2015).

3.2.3. Legislative Theatre in the US: Theatre of the Oppressed New York City (TONYC)

Founded in 2011 by Katy Rubin, Theatre of the Oppressed New York (TONYC) was born out of Rubin's desire to combine interactive theatre with socio-political advocacy and activism. An activist and facilitator, Rubin trained with Augusto Boal at the Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed (CTO) in Rio de Janeiro where she apprehended the power inherent in connecting Theatre of the Oppressed methodological practices with government agencies and officials. Rubin established TONYC as a non-profit organisation that partners with communities around New York City which are facing discrimination in order to spark transformative action through theatre.⁵⁸⁶ After overseeing the affairs of the theatre company for 8 years (2011-2019), Rubin has relinquished the position of executive director of TONYC in order to concentrate her efforts on placing the Legislative Theatre practice in the USA on a national pedestal.

The Legislative Theatre interventions by TONYC underscore Rubin's understanding of the various ways of implementing Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology which she gained through her training under Boal. Rubin had observed, on return to the United States after her training, that although Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed was being practiced in the USA, the prevailing approach emphasised the *sharing* of the tool rather than real advocacy. Rubin claims that in the US Boal's methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed were, at that time, circulating within academic and/or privileged spaces through university programs and workshops.⁵⁸⁷

Douglas Paterson in analysing the roots of both pedagogy and theatre of the oppressed in the US corroborates Rubin's view by asserting that the US academy of higher education is partly implicated in the multiplication of Boal's methods in the US through the hosting of Theatre of the Oppressed conferences and workshops.⁵⁸⁸ This, Paterson notes, is partly due to the fact that academic institutions were able to generate both the participation and the financial support necessary to sustain Boal's conferences and workshops in the US.⁵⁸⁹ However, although TO was flourishing in the academia and among limited privileged circles, Rubin observed that among communities facing real oppression, the TO methodology was not being applied in an impactful and sustainable way.⁵⁹⁰ This lacuna spurred Rubin into founding the Theatre of the Oppressed,

586 Katy Rubin <https://www.katyrubin.com>

587 Katy Rubin, "Theatre of the Oppressed NYC: Radical Partnerships on the Ground in New York City," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. Kelly Howe, Julian Boal, and Jose Soeiro (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 414.

588 Douglas Paterson, "Early Conferences in the US: PTO and Its Roots in the Academy," in *The Routledge Companion to Theatre of the Oppressed*, ed. Kelly Howe, Julian Boal, and Jose Soeiro (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 279.

589 Paterson, 279.

590 Rubin, "Theatre of the Oppressed NYC: Radical Partnerships on the Ground in New York City," 414.

New York (TONYC) in order to create awareness of, and address, genuine concerns of oppression within New York City.

TONYC's mode of operation is somewhat analogous to the CTO Rio's working relationship with the links and the 'nuclei' during Boal's mandate as a member of parliament. Through a strong partnership base with existing theatre troupes, TONYC engages with immigrant communities, formerly incarcerated people, veterans, as well as people living with HIV/AIDS and LGBTQ communities. TONYC uses the plays generated from the lived experiences of the members of the communities to raise awareness about pressing matters, build solidarity by identifying the collective effects of real existential problems and generate concrete ideas about how to tackle them.⁵⁹¹ Specifically TONYC employs the methodology of the Legislative Theatre in order to engage with officials of city, state and federal governments in interactive sessions during which the officials feel the pulse of those most impacted by the decisions they make. Commenting on the impact of one of the Legislative Theatre sessions organised by TONYC, Craig Levine, Director of Public Policy Reform acknowledges that 'Legislative Theatre broadened my thinking in terms of collaboration... We sometimes don't go to the next concentric circle of working directly with community groups, which we should'.⁵⁹²

TONYC's goal, à la Boal's the CTO, is to catalyse positive changes in New York City. To this effect, between 2013 and 2017, TONYC organised yearly Legislative Theatre Festivals in New York City. The Festivals produced notable policy shifts. For instance, the 2013 Festival tagged, 'Spring to Action: Save the Drama' which focused particularly on homeless LGBTQ youths led to the creation of the Federal Interagency Working Group for Homeless and LGBT Youth in order to meaningfully understand and address the needs of runaway and homeless LGBT youth.⁵⁹³ TONYC's 2014 Legislative Theatre Festival 'Can't Get Right' examined, among other themes, the challenges faced by transgender persons. This engendered policy proposals among which was the exigency for change in birth certificates to reflect people's preferred pronouns and the creation of municipal IDs for New Yorkers. This further resulted in a legislation which created a municipal ID for New York City that took into account LGBT and gender non-conforming individuals.⁵⁹⁴ The 2015 Festival emphasised the challenges faced by ex-offenders (particularly those of Black extraction) in securing employment and scholarship fund. The ensuing policy proposal was partly instru-

591 Rebecca Kelly-Golfman, "Watch, Act, Vote: The Impact of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC Legislative Theatre on New York City Policy and Civic Engagement" (New York City, n.d.), 4.

592 Kelly-Golfman, 21.

593 Kelly-Golfman, 7.

594 Kelly-Golfman, 8.

mental to the 2017 free education policy for New Yorkers with family income below \$100,000 at CUNY.⁵⁹⁵

Tagged ‘Housing Circus’, the 2016 TONYC Legislative Theatre Festival interrogated the experiences of veterans with the criminal justice system and the long wait of home seekers for permanent housing which often leads to homelessness. This produced a proposal to support the veterans and the homeless with ‘Housing Ambassadors’ who visit housing facilities before tenants sign the agreement. TONYC’s 2017 Legislative Theatre Festival produced the following policy shifts: an increase in the support for the cultural life of low-income underrepresented communities, an increase in support for individual artists, and the coordination and promotion of engagements between the City (New York) and its cultural community.⁵⁹⁶

In the foregoing sections, I have analysed Boal’s seminal experiment with the Legislative Theatre in Brazil, and the adoption of the method by various practitioners in other countries. In the next session, I will discuss what I foresee as the benefits accruable from the application of the methodology in Nigeria as well as consider the problems and limitations inherent in this mode of praxis. I intend, therefrom, to validate the hypothesis that despite the problems and limitations, the Legislative Theatre methodology remains a potentially worthwhile politico-theatrical interface between citizens and their representatives in a representative democratic government.

3.2.4. Adopting Legislative Theatre in Nigeria: Foreseeable Benefits and Limitations

From the above discussion on the execution of Legislative Theatre projects in Brazil, Canada, Afghanistan and the USA, it is evident that the application of Boal’s Legislative Theatre methodology has its share of problems, limitations, and benefits. On the one hand, the outcome of some of the projects makes apparent the possibility that a Legislative Theatre project could be stalled by the attitudinal disposition of the authority or arm of government vested with the power of promulgating Legislative Theatre proposals into laws. On the other hand, other projects evidenced the positive influence that could potentially be exerted on the process and outcome of legislation through the adoption of Legislative Theatre. In this section of the chapter, I intend to closely consider to what extent the challenges and limitations as well as the benefits of Legislative Theatre could apply within the Nigerian context.

Earlier I noted the two basic approaches by which a theatre company could interface with the legislative arm of government in its adoption of the Legislative Theatre

595 Kelly-Golfman, 12.

596 Kelly-Golfman, 20.

methodology: ‘Legislative Theatre with Legislator’ and ‘Legislative Theatre without Legislator’. Where the legislator is a member of the theatre company, as was the case during Boal’s mandate, the fear that the legislative referenda could be tampered with is either nonexistent or, at least, significantly diminished. The same might not apply when the approach adopted is Legislative Theatre without Legislator. In adopting the Legislative Theatre methodology in Nigeria, it appears more circumspect to assume that the ‘Legislative Theatre without Legislator’ method would apply. In practical terms, this demands that the representative would be sufficiently invested in the referenda and guard it jealously. It also requires that adequate precautionary measures are put in place to ensure that the referenda are not tampered with and, to proactively devise the means of holding representatives accountable in the event that proposals are tinkered with.

Also, irrespective of the approach adopted, the eventual passage of the proposal into legislation presents yet another challenge. Boal himself hints at this by noting that in the Brazilian context promulgated laws are not automatically enforced. Boal observes that pressure is usually needed in order to get persons and institutions to abide by the dictates of the law. This reinforces Chantal Mouffe’s argument in which she forecloses the possibility of non-adversarial democratic politics.⁵⁹⁷ As Boal notes, the law is ‘only a tool to be used by the oppressed, to help apply this pressure’.⁵⁹⁸ This is another challenge inherent in the use of Legislative Theatre that needs not be glossed over.

While it is appropriate and expected to engage in Legislative Theatre projects with the anticipation that laws enacted through the projects will be implemented, it is, perhaps, also expedient to realise that in practical terms implementation of the laws might sometimes be delayed. This is not to suggest that necessary pressure should not be applied to ensure the implementation of promulgated laws. Rather, the understanding that the implementation of some promulgated legislation might be delayed reinforces my standpoint in this dissertation that while awaiting the promulgation and implementation of laws, the opportunity afforded by Legislative Theatre sessions for the clarification of policies that operate within the polity is already a cogent reason to embark on Legislative Theatre projects. The cumulative effect of such positive imprints could potentially yield more definite policy shifts in future.

A critical matter associated with the practice of Legislative Theatre is premised on one of Boal’s fundamental claims regarding Legislative Theatre. Boal claims that Legislative Theatre facilitates transitive exchange between the actors and the spectators (spect-actors). The exchange is, of necessity, mediated by the provocateur or Joker. Boal’s

597 Chantal Mouffe, “Art as an Agonistic Intervention in Public Space,” *Art and Democracy*, 2007, 3, onlineopen.org.

598 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 82–83.

claim is predicated on an envisaged seamless ventilation and exchange of opinions between participants and actors in the forum session in a democratic ambience that affords participants equal access. However, Howe, as I have previously noted, sounds a cautionary note about the dangers of an uncritical equation of forumming with democracy and democracy with equal access.⁵⁹⁹ Howe avers that a Joker's disposition is capable of influencing the level of freedom with which participants express their opinions during a forum session. This, in turn, will shape the knowledge which the forum session generates.

This challenge is not site-specific and is therefore expected to apply in the Nigerian context. It places great demand on Jokers to ensure that the forum space is devoid of any tendency from themselves or other participants that is capable of stifling freedom of expression. These problems and limitations notwithstanding, there are many envisaged benefits derivable from the employment of the Legislative Theatre methodology in the interface between the electors and the elected in Nigeria's representative democratic government.

An examination of the benefits of Legislative Theatre compels a consideration once again of the argument on the criteria to adopt in assessing the impact of a Legislative Theatre project. I have noted earlier the divergent views in this regard as exemplified by Fink's and Howe's postulations. While Fink insists that a Legislative Theatre project should necessarily culminate in the promulgation of legislation in accordance with the term *Legislative Theatre*, Howe holds the view that the value of a Legislative Theatre engagement could be located outside the quantum of legislation produced through the process. Howe argues further that Legislative Theatre sessions provide the requisite atmosphere for collective knowledge generation on public policy.⁶⁰⁰ I reason that both arguments have their merit. Therefore, my stance in considering how Nigeria's democracy might benefit from the application of the methodology is that while Legislative Theatre projects should be embarked upon with the ultimate target of producing legislation and ensuring that they are implemented, the delay that often accompanies this process should not be allowed to pose as a deterrence in engaging in Legislative Theatre projects. The education about the provisions of extant laws and the consciousness that citizens have the agency to make input into the laws are already highly rewarding outcomes of the Legislative Theatre process.

While acknowledging that the capacity to provide an ambience conducive to information sharing is not exclusive to Legislative Theatre since all forms of the Theatre of the Oppressed (and theatre in general), provide an opportunity for the dissemination

599 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 241.

600 Howe, 240.

of information, Howe argues that Legislative Theatre frames information-sharing as ‘an act of citizenship’.⁶⁰¹ The import of citizenship transcends membership of a community. It involves participation in the democratic processes.⁶⁰² Fundamentally, therefore, Legislative Theatre provides a pedestal on which members of a community can participate as effective citizens. I reckon that this is very relevant to the Nigerian situation particularly in view of Samuel Kafewo’s position that Nigeria’s democratisation process raises crucial questions about citizenship on account of the ‘country’s huge social diversity and deep ethnic, religious, and regional divisions’.⁶⁰³

Legislative Theatre creates the opportunity for an interface between the citizens and the government bodies that legislate their existence, to borrow Howe’s phraseology. Typical of representative democracy is what Guinier denotes as electocracy; a process that thrives on sacred moments of choice and in which the elected is more powerful than the electorate which ultimately produces what Tocqueville denotes as powerful strangers. In conceptualising the Legislative Theatre, Boal sought not only to bridge the gulf between the electorate and the elected but also to restore to the electorate the political agency that in most representative democracies usually dissipates at the point of casting a vote. Stevenson Omoera’s argument that Nigeria ‘has not had a true taste of democracy’ partly due to what he describes as ‘political dictatorship’⁶⁰⁴ further underscores the necessity for Nigerian theatre practitioners to test the utility of Legislative Theatre within the Nigerian context.

Legislative Theatre is also beneficial in creating room for the clarification of government policies. The significance of this is double-fold. First, it exposes inequalities contained - and often hidden - in state policies. These hidden inequalities make it difficult for citizens to be equipped with the tools that could enable them to perform as ethical members of their communities.⁶⁰⁵ Similarly, clarification of policies equips citizens with knowledge about their privileges as contained in extant laws. This is yet another potential utility of the Legislative Theatre methodology within the Nigerian context where the level of illiteracy is considered remarkably high. A 2019 assessment by the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) claims that about 35% of Nigerian adults are illiterate and this, according to NMEC, ‘accounts for the low level of development in Nigeria’.⁶⁰⁶ NMEC further

601 Howe, 245.

602 Heller, “Democracy, Participatory Politics and Development: Some Comparative Lessons from Brazil, India and South Africa,” 645.

603 Kafewo, “Discussion, Intervention, Processing: Theatre and Citizenship in Nigeria,” 178.

604 Ibagere and Omoera, “The Democratization Process and the Nigerian Theatre Artist,” 67.

605 Jacqueline Kennelly, “‘Acting Out’ in the Public Sphere: Community Theatre and Citizenship Education,” *Canadian Journal of Education* 29, no. 2 (2006): 552.

606 Editorial, “The Challenge of Illiteracy in Nigeria,” *ThisDay NewsPaper*, 2019, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2019/08/01>.

observes that, ‘the growth and development of any nation depend largely on the quantity and quality of all segments of its population’.⁶⁰⁷

I have noted that Legislative Theatre facilitates the participatory involvement of citizens in the formulation of new laws or, where necessary, in the amendment of extant laws. This was exemplified in Boal’s seminal experiment which birthed thirteen legislations passed by the Rio City Council between January 1993 and December 1996. The Legislative Theatre interventions by Theatre of the Oppressed, New York (TONYC) instantiates the replication of Boal’s example through the policy shifts they effected in the New York City Council. Legislative Theatre’s capacity to effect policy shift, therefore, serves as another crucial incentive for the application of the methodology within the Nigerian context.

I reason with Gianpaolo Baiocchi that Legislative Theatre births social transformation and indisputably better legislations made possible through the experiential input of citizens. Therefore, I consider it worthwhile for Nigerian theatre practitioners to incorporate the method in the effort to place Nigeria’s democracy on a firmer footing. In order to test the viability of the method within the Nigerian context, I carried out an experimental Legislative Theatre project on sexual harassment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The discussion of that seminal effort will henceforth engage my interest in this chapter. This will be followed by my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play.

3.3. Legislative Theatre: The AAUA Intervention and Theorisation as Play

I find in Legislative Theatre features which make it relatable to the concept of play hence my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play. Different conceptual frames have been postulated with respect to play, one of which argues that play is a fundamental way by which creatures coherently articulate their possibilities for acting in the world.⁶⁰⁸ Also, Derrida conceptualises play as *passé-partout*, that is, an instrument with which the crossing of territorial borders is made possible.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, I argue that, as play, Legislative Theatre facilitates the entry by the participants into the terrain of law-making; a terrain which is otherwise not accessible to them. From here, participants innocuously function as lawmakers and determine the nature of laws which prescribe

607 Editorial.

608 Thomas S. Henricks, “Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play,” *American Journal of Play* 6, no. 2 (2014): 190.

609 Katarzyna Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art* (London and New York: Tauris I.B, 2015), 63.

their existence. I further argue that through the play process the participants are able to articulate possibilities open to them in the real world and are consequently able to take their place as equal members of their communities thereby guaranteeing their political and democratic well-being.

To test my hypothesis about the role the Legislative Theatre methodology could play in strengthening democratic culture and to assist in my theorisation of the methodology as play, I carried out a laboratory Legislative Theatre project at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. The objective of the project was to test how the praxis of Legislative Theatre might be implemented in Nigeria and what the methodology might contribute towards democratic, participatory processes in the Nigerian context. The thematic thrust of the intervention was sexual harassment in Nigerian universities with specific interest in Adekunle Ajasin University. As will be further discussed, the choice of this theme was informed mainly by its timelessness, its contemporaneity in Nigeria around the time of the project on account of an undercover investigation carried out in some West African Universities by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC),⁶¹⁰ and the hypothetical conjecture about its existence in the Adekunle Ajasin University.

Crucially, the project provided the opportunity to put to test some of the perceived challenges of the implementation of Legislative Theatre as noted earlier in the chapter. The challenges include the attitudinal disposition of relevant authority and the onus on the Joker to ensure equal democratic ownership of the performance space. The manner in which the challenges played out in the laboratory project and my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play are part of the focus of the rest of this chapter. To begin with, I explore the contiguity between Legislative Theatre and TfD in order to elucidate on why I advocate the adoption of the former by TfD practitioners in Nigeria.

3.3.1. Legislative Theatre and the Practice of TfD in Nigeria

My discussion in Chapter 2 of this dissertation attests to the considerable presence of TfD in Nigeria. As previously noted, TfD is viewed as a mode of theatre practice which focuses attention on various matters within communities with a view to celebrating the human person as a being capable of using his cultural forms for individual and societal transformation. In like manner, Legislative Theatre harnesses the embodied experiences of participants described by Howe as ‘embodied think tanks’.⁶¹¹ Thus,

610 BBC News, “‘Sex for Grades’: Undercover in West African Universities,” BBC News Africa, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-49907376>.

611 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 240.

both TfD and Legislative Theatre are unanimous on the innate capabilities which the human person possesses and which she could utilise for her benefit.

Also, TfD's conceptual premise of 'the power of the people and power to the people'⁶¹² finds concrete expression in the praxis of Legislative Theatre. This is owing to the ambience created through Legislative Theatre for communities to participate in the making of the laws that circumscribe their daily existence. To partake in enacting the laws under which one lives bespeaks not only of being a recipient of power to the people but, more fundamentally, it is also a demonstration of the inherent power of the people being put into effective use.

Lawmaking, as Boal observes, should not be the exclusive preserve of a section of the community.⁶¹³ Transforming the political system that strips members of the society of the power to decide their fate and creating the ambience for them to change the narrative through laws appear to be the most fundamental way to alleviate the burdens of those at the lower rungs of the societal ladder who often bear the brunt of repressive laws. Laws, Boal notes, are always the desire of the powerful.⁶¹⁴ Thus, Boal's Legislative Theatre is conceptually a means of recalibrating the source and course of power in order to accommodate the desires of those placed at the fringes of political power by the systemic structure of society.

In Chapter 1, I noted the connection between democracy and law, and the necessity for laws to be made by the people who are most affected by the dictates of the law. I argued that this is a fundamental component of democracy. Also, in Chapter 2, I dwelled on the conceptual connection between TfD and democracy. I noted the policy position which stipulated that TfD was innovated as the theatrical arm of the developmentalist project designed to catalyse the actualisation of a democratic culture for developing countries. This is therefore another crucial premise on which I propose the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology to be employed apace with the already widespread TfD in Nigeria. On the one hand, the correlation between development and democracy has been established.⁶¹⁵ On the other hand, democracy and law serve each other.⁶¹⁶ Therefore, the application of Legislative Theatre along with TfD will support the building of a healthy democracy as TfD was originally primed

612 Abah, "Vignettes of Communities in Action: An Exploration of Participatory Methodologies in Promoting Community Development in Nigeria," 445.

613 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

614 Boal, 16.

615 M.D. Litonjua, "Democracy and Development: Theoretical Unity, Practical Split," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 37, no. 1 (2011): 51.

616 Klein, Yusuf, and Bafaki, *Concepts and Principles of Democratic Governance and Accountability: A Guide for Peer Educators*, 21.

to do. The Legislative Theatre methodology will complement the function of Tfd by being a tool in the fashioning of people-oriented laws.

3.3.2. Legislative Theatre: A Tool for Deepening Democratic Culture

Some critics have identified what they describe as the lack of an enabling atmosphere for democracy to thrive in Nigeria. For instance, Ibagere and Omoera contend that 'there have only been attempts at democratisation'⁶¹⁷ implying that in Nigeria, democracy, as a political culture, is yet to take deep roots. One of the ways of deepening the democratic culture of any society is by training the muscle of the citizens for political discussion and participation. As referenced earlier, Kelly Howe while arguing that Legislative Theatre sessions could be sufficiently rewarding irrespective of whether or not the interventions produce legislation, submits that Legislative Theatre sessions are 'a site for corporeal policy analysis'; an environment where participants 'could build knowledge collectively about public policy and how it might be profitably revised'.⁶¹⁸ Howe thus avers that Legislative Theatre sessions provide the setting for the generation and circulation of knowledge, and for enlightenment on political matters. I deem such political exercise indispensable to the growth and enculturation of democracy in Nigeria. Howe's position aligns with my submission that while waiting for a Legislative Theatre project to produce legislation, the knowledge about extant laws which it affords and the political consciousness it creates already serve as sufficient incentive to engage in it. My experimental Legislative Theatre engagement at the Adekunle Ajasin University lends credence to this claim.

In addition to affording the opportunity for the discussion of extant laws and policies, Legislative Theatre sessions also provide participants opportunity to deliberate on topical issues that bear relevance to democracy. Again, my project at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria, instantiates this. As already stated, the project explored the grave issue of sexual harassment in Nigerian universities which, around the time of the project, gained currency due to an undercover investigation into sexual harassment in some West African universities conducted by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). This provided the gateway to explore how Adekunle Ajasin University might be implicated in the situation. The lived experiences of the Adekunle Ajasin University students which served as the material from which the performance skit was built further strengthened the topicality of the chosen theme, that is, sexual harassment.

617 Ibagere and Omoera, "The Democratization Process and the Nigerian Theatre Artiste," 67.

618 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 240.

3.4. Laboratory Legislative Theatre Project on Sexual Harassment at AAUA

In order to justify my proposal for the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by Nigerian theatre practitioners, it was practically expedient for me to conduct a laboratory experiment of Legislative Theatre as part of the research. This was intended to situate the methodology within the Nigerian context and thereby provide practitioners with a Nigerian (miniature) instance of Legislative Theatre to which they could relate.

The choice of sexual harassment as the subject of the intervention at Adekunle Ajasin University was predicated on a number of factors. Sexual harassment has been described as a worldwide problem in and around schools with serious implications for educational attainment.⁶¹⁹ The peril of sexual harassment is claimed to have stripped educational institutions of their glory as ivory towers and have reduced them to arenas for sexual victimisation.⁶²⁰ Also, sexual harassment of female students is viewed as rampant within educational settings in sub-Saharan Africa⁶²¹ and widespread in Nigerian institutions of higher education.⁶²² Notwithstanding this pervasiveness, Paul Bello in a research on combating sexual harassment in Nigerian universities, declares that little is known about institutional measures to address the menace of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities.⁶²³ While cases of sexual harassment are said to be under-reported, victims often find the courage to make formal reports when policies and procedures are put in place to combat sexual harassment.⁶²⁴

Spurred, perhaps, by the claims of the pervasiveness of sexual harassment in sub-Saharan Africa the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) undertook undercover investigations at the University of Ghana and the University of Lagos, Nigeria. The investigations revealed that BBC undercover 'female reporters were sexually harassed, propositioned and put under pressure by senior lecturers at the institutions'.⁶²⁵ Following the report, the Nigerian Senate reintroduced⁶²⁶ a bill aimed at the prevention

619 Regis Chireshe and Excellent Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 80 (2009): 89.

620 Janice Joseph, "Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Institutions: A Comparative Perspective," *TEMIDA*, 2015, 126.

621 Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 89.

622 Paul Oluwatosin Bello, "Combating Sexual Harassment in Ivory Tower in Nigeria: Mixed Feelings," *Bangladesh E-Journal of Sociology* 17, no. 1 (2020): 173.

623 Bello, 174.

624 Gruber & Smith 1995 cited in Sandy Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 182.

625 News, "'Sex for Grades': Undercover in West African Universities," 1.

626 'The fact of being 'reintroduced' indicated that the bill had previously been introduced unsuccessfully.

of sexual harassment of university students.⁶²⁷ Recognising its import, the United Nations (UN) implored media houses and civil society groups to lend their unalloyed support to the bill to ensure its passage into law.⁶²⁸

Taking into particular account Bello's submission above that little is known about institutional measures to address the ill of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities, I thought it apposite to use the Legislative Theatre methodology to investigate how Bello's assertion might apply to the Adekunle Ajasin University. With the hypothetical assumption that institutional measures to address sexual harassment are in existence in the university, the project looked forward to using Legislative Theatre to strengthen the presumed existing measures. Thus, the expectation with which the project commenced was to enable female students who fall victim to sexual harassment to muster sufficient boldness to make formal reports and subsequently to receive justice as I presumed was already provided for in the institution's regulations.

3.4.1. Sexual Harassment: Contours and Consequences

The definition and occurrence of sexual harassment have often been labelled as 'contextualized'.⁶²⁹ Classified as 'sex discrimination', sexual harassment is an inappropriate sexual gesture that is 'unwanted', 'unreciprocated', and mostly characterised by unequal power relations.⁶³⁰ Sexual harassment has been denoted as being 'pervasive'⁶³¹ in Nigeria. Its prevalence notwithstanding, specific laws on sexual harassment in Nigeria have been late in coming.⁶³² However, Section 46 of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPPA, 2015) defines sexual harassment as the 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex or gender which is persistent or serious and demeans, humiliates or creates a hostile or intimidating environment and this may include physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct'.⁶³³

The socio-cultural theorisation of sexual harassment perceives it as a product of differentiation in the cultural socialisation of men and women which privileges

627 The Bill was passed into law by the Nigerian Senate in the year, 2020. However, it still requires both assent by the Nigeria's President and adoption by the 36 state governments to become applicable nationwide.

628 Aishat Babatunde, "UN Seeks Support for Nigeria's Anti-Sexual Harassment Bill," Premium Times, 2020, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/378406-un-seeks-support-for-nigerias-anti-sexual-harassment-bill.html>.

629 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 186.

630 Frazier Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," *Issues in Science and Technology* 35, no. 2 (2019): 56; Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 88; Christopher Uggen and Amy Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment as a Gendered Expression of Power," *American Sociological Review* 69, no. 1 (2004): 66; Catharine MacKinnon, *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: A Case of Sex Discrimination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 1.

631 Olamide Abudu, "Sexual Harassment in Nigeria: It's Everybody's Problem," *The Guardian*, 2017, <https://guardian.ng/issue/sexual-harassment-in-nigeria-its-everybodys-problem/>.

632 Paul A. Ejembi et al., "The Trajectory of Nigerian Law Regarding Sexual Harassment in the Workplace," *AJLHR* 4, no. 2 (2020): 4.

633 Ejembi et al., 2.

masculinity.⁶³⁴ This view suggests that men are socialised to dominate while women are acculturated to function as minions. Also, the organisational-level theorisation of sexual harassment connotes that individuals with formal organisational power may use their position to harass subordinates.⁶³⁵ Formal organisational power would, in the context of my laboratory Legislative Theatre experiment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, reflect the relationship between male teachers and their female students.

Broadly, two categories of sexual harassment exist - the quid pro quo and the hostile environment. Hostile environment sexual harassment involves behaviours such as sexual jokes, comments, and touching which interfere with an individual's ability to do their job or that create an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.⁶³⁶ The quid pro quo harassment makes a demand; 'sleep with me or...'⁶³⁷ Within the context of the relationship between a teacher and a student, the threat would mean, 'sleep with me or you fail'. A study on the sexual harassment of female students in three Zimbabwean high schools suggests that most cases of sexual harassment go unreported⁶³⁸ due to fear of retaliation from the perpetrator, fear that accounts of sexual harassment may be dismissed as untrue, fear of worsening the situation and fear of being blamed for the assault.⁶³⁹ Women's responses to sexual harassment have been represented as a continuum of 'avoidance, diffusion, negotiation, and confrontation'.⁶⁴⁰ A cultural belief holds that women 'control' male sexuality through their comportment⁶⁴¹ and should therefore be held responsible for the assault they suffer from male predators.⁶⁴² Beliefs such as this are critical to research into sexual harassment.

Sandy Welsh in a study of the multifarious dynamics of gender and sexual harassment declares that for some victims sexual harassment could mark a negative turning point which alters their progression through life-course sequences.⁶⁴³ Within a learning environment, students who are victims of sexual harassment often show signs of withdrawal by skipping or dropping classes, changing either their course of study or their advisers, or dropping out of school altogether.⁶⁴⁴

634 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 176; Uggen and Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment as a Gendered Expression of Power," 67; Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 88.

635 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 177.

636 Welsh cites US EEOC 1980 Welsh, 170.

637 Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," 56.

638 Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 94.

639 Chireshe and Chireshe, 94; Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 182.

640 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 182.

641 Kethusegile et al., 2000: 159 cited in Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 92.

642 Amy Grubb and Emily Turner, "Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 17 (2012): 444.

643 Welsh, "Gender and Sexual Harassment," 183.

644 Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," 57.

These deleterious consequences attributable to sexual harassment necessitated the intervention. It was therefore gratifying to embark on the Legislative Theatre project in my academic community (Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria) being mindful, however, of the probability that the project could present some challenges not only due to the subject matter of the intervention (sexual harassment) but also due to the novelty of the methodology (Legislative Theatre).

3.4.2. The Intervention: Getting Set

The Legislative Theatre project was domiciled within the Department of Performing Arts. In order to elicit and sustain the cooperation of the students, it was deemed necessary to hinge the project on one of the courses taught in the department. After a survey of the courses offered in the department during the semester in which the project was executed, PFA 401 titled 'Topics in Theatre Studies' appeared suitable for the domiciliation of the project. The course was co-taught by the researcher and two other lecturers. One of the topics addressed by the course, Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre (handled by the researcher) offered a springboard from which to launch the discussion of Boal's Legislative Theatre, which the students were hitherto unfamiliar with.

Departing from Piscator's anti-illusionist political theatre which viewed complex socio-political and other factors as changeable⁶⁴⁵ attention was shifted to Bertolt Brecht's theatre of discussion which, in its treatment of contemporaneous concerns, emphasised emotional distancing and critical consciousness as requisites for social transformation. Brecht's theatre of discussion exerted a degree of influence on Augusto Boal. However, Boal, in his conceptualisation of the Theatre of the Oppressed, contends that in order to actualise social transformation, theatre should transcend mere discussion. Brecht's insistence on a theatrical form which would critically arouse the consciousness of the audience is partly the impetus for Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed which seeks to transfer to the oppressed the political tools with which to transform their condition. From that perspective, the fundamentals of Legislative Theatre both as applied theatre and as a politico-theatrical tool potentially utilisable for socio-political transformation were discussed. Beyond the department, I also had interactions with the Legal Unit of the university, the Women Studies and Development Centre, and the Faculty of Law. Also, I put the University's Guidance and Counselling Unit on notice in case any participant would need their services in view of the personal experiences that the participants would be sharing during the project.

645 Herbert Knust, "Piscator and Brecht: Affinity and Alienation," in *Essays on Brecht: Theater and Politics*, ed. Siegfried Mews and Herbert Knust (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1974), 46.

Having discussed the rudiments of Legislative Theatre with the forty-one (41) students (male and female) enrolled for PFA 401, the project was then introduced stating its specific focus, that is, sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers within the university. The male students were clearly informed that the gender specificity of the project would automatically preclude them from participation. The male students, whose interest in the project had apparently been elicited perhaps due to its novelty, resented their exclusion from the project. Their exclusion, however, is in tandem with the *modus operandi* in applied theatre projects in which, of necessity, participants comprise persons impacted by the issue at stake⁶⁴⁶ which, in this case, was sexual harassment of female students. It was, therefore, necessary to restrict the participation of the male students whose inclusion could have jeopardised the interest of the population group delineated by the project. Therefore, only a few male students were allowed as audience members during the performance.

To avoid possible stigmatisation, participation in the project was not predicated on having been sexually harassed rather the opportunity to partake in a novel theatre engagement was flagged as the main pivot of interest. It was however hoped that in the course of the project participants who had experienced sexual harassment from lecturers would willingly share their experiences. With this understanding, interested female students were invited to a preliminary meeting which held on 3rd February, 2020. At the meeting, attended by eighteen female students, the unconditionally voluntary nature of their involvement and the fact that they were therefore not being coerced into enlisting in the project was made explicitly clear.

After the inaugural meeting of 3rd February, 2020, another meeting was held on the 5th. The two-day intervening period was intended to afford the students ample latitude of time to make informed decisions about their continued involvement in the project.⁶⁴⁷ On the same day (5th) the students were made to sign the Informed Consent form and to watch a short video *Legislative Theatre: Animated Presentation*⁶⁴⁸ which afforded them an audio-visual illustration of the processes of a Legislative Theatre engagement including the voting process. With these, the students were allowed a one-week period

646 Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton, *Applied Theatre: International Case Studies and Challenges for Practice* (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2009), 6.

647 To further educate the students the following reading materials were made available to them: Gopal Midha's *Theatre of the Oppressed: A Manual for Educators*, which includes a brief introduction to the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology, was deemed a background knowledge necessary for the understanding and appreciation of Legislative Theatre. Eduardo Salvador's 'Legislative Theatre: Art for Community Conflict Resolution. From Desires to Laws'; Salvador's article gives a general overview of Legislative Theatre, highlights its Brazilian origin and outlines its rationale and processes of execution. A section of Boal's *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics* was considered necessary to afford the students a firm grasp of Boal's vision in innovating the Legislative Theatre methodology.

648 Lucija Smodis and Brina Fekonja, *Legislative Theatre: Animated Presentation*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xx-CHhzR2s>.

to study the literature.⁶⁴⁹ The meeting was attended by fifteen students, a shortfall of three students from the eighteen who had attended the inaugural meeting.

3.4.3. The Workshop Sessions

Bearing in mind the need to sustain the commitment of the participants, the entire project was envisaged to last no longer than three (3) weeks altogether from the point of its introduction to the students to the performance/intervention.⁶⁵⁰ As the workshop facilitator, I drew inspiration from my study of Boal's writings and other literature which dwell on the Legislative Theatre methodology. Also, with inspiration drawn from previous participation in Theatre of the Oppressed workshops, I structured the workshop to commence with creating an atmosphere of camaraderie and trust.⁶⁵¹ This crucially envisaged the ambience for the willing sharing of personal stories. Subsequently, the sessions would proceed to Image Theatre representation of the shared intimate stories. Furthermore, it was envisaged that a utilisable drama sketch would be devised which would then be properly rehearsed for performance on the day of the intervention. However, my participation in previous workshops – and experience gathered over the years in theatre engagements – notwithstanding, I approached my seminal Legislative Theatre project with a degree of apprehension over what the overall outcome could or would be.

When the group reconvened one week later (on 12th February) to commence the creative sessions there were thirteen participants in attendance indicating that after signing the Informed Consent form, two other students voluntarily withdrew from the project. No attempt was made to ascertain the reason for the attrition as this could be interpreted by the students as subtle pressure. The remaining thirteen students continued, voluntarily, with the project to the end. The workshop sessions included games such as 'In a Circle',⁶⁵² 'Joe Egg' also known as 'Trust Circle'⁶⁵³ and the two variations of 'Pushing against each other',⁶⁵⁴ drawn from Boal's *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.⁶⁵⁵ As the workshop facilitator, I employed the games with the intention to engender a relaxed mind and body, and to ensure warmth and camaraderie among the participants. The games were also intended to build trust which was necessary in

649 The students were at this point given the Informed Consent form to complete. It was however made clear to them that notwithstanding that they had to sign the Informed Consent form at that stage, they were still at liberty to opt out of the project at any time they so wished during the period of the project.

650 The project could have been executed within a shorter span of time. The period of 3 weeks was however deemed appropriate in view of the students' other engagements.

651 Between 2018 and 2019 I participated in Theatre of the Oppressed workshops facilitated in Amsterdam by Uri Negra, and in Berlin by Barbara Santos under the auspices of Migrant Women Theatre Collective, Amsterdam and Kuringa, Berlin respectively.

652 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 75.

653 Boal, 62.

654 Boal, 58.

655 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*.

order to have productive sessions. The exercises not only fostered an atmosphere of conviviality among the participants but they also helped to familiarise the students with the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology and engendered a conducive aura for the creative process.

Feminist scholars argue that on account of their experience ‘marginalized groups hold a particular claim to knowing’⁶⁵⁶ but have also contended that relations of power have the capacity to pose a hindrance to the generation of knowledge from among the marginalised groups.⁶⁵⁷ This, they posit, is in view of the fact that relations of power inflict fear, shame, and other uncomfortable emotions on potential informants, deprive them of their resources to communicate and undermine trust between researchers and potential informants.⁶⁵⁸ However, the inhibitions which could be engendered by skewed power relations are usually overcome when the marginalised are able to move away from an individualised to a collective articulation of their social experiences.⁶⁵⁹ In other words, inhibitions are overcome when the marginalised come to the realisation that their personalised social experiences are, in reality, not peculiar to them.

I countenanced the fact that although the power differential was apparently skewed in my favour, it was capable of exerting an adverse effect on the research project. Thus, to proceed in the workshop and in order, crucially, to enhance the generation of the needed experiential knowledge I thought it expedient to initiate the process by sharing with the participants my own experience of sexual abuse by my teacher as a young Sixth Grader. By doing so, I drew the participants away from an individualised to a collective articulation of their sexual harassment experiences. In other words, by sharing my personal experience with the participants, I created a space for myself in their world. From that standpoint of collective rather than individualised experience of sexual harassment,⁶⁶⁰ I succeeded in challenging the power differential which my positionality as a researcher might have bestowed on me. Also, I impressed upon the participants the fact that personal experiences of participants which applied theatre often uses as materials must, for ethical reasons, not be divulged to anyone outside the group. As Richard Schechner submits, performance workshops should be treated as ‘well-defined safety nets’⁶⁶¹ where safety and trust thrive.

656 Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, cited in Lina Gurung, “Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility,” *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 2021, 107.

657 Kristina Rolin, “Standpoint Theory as a Methodology for the Study of Power Relations,” *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (2009): 222; Gurung, “Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility,” 109.

658 Rolin, “Standpoint Theory as a Methodology for the Study of Power Relations,” 222.

659 Rolin, 224.

660 Gurung, “Feminist Standpoint Theory: Conceptualization and Utility,” 107.

661 Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2004), 27.

Subsequently, the participants were broken into sharing circles where members, knowing fully well the aim of the performance, shared their personal stories. The participants had the liberty to either openly identify with their stories or to anonymise as they deemed fit. Some participants who had assumably overcome the inhibitions usually associated with sexual harassment shared various experiences of sexual harassment which they had suffered at one stage of life or the other. A participant recounted how a male colleague (student) with whom she had previously shared a platonic relationship had attempted to take advantage of her for his sexual gratification when she paid him a visit at his residence. Some others recounted their experiences in other settings outside the university community. There were then Image Theatre representations of the recounted stories where each circle presented to the entire group.

However, in order not to deviate from the focus of the project, there was the need to establish from students' personal encounters the existence of sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers within the University community. In this regard, a student recounted an anonymised encounter of a final-year female student whose male Long Essay supervisor had propositioned for a sexual relationship which she declined. The supervisor then handed her two options of either sharing his bed with him or paying him a huge amount of money. This real case account, an ongoing crisis faced by the affected student at the time of the intervention, was embedded within fictionally thought-out scenarios. The real case account however served as the spine of the drama sketch which was devised for the performance. The participant's decision to recount this encounter as anonymised was not challenged.

3.4.4. The Devised Story

The drama sketch opens with a female student named Susan who goes to the office of a male lecturer (Dr Makanaki)⁶⁶² to lodge a complaint about the non-inclusion of her score on the results published for one of the courses in the department. Dr Makanaki checks through his records after which he claims that the student performed poorly in the course. The student has no ready access to her examination script and is, therefore, unable to affirm or refute the lecturer's claim. However, the lecturer informs her that her poor score is not cast in iron. In other words, the poor performance notwithstanding, something could still be done, favourably, about her scores to make it 'look up'. There in his office, Dr Makanaki takes sexual advantage of Susan in a manner which exemplifies an organisational-level form of sexual harassment which stipulates 'sleep with me or you fail' after which he alters her score upwardly. When Susan informs Kate and Ene about her excellent performance, they are puzzled over what might have transpired and lament over the unhealthy situation in which students often have to meet lecturers in person to obtain clarity over their results.

662 Makanaki is a fake name which in Nigerian parlance denotes a lecherous man.

The story continues with Dr Labalaba, (the Long Essay Coordinator in the department) allocating Kate (one of the intelligent students) to Dr Makanaki for the supervision of her Long Essay on Dr Makanaki's request. On Kate's first visit to Dr Makanaki's office in his capacity as her supervisor, Dr Makanaki exudes noticeable excitement to Kate's surprise. Dr Makanaki who apparently has no time to waste, moves stealthily towards Kate and begins to caress her arm and hair, a move which Kate immediately rebuffs. Infuriated by Kate's reaction, Dr Makanaki walks her out of his office wondering if she thinks 'good supervision' comes on a platter of gold. A distraught Kate meets two other friends of hers who, on getting to know why she is troubled, narrate similar experiences and how, with a sense of helplessness, they eventually caved in to pressures from male lecturers. According to them, they felt incapacitated before a system in which lecturers appear not to feel the restraint of the legal (or moral) consequences of demanding sexual gratification from students. In their estimation, yielding to the sexual demands of the lecturers appeared to be the only guaranteed way of scaling through the university system without encountering serious academic challenges. They advise Kate to do the 'needful' and move on with her studies.

At this point, Kate recalls Susan's encounter with Dr Makanaki over Susan's missing result and expresses her scepticism over what could have transpired between Susan and Dr Makanaki. Kate and Ene later meet Susan and asked to know what transpired between her (Susan) and Dr Makanaki. After much persuasion, Susan eventually admits to having had forced sex with Dr Makanaki. She advises Kate to acquiesce to Dr Makanaki's demand so as to relieve herself of pressure from him. Kate threatens to an lodge official complaint but Susan warns her against such a 'foolish' move. In Susan's view, not only will Kate not obtain justice, she would have also earned the ire of other lecturers in the department who could then gang up against her.

Susan further suggests, in the alternative, that Kate offers money to Dr Makanaki. At this point, Kate, despite her confidence in her academic capability, is at a loss about what step to take. She declares her willingness to pay her way through but her poor financial state forecloses this option. Ene then suggests that Kate calls Dr Makanaki to plead with him to carry on the supervision without placing any demands on her. When Kate contacts Dr Makanaki through a phone call, he tells her to either pay him cash or get under his sheets. Dr Makanaki insists, 'It is either your body or your money'; this is another instance of organisational-level sexual harassment. The play is nipped off at this climactic moment in order that Kate's dilemma could serve as a take-off point for the audience's intervention.

Critical views on sexual harassment oscillate between two functional terms; whether the action is 'severe' or 'pervasive'. This takes into account whether the action was a

single serious incident or a pattern of less severe, but repeated behaviours.⁶⁶³ It has however been argued that sexual harassment need not be repeated, rather, a single offensive incident is sufficient to constitute harassment.⁶⁶⁴ Also, a single instance of sexual coercion inflicts the same professional and psychological damage as repeated cases.⁶⁶⁵ Thus, Kate's singular encounter with Dr Makanaki is deemed sufficient to provoke adverse psychological and other effects of sexual harassment. This one-time experience leads Kate to seek to change her supervisor thus supporting Frazier Benya's submission that part of the effects of sexual harassment is the resolve by victims to change majors or advisers.⁶⁶⁶ In this instance, Kate's effort to change her supervisor is thwarted by the complicity of Dr Labalaba, the Long Essay Coordinator.

3.4.5. The Intervention

Having concluded the workshop sessions and having also taken other preliminary steps, the day of the performance/intervention finally came. It was 20th February, 2020 and the location of the seminal Legislative Theatre session was the Dance studio of the Performing Arts Department, Adekunle Ajasin, University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria. As noted earlier, the objective was to use the project as a test case of how Legislative Theatre methodology might fare in the advancement of participatory democratic practices in Nigeria.

Before the commencement of the drama presentation, the participating audience (audience members drawn from across the university community)⁶⁶⁷ was made to engage in some Theatre of the Oppressed games. These included 'Good Day',⁶⁶⁸ which is usually employed when the audience at a Forum Theatre is composed mainly of people who are unfamiliar with one another. In this instance where the participants comprised students who, to some degree knew one another, the game was used in view of the unfamiliarity of the audience with the Forum Theatre methodology. Another game used was 'The Cross and The Circle'⁶⁶⁹ which was varied as 'The Circle and Name'. As is traditionally the norm during Theatre of the Oppressed engagements, the games were used to create an atmosphere of friendliness among the participants.

The participants (about 90% of whom were female students) were asked to momentarily envision themselves as lawmakers saddled with the responsibility of proposing

663 Uggen and Blackstone, "Sexual Harassment as a Gendered Expression of Power," 65.

664 M.J. Booker, "Can Sexual Harassment Be Salvaged?," *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, no. 11 (1998): 1173.

665 Benya, "Treating Sexual Harassment as a Violation of Research Integrity," 57.

666 Benya, 57.

667 The university community was notified about the event through various university-based platforms with a caveat that in view of the gender specificity of the project, priority of admittance into the venue will be given to female students. The audience composition was therefore preponderantly (over 90%) female.

668 Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, 85.

669 Boal, 50.

laws against sexual harassment of female students by male lecturers in the University and to write down their proposals. These were collected and handed over to the members of the Metabolising Cell before the commencement of the drama presentation. The Metabolising Cell consisted of the Director of the Legal Unit of the University (male), another member of staff of the Legal Unit (male), the Ag. Director of the Women Studies and Development Centre (female), a lecturer in the Faculty of Law (male), and a fourth-year female student of the Faculty of Law and founder, Coalition for Legal Education and Rights Protection (CLERP).

In the composition of the Metabolising Cell, the expertise of the members, as it would serve the interest of the project, was taken into consideration. Thus, while the lawyers were to bring to bear their professional insight as lawyers, the involvement of the Ag. Director of the Women Studies and Development Centre was deemed crucial in view of the statutory involvement of the Centre with women related concerns and consequently its connection with the focus of the intervention, that is, sexual harassment of female students. The consideration of the expertise of members of the Metabolising Cell produced a gender distribution of three males and two females. This, however, did not seem to have wielded any adverse influence on the task they had to perform. None of the members of the Metabolising Cell, who were all entirely new to the Legislative Theatre methodology, participated in the workshop. They were however properly briefed about the objectives of the intervention, that is, to generate input into the University's regulations for the apprehension of sexual predators among the male lecturers. They were made to understand that their duty was to collate the proposals submitted by the participants and organise them in a way that would easily facilitate the voting process.

During the deliberations which ensued after the presentation, some participants argued that academically weak students often create the setting which encourages sex predators to seek to have sexual engagement with them for the mutual benefit of both parties. The participating audience contended that Susan (the student with the missing result), through her dressing and deportment, portrayed her desire to be propositioned by Dr Makanaki in order to trade sex for marks. Such victim blame theory tends to deny, justify or even defend male sexual aggression against women and postulate that men are only being led on by women.⁶⁷⁰ One of the theories often invoked in the justification of the victim-blame stance is the *just world theory* which

670 Grubb and Turner, "Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming," 445; Christine L. Hackman et al., "Slut-Shaming and Victim Blaming: A Qualitative Investigation of Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Sexual Violence," *Sex Education* 17, no. 6 (2017): 703.

in essence argues that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get.⁶⁷¹ This implies that victims of sexual harassment are justifiably so harassed for failing to take proper precautions thus making themselves an easy target of sexual harassment.⁶⁷² The theory also upholds the perception that sexual harassment happens to women who are 'sluts' or 'flirts'.⁶⁷³ However, this attitudinal disposition has been challenged as it tends to create a dilemma⁶⁷⁴ for women while exonerating the male predators.

Kate's (the protagonist) predicament is further compounded by the Long Essay Coordinator's (Dr Labalaba) complicity. The Coordinator is representative of the University's authority. In a study on why faculty sexual misconduct is prevalent in institutions of higher learning in the USA, Young and Wiley aver that universities and other higher education systems are institutionally designed to support a culture of complicity and complacency with respect to sexual misconduct.⁶⁷⁵ This assertion is pertinent to the Nigerian situation where, as noted earlier, little is known about institutional measures to address the challenge of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities. The importance of these measures is underscored by the fact that without sanctionable laws which expressly categorise sexual harassment as a criminal offence or liable to civil action, checkmating the menace within the Nigerian society might be a difficult task.⁶⁷⁶

As earlier observed, women's responses to sexual harassment fall within a continuum of avoidance, diffusion, negotiation and confrontation. Kate, unable to avoid encounters with Dr Makanaki, her supervisor, and uncertain about the repercussions of making an official report, attempts to diffuse the harassment by pleading with Dr Makanaki to let her off the hook. Dr Makanaki's attempt to draw her into a negotiation to pay in cash fails only due to her dire financial condition. Were Kate to have the financial capability she would most probably have opted to pay her way through.

Cultural requirements of silence often force abused women to suffer and resort to silence and submission as survival skills.⁶⁷⁷ This is exemplified in Kate's mates who describe how they were forced into submission to sexual harassment as the only foresee-

671 Grubb and Turner, "Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming," 444.

672 Hackman et al., "Slut-Shaming and Victim Blaming: A Qualitative Investigation of Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Sexual Violence," 703.

673 Hackman et al., 702.

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675 Sarah L. Young and Kimberly K. Wiley, "Erased: Why Faculty Sexual Misconduct Is Prevalent and How We Can Prevent It," *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 2021, 1.

676 Adetutu D. Aina-Pelemo, M.C. Mehanathan, and Pradeep Kulshrestha, "Sexual Harassment at Workplace: Judicial Impact in Nigeria and India," *Indian Journal of Law and Human Behavior* 4, no. 2 (2018): 209.

677 Chireshe and Chireshe, "Sexual Harassment of Female Students in Three Selected High Schools in Urban Masvingo, Zimbabwe," 94.

able means of remaining in good academic standing. As Chireshe and Chireshe note, females already conditioned by the culture of silence tend to regard sexual harassment as inevitable hence the powerlessness they feel in lodging reports as appropriate.⁶⁷⁸ This attests to the need to devise means of ‘unsilencing’⁶⁷⁹ female students, listen to their voices and take into account their everyday experiences and needs. The Legislative Theatre intervention at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria, afforded the female students of the University the occasion to articulate their experiences and be heard. It marked the first time female students of the University came together on the platform of a theatrical intervention to articulate their experiences of sexual harassment and to proffer solutions. Legislative Theatre could therefore be a veritable means of ‘unsilencing’ the silenced especially as it potentially could provide a legal spine to the liberated voices of the oppressed.

3.4.6. The Outcome

As earlier indicated, I commenced the Legislative Theatre project at the Adekunle Ajasin University presuming the existence of regulations against sexual harassment. I presumed that the project would only uncover any lacuna(e) in the extant regulations on sexual harassment in the university and would thereafter explore the means of strengthening those regulations and ensuring that they are implemented. However, I made a critical discovery about the non-existence of any regulation against sexual harassment in the university. Instead of being categorically named as an offence and thereby clearly stating its legal consequences, sexual harassment is assumed (without being so stated) to be subsumed under ‘misconduct’ in the Rules and Regulations of the University. This - overtly or covertly - creates a window of escape for offenders. As Welsh notes, it is necessary to properly delineate sexual harassment within the legal system⁶⁸⁰ in order to ensure that offenders are prosecuted within the ambit of the law.

After the performance was nipped off at the climactic moment when Kate, the protagonist, finds herself faced with the dilemma of choosing between sharing Dr Makanaki’s bed and gratifying him financially, I took over as the Joker in order to launch the forum into the discussion of the issues raised by the performance thus opening up the space for the participatory involvement of the audience. Being neither fully an actor nor fully a member of the audience, I played an intermediary role between the actors and the participating audience in the analytic discussion of pertinent issues. In view of Howe’s cautionary note about the uncritical equation of forum theatre with democracy and democracy with equal access,⁶⁸¹ I was mindful to ensure that all shades of opinion were equally recognised and accommodated, and that the performance

678 Chireshe and Chireshe, 93.

679 Chireshe and Chireshe, 94.

680 Welsh, “Gender and Sexual Harassment,” 175.

681 Howe, “Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre,” 241.

space was made accessible to every participant who was willing to mount the stage. Also, in my capacity as the Joker, I facilitated the democratic process of voting which produced the Referendum adopted by the participants. Details of the Referendum will be discussed shortly.

Using interventions from spect-actors as a springboard, the participants raised for discussion several issues bordering on sexual harassment in the university. For instance, based on one of the interventions, and bearing in mind the need for concrete evidence in the prosecution of allegations of sexual harassment, the participants were of the opinion that any female student being propositioned against her wish could furtively obtain incontrovertible video evidence against the predator by installing the Background Video Recorder (BVR) application on her smartphone. In this regard, participants were of the view that awareness should be created about the existence of the BVR. This indicates that the students acknowledge the role technology could play in ameliorating the problem of sexual harassment in the University.

The session afforded the participants the opportunity to become more acquainted with the regulations of the university. Specifically, the project made the participants aware that sexual harassment escaped specific mention as an infraction in the university regulations. Rather, it is assumed (without being so stated) to be classified as misconduct. The omission, as the Director of the University's Legal Unit claims, 'is not peculiar to the institution'.⁶⁸² This submission by the Director invariably validates Paul Bello's assertion that little is known about institutional measures to combat the ill of sexual harassment of female students in Nigerian universities.⁶⁸³ According to the Director, the omission is also applicable to the Nigerian laws which make no definite pronouncement on sexual harassment.

The Director further stated that the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPPA, 2015) is incapable of addressing the situation due to the fact that the Act is yet to be adopted as law by the Federal Government of Nigeria and would further need to be adopted by the various states in the federation. Only one state in Nigeria (Lagos State), the Director notes, has specific laws against sexual harassment. The education provided during the interaction validates Howe's position that Legislative Theatre sessions are veritable sites for policy analysis and corroborates my position in which I argue that while working with the consciousness of producing legislation (as Fink insists a Legislative Theatre project must necessarily do) the knowledge of the provi-

682 The Director of the Legal Unit of the University provided these information orally during the discussion which followed after the drama presentation.

683 Bello, "Combating Sexual Harassment in Ivory Tower in Nigeria: Mixed Feelings," 174.

sions of the law which Legislative Theatre sessions affords serves as an indispensable incentive for which to embark on Legislative Theatre interventions.

Having sifted through the submissions by the participants and discarding those considered as not justiciable,⁶⁸⁴ members of the Metabolising Cell selected the proposals deemed justiciable which participants then voted on. The prejudgment exhibited by the members of the Metabolising Cell in predetermining what could or could not be voted on exemplifies the limitations of the Legislative Theatre methodology. It speaks to the challenges of electoral democracy in miniature and to the influence which the members of the Metabolising Cell could wield on the outcome of a Legislative Theatre project. Also, it directs attention to the unwillingness of the ruling class or lawmakers to subject the provisions of extant laws to questioning by the citizens as well as to the bigger challenge which the application Legislative Theatre methodology might have to grapple with in the larger society.

The experimental project at the Adekunle Ajasin University underscored some of the potential benefits of the Legislative Theatre methodology as a tool that could be adopted for the creation of a more robust democratic culture. To begin with, within the perimeters of the course (PFA 401) on which the project was hinged, the Legislative Theatre experiment was made accessible to as many female students as were willing to participate. As noted previously in this dissertation, unfettered participation is a basic prerequisite of democracy. True democracy is unthinkable without the active participation of the members of the democratic body. Also, the forum session was conducted in a manner that ensured the participation of everyone who expressed willingness to contribute to the discussion. Notwithstanding the novelty of the method and its unfamiliarity with the participants, as the Joker I endeavoured to facilitate the session in a way that granted fair recognition and space to every participant.

Also, the session prefigured the bridging of the gap between Nigerian policymakers, represented in this instance by the Legal Unit of the University and the Directorate of Women Studies and Development, and the students who, in this case, represent Nigerian citizens who are directly impacted by the policies and laws promulgated by the lawmakers. The experiment demonstrated the potential that on the platform of Legislative Theatre the gulf between lawmakers and citizens could be bridged. By giving voice to the yearnings of the students, it also underscored a fundamental point about popular sovereignty which is the bedrock of democracy. Thus, it symbolised the restoration of the voice and agency of Nigerian citizens. The ambience created through the methodology for the students to engage in debate over the laws to which

684 An instance of submissions that were deemed to be non-justiciable was the proposal by some participants that male lecturers found guilty of sexually harassing female students should be castrated.

they subscribe prefigured the restoration of the Nigerian people's power. In other words, it was indicative of the reformulation of the source and course of power. The Referendum which the participants produced stating their proposed input into the University's regulatory provisions on sexual harassment bespeaks of a shift in the trajectory of power in favour of the students. This reflects and prefigures the recalibration of the source of power which the Nigerian theatre practitioners could achieve through the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology. This, as I argue, could serve as a boost to the democratic culture in Nigeria.

The Referendum adopted at the end of the voting exercise stated the following core demands: sexual harassment should be recognised and distinctively categorised as an infraction on its own terms instead of being subsumed - or assumed to be subsumed - under 'misconduct'; the University should put in place institutional framework for the detection of cases of sexual harassment in order to make it possible for victims to prove their cases beyond any shade of doubt; lecturers found guilty of the offense should be sacked; and any sacked offender should be handed over to the law enforcement agencies for prosecution.

Although not captured in the Referendum the participants expressed the view that the Nigerian government should mandate institutions and organisations to set up rules and regulations that will serve not only as punitive but more crucially as preventive measures against sexual harassment. They also upheld the notion that institutions should be held vicariously liable for the sexual offences of their employees. The employees should be sufficiently (periodically) orientated to understand the gravity (psychological, social and academic) of sexual harassment of female students and the legal implications thereof.

To the extent that the events of the day (20th February, 2020) are at issue, the project enjoyed the support of the University as attested to by the presence of relevant officials representing various arms of the University and the proposal by the Ag. Director of the Women's Studies and Development Centre for a collaboration between the Centre and the project facilitator to ensure that the Referendum is adopted as part of the University's Regulations. However, it could be said that the institutional framework under which the experimental project was carried out could have aided its successful execution. Therefore, it seems circumspect to assume that the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology in the larger society could prove more challenging. It is also crucial to note that effort to realise the inclusion of the Referendum in the University's Regulations has so far been hampered by the instability of the University's academic calendar. Two major factors are notable in this regard; the global lockdown in 2020 occasioned by COVID-19. The lockdown happened apace with an industrial

action by university teachers which led to the shutting down of activities in Nigerian universities until January, 2021. This was followed, about one year later, by another strike by which lasted from February 14, to October 17, 2022. This goes to confirm my position that in the execution of Legislative Theatre interventions, practitioners should be mindful of a possible delay in the realisation of a policy shift.

The intervention, through the participating students, prefigured the interrogation of Nigeria's seemingly absolute democracy. The Legislative Theatre experiment provided empirical evidence about the potential of the methodology for the advancement of democratic values and culture. More specifically the participants, through the Referendum, questioned the seemingly inalterable nature of the University's regulatory provision on sexual harassment. By that token, the participants steered the regulation in favour of not those who *make* the law but those who *live* the law. Also, it demonstrated Derrida's conceptualisation of play as *passé-partout*, that is, an instrument which facilitates the crossing of territorial borders.⁶⁸⁵ In this case, it facilitated the crossing into the territorial borders of lawmaking. This is the fulcrum of my contemplation of Legislative Theatre as play which I expound on in the next section.

3.5. Theorising Legislative Theatre as Play

Earlier in this dissertation I made a connection between the concept of play and the application of myth by Nigerian dramatists. I argued that the application of myth in the passage of veiled, yet pungent, political messages bespeaks of the 'apparent purposelessness' which Brown links with play. I argued that by adopting what ordinarily seems like a mere historical account with no seeming contemporary relevance, and therefore meant apparently only for entertainment purposes, the dramatists drove home critical political messages. However, whereas an interface exists between myth and play in the Nigerian political theatre, such interplay is lacking in the Tfd. This, perhaps, further buttresses my point that Nigerian Tfd could be classified as 'puppet' or 'police' theatre as it is bereft of the ingredients that ruffle the social structure of the society. In this section of the dissertation, I intend to fully develop my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play.

In theorising Legislative Theatre as play, I note first the existence of a myriad of definitions, theories and perspectives on the concept of play.⁶⁸⁶ To begin with, play is regarded as one of the instinctual inclinations of man. Theoretically located within

685 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 63.

686 F. David Lancy, "Play in Species Adaptation," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 9 (1980): 471.

aesthetics, play is also often viewed from biological, cultural or social perspectives.⁶⁸⁷ For instance, in a study of the connection of the body, brain and culture, Victor Turner discourses the lateralisation of the cerebral hemispheres and the division of control functions between the left and right hemispheres.⁶⁸⁸ Turner avers that while, among other functions, the left hemisphere controls the production of speech and linear analytic thought and also processes information sequentially, the functions of the right hemisphere include recognising spatial and tonal perception and also recognising patterns including those constituting emotion and other states in the internal milieu. Moving away from the binary distinction of the two hemispheres regarding their functions, Turner avers that specific acts involve complementary shifts between the functions of the hemispheres and claims that play does not fit anywhere in particular.⁶⁸⁹ According to Turner, play, a joker (or wild card) in the neuroanthropological act, is both transient and recalcitrant to localisation, placement or fixation.⁶⁹⁰ Thus from the biological viewpoint Turner underscores the freedom inherent in play.

Departing from the biological underpinning of play, I note in particular two major conceptualisations of the value of play. While some scholars (Johan Huizinga, Bernard Suits and Jean Piaget, for instance) espouse the view that play has no value outside the activity, others (Lev S. Vygotsky and Patrick Bateson among others) argue that play has utility beyond itself. To begin with, Huizinga defines play partly as an activity which stands quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', connected with no material interest and by which no profit can be gained.⁶⁹¹ Huizinga denotes play as a social construction which, in his view, is present everywhere. While, on the one hand, Huizinga deems as problematic the neat demarcation between 'the serious' and 'the non-serious' in the determination of the features of play, on the other hand, however, his stance tilts in favour of the view that play could rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leaves seriousness far beneath.⁶⁹² To reiterate, play, in Huizinga's estimation, is a voluntary, disinterested activity engaged in for the sake of the accruing fun and pleasure which yields no practical or material interest.⁶⁹³ In sum, to Huizinga, play is useful only within its own confines.

Huizinga notes various other critical views which have been advanced about the origin and fundamentals of play which include that play is premised on the discharge of superabundant vital energy, the satisfaction of imitative instinct, the need for relaxation,

687 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 2.

688 Victor Turner, "Body, Brain and Culture," *Performing Arts Journal* 10, no. 2 (1986): 26.

689 Turner, 26.

690 Turner, 30.

691 J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 4.

692 Huizinga, 8.

693 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 12.

as wish-fulfilment and as a fiction designed to keep up the feeling of personal value.⁶⁹⁴ Huizinga worries that these views about play are hinged on the assumption that play must serve other purposes which are *not* play and argues that such conceptions of play miss the crucial point of the *fun* inherent in play. In other words, Huizinga's position favours the autotelicity of play.

Bernard Suits also dwells on the autotelic nature of play but argues that although necessary, autotelicity alone is not sufficient in the determination of what qualifies as play. According to Suits, while all play may be categorised as autotelic activity, not all autotelic activities fit into the category of play. Suits proceeds to define play as 'a temporary reallocation to autotelic activities of resources primarily committed to instrumental purposes'.⁶⁹⁵ To Suits, play occurs when there is an inversion in which resources that are otherwise reserved for purposive use are applied in a manner that has a purpose *in* and not *apart* from itself.

Jean Piaget's conceptualisation of the value of play is analogous to those of Huizinga and Suits. With regard to the satisfaction derivable from play Piaget submits that the pleasure of the phenomenon is contained within the activity itself.⁶⁹⁶ In Piaget's view, play is an activity directed at itself which goals are immersed within itself. Gary Izzo also toes the same path when he asserts that the only real motive for which the player engages in play seems to be the sheer enjoyment derivable from it.⁶⁹⁷ In summary, therefore, Huizinga, Suits, Piaget and Izzo, while retaining their individually nuanced conceptualisations on play seem to be unanimous on its autotelicity.

Conversely, other scholars see merit in play beyond the confines of the phenomenon itself. Les S. Vygotsky for instance draws a correlation between play and the development of the individual. In his analysis of the impact of play in the development of the child, Vygotsky suggests that play has emancipative qualities that free a child from situational constraints.⁶⁹⁸ Vygotsky's submission is evidently in relation to children's play. However, the utility of play might not only be associated with children. According to Thomas Henricks, 'in play, people envision and enact the possibilities of living in their societies; and for that reason, play is an important agency of social and cultural change'.⁶⁹⁹ Thus, Henricks's submission clearly suggests that play has utility beyond the (developmental) needs of children.

694 Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, 2.

695 Bernard Suits, "Words on Play," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 4, no. 1 (1977): 124.

696 Jean Piaget (1962) 92 cited in Lasse Juel Larsen, "Play and Space - Towards a Formal Definition of Play," *International Journal of Play* 4, no. 2 (2015): 180.

697 Gary Izzo, *The Art of Play: The New Genre of Interactive Theatre* (Portsmouth (N.H): Heinemann, 1997), 8.

698 L.S. Vygotsky (1978) 99 cited in Larsen, "Play and Space - Towards a Formal Definition of Play," 181.

699 Henricks, "Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play," 194.

Also, Bateson states that play is a mechanism for generating novel solutions.⁷⁰⁰ Specifically, Bateson argues in favour of a connection between play, on the one hand, and creativity and innovativeness in humans, on the other hand. To instantiate his claims, Bateson associates the musical genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and the scientific discoveries of Alexander Fleming and Richard Feynman with a playful disposition to their musical and scientific enterprise which spurred their creativity and ingenuity.⁷⁰¹ Beyond these individual cases, Bateson further reports a survey involving 1536 persons which, according to him, established a significantly massive correlation between ‘Acting playfully’ and ‘Coming up with new ideas’.⁷⁰² Also, the ability of humans to think about things that are not actually present, to be inventive and to think of new possibilities have all been linked with the innate disposition and capability of humans to play.⁷⁰³

To summarise, while some scholars uphold the autotelic argument about play, viewing it as a concept which has no utility beyond itself, others argue that play is both serious and useful beyond its borders. Thus, in my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play, I take into account the utilitarian qualities which Vygotsky, Henricks and Bateson, among others, have associated with play. I see Legislative Theatre as a *playfully serious* engagement which utility transcends the act itself. My conceptualisation of Legislative Theatre as a *playfully serious* engagement resonates with Peter Gray’s position that play is ‘serious, yet not serious’; trivial, yet profound...real, (yet) it takes place in the fantasy world; ...childish, yet it underlies many of the greatest achievements of adults’.⁷⁰⁴ This seeming ambivalence in Gray’s placement of play reinforces Turner’s argument about the transience and recalcitrance of play to localisation or fixation in the cerebral hemispheric division. Thus, my conceptualisation of Legislative Theatre as play countenances the fact that it moves from being a theatrical performance, a ‘play’ by a class of citizens who are usually not associated with lawmaking, to potentially engendering a binding law. Thus, it exhibits the freedom which Turner associates with play.

Also, in his conceptualisation of play Hans-Georg Gadamer underscores a special relation between play, on the one hand, and what is serious, on the other hand. Drawing inference from Aristotle who avers that we play for the purpose of (bodily) recreation, Gadamer submits that play contains its own, even sacred, seriousness.⁷⁰⁵ Gadamer’s views on the ‘seriousness’ of play is not exteriorised but delimited within the world of play itself. To Gadamer, seriousness in play is necessary to make the play wholly

700 Patrick Bateson, “Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation,” *Animal Behavior and Cognition* 1, no. 2 (2014): 104.

701 Bateson, 108.

702 Bateson, 109.

703 Peter Gray, “What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?,” *Topics Language Disorders* 37, no. 3 (2017): 218.

704 Gray, 217.

705 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Rev (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 102.

play. In other words, Gadamer sees seriousness as a requisite element for play which, howbeit, does not relate to any utility beyond the confines of the activity. To him, play exists where there are no subjects who are behaving ‘playfully’.⁷⁰⁶ Thus, Gadamer submits that anyone who engages in, but denies, play of its seriousness is a spoilsport.⁷⁰⁷

Put simply, Gadamer’s conception of seriousness in play is in relation to the disposition towards the act. It is a form of seriousness which has no material value outside the act itself. This differs from my conceptualisation of seriousness in play which points to its utility beyond the borders of the play world. My conceptualisation of the seriousness of play is in line with the utilitarian worth of play beyond itself as attested to, as I have noted above, by Vygotsky and Bateson, among others.

To proceed in my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play, I will hence examine some features which, as I argue, are common to both concepts. According to Gray, humans are species that are able to think of things that are not actually present. In his view, therein lies ‘the foundation of our inventiveness, our ability to think of new possibilities, to create hypotheses, to reason deductively, or even to think about tomorrow.’⁷⁰⁸ Gray associates these aptitudes to human play. Also, Henricks argues that play is an important agency for social and cultural change being that through play the players envision new possibilities of living in their societies.⁷⁰⁹ Similarly, Legislative Theatre is a process through which citizens exercise their aptitude or capacity for exploring new possibilities. In this regard, new possibilities in the form of new laws (and the review of extant laws) are explored. Also, the creation of new laws or reviews of extant ones represent, in effect, a way of articulating new possibilities for the future.

Gray declares that participation in play is *voluntary*. According to him, no one is obligated to participate in play. In other words, players not only choose *to* play but they also choose *what* and *how* to play.⁷¹⁰ This is relatable to Legislative Theatre in which participation is voluntary. This freedom of choice regarding participation is however not peculiar to Legislative Theatre being, as it is, a common feature of other forms of participatory theatre. With specific reference, in this case, to the Legislative Theatre processes participants exercise their liberty on how to participate as well as the laws to propose. Participants also have the freedom to quit when they so decide. The freedom to quit playing, according to Gray, makes play democratic.⁷¹¹ Gray’s argument that the foundation of human inventiveness and ability to think of new possibilities lie in

706 Gadamer, 103.

707 Gadamer, 103.

708 Gray, “What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?,” 218.

709 Henricks, “Play as Self-Realization: Toward a General Theory of Play,” 194.

710 Gray, “What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?,” 220.

711 Gray, 220.

man's ability to play suggests that the ability to invent is not the exclusive preserve of a special class of human beings. Gray's argument could be summarised thus; anyone who can play can invent. All humans can play therefore all humans have the innate capacity to invent. This resonates with Kelly Howe's stance which states that expertise in making input into laws in the Legislative Theatre is not always 'detached'. Rather, it is primarily a consequence of 'embodied' experience.⁷¹² In other words, Howe argues that 'common' people, by reason of their embodied experiences, are well positioned to make needed and relevant input into laws.

Play, according to Bateson, has features that make it especially suitable for finding the best way forward in a world of conflicting demands. Bateson stresses that in deliberately moving away from what might appear to be the 'final resting point',⁷¹³ there is the possibility of arriving at something better. Legislative Theatre is representative of a deliberate move away from *what* and *how* laws are made thereby moving away from what might appear as the 'final resting point' in the provisions of the law. Bateson argues further that play fulfils a crucial probing role which makes possible the escape from false end-points or 'local optima'.⁷¹⁴ Practically speaking, this means that the activities involved in play create room for the discovery of better opportunities than those arrived at without play. I argue in this regard that Legislative Theatre is that form of play used in interrogating 'false end-points'; the false veneer of the inalterability of laws and of the category of persons who can make laws. Bateson's argument on the possibility of arriving at something better through play resonates with Gianpaolo Baiocchi's assertion that Legislative Theatre processes make possible the birthing of 'indisputably better legislation'.⁷¹⁵

Lasse Larsen notes the view among Scandinavian scholars which 'sees play as the dynamo for social development in which understanding of oneself and others is of primary concern'.⁷¹⁶ Part of the fundamental purposes of Legislative Theatre is the use of theatrical performances to facilitate an understanding of how the provisions of some laws (or the absence thereof) impact on the citizens. Thus, through the performances, the conventional makers of laws are potentially made to understand themselves and their actions in relation to how the laws they enact impact on the citizens and therefore made to share the concerns of those for whom they institute the laws. Carlos Menchaca's (Council Member, New York, City) submission after participating in a Legislative Theatre session under the auspices of Theatre of the Oppressed, New York City, attests to this. According to Menchaca, 'Legislative Theatre offers a practical

712 Howe, "Embodied Think Tanks: Practicing Citizenship through Legislative Theatre," 240.

713 Bateson, "Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation," 104.

714 Bateson, 104.

715 Baiocchi, "Performing Democracy in the Streets: Participatory Budgeting and Legislative Theatre in Brazil," 83.

716 Larsen, "Play and Space - Towards a Formal Definition of Play," 182.

experience for both the constituent participants and the elected or administrative officials present... We need to continue to increase the number of opportunities for elected officials, agency personnel, and City staff members to participate directly in Legislative Theatre'.⁷¹⁷

My theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play tends, however, to push against the boundaries of some of the theories on play. To instantiate, Gray contends that although play often has goals, the goals, according to him, are experienced as part and parcel of the activity, not as the primary reason for the activity.⁷¹⁸ To the extent that play has goals, my conceptualisation agrees with Gray's. Legislative Theatre operates with goals. However, contrary to Gray's position Legislative Theatre, as I argue, is a play which has its goal(s) as its primary reason; the goal of incorporating the citizens into the process of lawmaking and possibly creating more people-oriented laws. The goals serve as the primary reason for which Legislative Theatre processes are embarked upon. Gray further contends that play is the ideal context for practicing new skills or trying out new ways of doing things precisely, as he avers, considering that 'play has no real-world consequence'.⁷¹⁹ Gray's submission is arguably ambivalent in that it begs the question about the need for practicing new skills if no modicum of real-world value whatsoever could be attached to it. I argue that Legislative Theatre as play has tangible real-world value(s) attached to it.

Gray's stance that goals are not the primary reason for engaging in the play activity echoes Scott Eberle's submission that players do not 'aggressively' seek out some other purpose to play. According to Eberle, trying to twist play to an end vitiates it, making it less and less like play. Eberle further contends that it is hard to imagine as play an 'overly purposeful'⁷²⁰ activity. In the case of Legislative Theatre there is an envisaged end, a goal. However, whether the journey to the goal could be termed 'aggressive' or 'overly purposeful' is arguably subjective.

Therefore, Legislative Theatre, as I posit, is a politico-theatrical play with the goal of effectuating tangible real-world outcomes. Being fully a political activist theatre, its transience and recalcitrance to localisation or fixation makes it accommodative of elements of a parliamentary session in which there is robust debate on policy matters, and voting on proposed legislative positions. It is a form of play employed in exploring new opportunities and activating creativity and innovativeness in fashioning new

717 Kelly-Golfman, "Watch, Act, Vote: The Impact of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC Legislative Theatre on New York City Policy and Civic Engagement," 14.

718 Gray, "What Exactly Is Play, and Why Is It Such a Powerful Vehicle for Learning?," 221.

719 Gray, 221.

720 Scott G. Eberle, "The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and Definition of Play," *Journal of Play* 6, no. 2 (2014): 215.

laws. It enables citizens living under a democracy to envision and possibly realise new opportunities of living in societies through the creation of people-oriented laws thus becoming a necessary agency for change in social and democratic culture through more robust democratic citizenship participation.

As a form of play, Legislative Theatre is not discriminatory with respect to the class or calibre of participants it accommodates. Rather it acknowledges and places worth on the input of every participant. As play, Legislative Theatre is a tool for political activism especially suitable for finding the best laws in a world where there are conflicting interests and where lawmaking has been the exclusive preserve of the 'powerful'. Legislative Theatre is a deliberate move away from *what* and *how* laws have usually been made. Legislative Theatre is a type of play which serves as an instrument of political activism aimed at interrogating the false end-points or the seeming inalterability of (some) laws, and of the category of persons empowered to make laws. Legislative Theatre is beneficial for social development. It creates room for empathic identification with the existential realities of those who live under the weight of the law by those who traditionally make the laws. Legislative Theatre seeks to exploit such opportunities to device laws in favour of those usually on the wrong end of the effects of laws. It is a politico-theatrical play which primarily sets out to achieve goals that ultimately have tangible real-world values and consequences for citizens living under a democracy.

A feature of play which facilitates its foray into confines beyond itself is role-playing. Play shares this crucial feature with theatre, hence its relevance to Legislative Theatre. Zimna is deliberate in linking this feature of play to contemporary participatory practices and describes role-playing games as 'collaborative and interactive storytelling' in which viewers, who are turned into active participants, invariably become the 'artists' playmates'.⁷²¹ Zimna asserts that as a metaphor for participatory artistic projects, role-playing games suggest attempts to experience possibilities.⁷²² Thus, I argue that as play Legislative Theatre sessions afford actors and spect-actors - or playmates – the space to collaboratively create and experience other possibilities. A Joker's invitation to a spect-actor to mount the stage and play alongside the actors during a Legislative Theatre session is illustrative of the assertion that 'at play we may even become both spectator and actor',⁷²³ thereby granting both parties the opportunity of creating a new and potentially better reality. Thus, on the platform of Legislative Theatre citizens appropriate the freedom provisioned in/by play to articulate demands which effects go beyond the boundaries of play.

721 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 100–101.

722 Zimna, 101.

723 Eberle, "The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and Definition of Play," 214.

A noteworthy characteristic of most African cultural performances, according to Kennedy Chinyowa, is how it expresses itself *in* and *as* play.⁷²⁴ Chinyowa regards play as an aesthetic that is being applied in the execution of the development initiatives being driven by the African Theatre for Development (TfD).⁷²⁵ As already proposed in this research, given the spread of TfD in Nigeria, I deem the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by TfD practitioners in Nigeria as both expedient and exigent. I argue in this regard that Legislative Theatre will help to enhance the effect of TfD. Chinyowa's argument about the place of play in African TfD reinforces my proposal on the expediency of the adoption of Legislative Theatre methodology along with the Nigerian TfD praxis.

Play means orientation towards a process, experimenting, (and) stepping into different 'realities'.⁷²⁶ Legislative Theatre as a process tests the possibility of a different approach to lawmaking. By assuming the role of lawmakers, participants step into the reality that lawmaking could, putatively, not be the exclusive preserve, neither should laws reflect the desire, of only the 'powerful'.⁷²⁷ This was exemplified when, during the intervention at Adekunle Ajasin University the participants were requested to momentarily assume the role of lawmakers and propose laws on sexual harassment in the University. Thus, the participants envisioned and experimented with creating a different reality not only for themselves but for the entire population of female students within the University. The different reality created by the participants could be made to endure through statutory ratification.

Although Huizinga belongs to the autotelic school of play, his concept of 'magical circle' is of importance in my conceptualisation of play. According to Huizinga, play operates within a 'magical circle' which is hallowed and within which special rules apply. In effect, the 'magical circle' is a metaphorical space within which hitherto unimagined possibilities are explored. Legislative Theatre represents a form of Huizinga's 'magical circle'. Play possesses the quality of freedom and non-obligation which distinguishes it from the 'natural process' or perceivable reality. To play, therefore, is to step out of 'ordinary' or 'real life' and enter into the 'only pretending' mode of behaviour.⁷²⁸ From this 'only pretending' world possibilities emerge. The participants at the intervention who were drawn into that 'only pretending' world of play emerged from that world with regulatory positions on sexual harassment which have the potential

724 Kennedy C. Chinyowa, "Manifestations of Play as Aesthetic in African Theatre for Development" (Griffith University, 2005), 19.

725 Chinyowa, 20.

726 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 1.

727 Boal, *Legislative Theatre: Using Performance to Make Politics*, 16.

728 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 12.

to exert influence on the lived experiences of the female students thereby attesting to the connection, as Randolph Feezell asserts, between play and a good human life.⁷²⁹

Also, drawing from Zimna's analogy of play as a frame, Legislative Theatre could be likened to that frame which does not possess any content of its own but changes the meaning of what it frames; it changes the contours of a situation presented in a drama by seeking a resolution of the protagonist's predicament. As instantiated by the intervention at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Legislative Theatre changed the contours of Kate's experience from a helpless, oppressed supervisee to (potentially and metaphorically speaking) someone legally equipped through the Referendum to seek legal sanctions against her oppressor, the supervisor.

As I indicated previously, Legislative Theatre could also be related to Derrida's image of play as *passé-partout*, that is, a passport which permits entry into a territory. Thus, Legislative Theatre, as play, allows participants entry into the terrain of lawmaking; a terrain which is otherwise not accessible to them. This was exemplified when, during the intervention, the participants took on themselves the garb of lawmaking by proposing, voting and adopting the Referendum thus producing, putatively, a legal document against sexual harassment of female students in Adekunle Ajasin University.

Legislative Theatre activates the possibility of seeing something 'as something else'.⁷³⁰ In other words, it envisions another reality. By re-configuring the spring of power (not from the centre but from the periphery), Legislative Theatre challenges the notion or practice which makes lawmaking the exclusive prerogative of the perceived 'powerful'. Conceptualised as play Legislative Theatre links - even as it also departs from - the opposites⁷³¹ of what has been, which is unacceptable, with what could be, which is both desirable and achievable through legislation. With reference to the intervention, Legislative Theatre struck a connection between the opposites of the non-existence of regulatory provisions on sexual harassment and the inclusion of sanctions against sexual harassment of female students in the University's Regulations through the Referendum.

Thus, gaining entrance into the world of play via the platform of Legislative Theatre the participants, having moved beyond the autotelicity of play, emerged from the play world with an instrument putatively potent to alter the narrative of the sexual harassment of female students in the University. The participants in the AAUA Legislative Theatre intervention instantiated Boal's argument that lawmaking should not be the

729 Randolph Feezell, "A Pluralist Conception of Play," in *The Philosophy of Play*, ed. Emily Ryall, Wendy Russell, and Malcolm MacLean (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2014), 29.

730 Zimna, *Time to Play: Action and Interaction in Contemporary Art*, 69.

731 Zimna, 63.

exclusive prerogative of only a section of society. By producing a legal position potentially capable of birthing justice for every sexually oppressed female student in the university the participants demonstrated the inherent potential of Legislative Theatre as a political instrument for democratic participation and a means to ensure justice for female students within the university community. The experimental project, as I noted previously, exemplified the bridging of the gap between policymakers and the citizens, and the right of the citizens to interrogate the provisions of the law.

3.6. Conclusion

The core preoccupation of this chapter has been to exemplify the possibility of a type of theatrical enterprise in which citizens fulfil part of their citizenship role through their involvement in the political processes of lawmaking. The chapter has demonstrated a move away from the kinds of theatre discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. From the theatre studied in Chapter 1, in which citizens could only register their protests against detestable laws through the playwrights, to the theatre discussed in Chapter 2 which is a demonstration of what I describe as the loss of the citizens' political agency, the type of theatre under focus in this chapter has shown the possibility of the regaining of political agency by the citizens. In the first part of the chapter, I discussed the possibilities using Augusto Boal's seminal example in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil along with other instances in Canada, Afghanistan and USA, respectively. In the second part of the chapter, I demonstrated the possibilities using my practice-informed research - a Legislative Theatre experiment on sexual harassment at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria.

The types of theatre discoursed in the various chapters make clear the crucial role practitioners play (or could play) in realising the utility of theatre in society. The discourse in Chapter 1 exemplified a theatre in which practitioners apprehended the need to identify with the yearnings of the citizens and to employ their art in fighting the cause of the citizens. The chapter demonstrated this concern with specific reference to laws and policies which were deemed insufferable. In the theatre under focus in Chapter 2, the role of theatre practitioners shifted, as I argue, in favour of the government thus subtly but definitely relegating the voice of the citizens to the background. With the theatre in Chapter 3, the practitioners exemplify not necessarily working *for* but working *with* the citizens in the interest of democratic values.

This chapter has also been a narrative of my personal incursion into the world of Legislative Theatre. In that regard, I argued for the expediency of the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by Nigerian TfD practitioners bearing in mind the

existing spread of the latter in the Nigerian theatre space. I also argued that Legislative Theatre could serve as a platform for the deepening of democratic culture. I recounted the processes and objectives of my Legislative Theatre intervention at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria as a test case of my hypothesis. That experiment, as I argue, putatively challenged the seeming inalterability of the University's regulatory provisions on sexual harassment. The students who participated in the laboratory project and made proposals on the kind of justice that they want to extract against lecturers who sexually harass female students signified the potential exercise of political agency by Nigerian citizens as could be facilitated by Nigerian theatre practitioners on the platform of Legislative Theatre. The laboratory project illustrated the bridging of the gap between Nigerian citizens and their elected representatives, and prefigured the restoration of political agency to citizens under a democratic Nigeria.

Crucially, I have in this Chapter also articulated my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play. I posit that Legislative Theatre is a politico-theatrical tool which, like Derrida's *passé-partout*, facilitates the navigation of the interstice between play as an autotelic activity which has value *in* and not *apart* from itself, and play as a serious engagement which has real-world impact. I argue that Legislative Theatre as play is crucial as an agent of change in the social, political and democratic culture of a people. I contend that for Legislative Theatre to play these crucial roles, the decisive and deliberate involvement of theatre practitioners is a fundamental necessity.

As this dissertation has established, Nigerian theatre practitioners were actively involved in the political ferment that led to the end of both British colonial rule and military dictatorship in Nigeria. It is therefore expedient that the practitioners should appropriate the Legislative Theatre (a political activist theatre) in collaboration with citizens in exploring ways of enhancing participatory democratic culture through the formation of laws. With this tool, practitioners could work with citizens in discovering the best laws in a world of conflicting interests and where lawmaking has been the exclusive preserve of the 'powerful'. As previously noted, the utility of theatre remains latent until stirred by theatre practitioners.

4

Chapter 4

**Conclusion: Making a Case for the
Practitioners' Strategic Positionality**

This dissertation set out with a two-pronged aim: to determine the extent of the involvement of Nigerian theatre practitioners in participatory democratic process in Nigeria through the interrogation of laws from the era of British colonial rule to the end of military dictatorship and the (re)installation of democratic rule in 1999. Also, looking ahead, to propose what form the participation of Nigerian theatre practitioners in Nigeria's democracy might take in the future. Based on the qualitative analyses of both primary and secondary texts applied in addressing the first part of the research question, *the dissertation determined that Nigerian theatre practitioners and playwrights played a significant role in Nigeria's participatory democratic process within the period under study.* The application of the methodology made evident the use of the theatre as a tool for stirring up social and political change. With specific focus on the interplay between theatre and law, the dissertation established a vital connection between the practice of theatre and the interrogation of unjust laws and policies from the period of British domination over Nigeria to the end of military dictatorship in 1999. *The dissertation found that during the period represented by the first arm of the research question (that is, from the 1940s to 1999), Nigerian theatre practitioners employed their theatrical expertise in critiquing the impact of repressive laws on citizens.* The practitioners apprehended the impact of laws on the lived realities of the citizens and playfully deployed their art in agitating against laws which they deemed repressive. By doing so, the practitioners established themselves both as the citizens' voice of protest against the oppressive tendencies of the Establishment and as political activists engaged in the fight for the return of democratic governance in Nigeria.

In order to make necessary connection between the historical period studied under the first arm of the main research question and the role of the theatre practitioners in the future of Nigeria's democracy envisaged by the second arm of the research question, the dissertation found it expedient to further study Nigerian theatre in the post-1999 period. The study of the post-1999 Nigerian theatre displayed an observable detachment from Nigeria's contemporary political happenings. *The dissertation noted that instead of a robust engagement with participatory democratic process in Nigeria, Tfd has been used as an apparatus of governance thereby robbing it of the ability to substantially adhere to core objectives and values upon which it was founded.* The ideology upon which Tfd was established gives it credit as a form which engenders development and which is committed to democratic fair-dealing thus capable of aiding the enculturation of democracy in host communities. In this regard, the dissertation probed, essentially, how the tenets of democracy are reflected in the practice of Tfd in Nigeria. Through an in-depth analysis of documented Tfd interventions, *the dissertation noted an incongruence between the advertised objectives of Tfd and observable results as reflected in its practice in Nigeria.* The

dissertation noted the theoretical unity between development and democracy, on the one hand, and TfD, on the other hand, against their practical split.

The second arm of the main research question represents a decisive attempt to instigate the citizens' political agency and build democratic values thereby ameliorating the gaps inherent in the implementation of the TfD methodology. To this end, the dissertation deemed it appropriate to propose the adoption of Augusto Boal's Legislative Theatre methodology by TfD practitioners already steeped in participatory theatre and other practitioners who might be interested in exploring the methodology. The choice of this methodology was based on the qualitative analysis of relevant scholarly literature. This was further tested through the practice-informed research which I conducted. Through the adoption of the stated methodological steps, I hypothesised that the application of the Legislative Theatre methodology could serve as a veritable means of lessening the deficiencies in TfD praxis. This is hinged on the fundamental correlation between democracy and development, on the one hand, and, democracy and law, on the other hand. Laws are at the core of any democratic union and the level of input made into it by members of the democratic body is a fair indication of the health of the democracy. Also, it is hard to imagine any meaningful development without the committed participation of members of a given community. Therefore, I advocate, fundamentally, that irrespective of the mode of theatrical output Nigerian theatre practitioners should realign themselves appreciably with the socio-political and democratic cause of the citizens. Furthermore, my proposition for the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology by TfD practitioners is premised on the recognition of the correlation which fundamentally connects democracy, law and development. Legislative Theatre which is being recommended in this dissertation for adoption by Nigerian practitioners of TfD, in particular, is, *inter alia*, a potential theatrical valve through which citizens could express their innermost yearnings about the laws under which they live. The practice-informed research showed a noteworthy indication of the benefits of the Legislative Theatre methodology in galvanising civic participation in policy matters. Also, personal stories of participants upon which Legislative Theatre drama sketches are built make the methodology more presentational than representational. This is capable of engendering more positively impactful legislations. Such deliberate and decisive civic participation, as I have observed, is fundamental to development.

At the core of this research is the notion that although the place of theatre in enhancing democratic values has been well recognised, theatre, as a concept, cannot fulfil this role without the deliberate positionality of theatre practitioners. The study was therefore intended to situate the role Nigerian theatre practitioners could play in strengthening Nigeria's democracy. For proper contextualisation of my proposal

on the role of theatre practitioners in Nigeria's democracy, I found it expedient to commence by conducting a historical survey of the previous role of Nigerian theatre practitioners in Nigeria's political evolution. I conducted the survey through the lens of political theatre. I adopted this approach given that I deemed it a veritable means of ascertaining the involvement of Nigerian theatre practitioners in Nigeria's participatory democracy with particular reference to how theatre practitioners interrogated Nigerian laws on the stage. I reasoned that determining the nature of the past role of the practitioners in participatory democratic practices, regardless of its tangentiality, would serve as a useful departure point in proposing what their role should be under Nigeria's current democratic enterprise.

I sought to discover the nexus between laws and policies, on the one hand, and the existential realities of Nigerian citizens as reflected on the Nigerian stage, on the other hand. I approached this with the hypothetical assumption that Nigerian theatre practitioners, through the application of the genre of political theatre, often deployed their art in protesting against unjust laws in the Nigerian polity in favour of the citizens. I further hypothesised that the interrogation of the laws served as a means through which the practitioners participated in the struggle for the return of Nigeria to democratic rule. The study of the selected works of notable Nigerian theatre practitioners confirmed my hypothetical assumptions. The study proved that the practitioners were unsparing in their condemnation of repressive laws and reckoned with their theatrical enterprise as a way of engaging in the struggle for the liberation of Nigeria from both British domination and military dictatorship. This often earned the practitioners the ire of, and subjugation by, the Establishment. The methodology adopted in this regard (that is, an analysis of both primary and secondary texts) proved fruitful showing explicitly that Nigerian theatre practitioners did consider both British colonial rule and military dictatorship as an aberration. The application of the methodology also enabled me to validate the hypothesis that the practitioners specifically interrogated oppressive laws enacted by various governments and used this means in the fight to restore the rule of the people (i.e. democracy) in Nigeria.

I also sought to find out the steps Nigerian theatre practitioners could take to meaningfully participate in strengthening Nigeria's current democratic culture. In this regard, I conjectured that through the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology the practitioners could play significant role in acculturating democratic practices in Nigeria. My conjecture was based on the documented impact of the methodology as contained in available academic sources. The sources provided evidence of the productive interface between policy making (and policy makers) and the citizens and how that interface resulted in corporeal policy education and political participation for the citizens and, in many cases, to policy shift in favour of the citizens. To test this

hypothetical postulation, I executed an experimental Legislative Theatre project. This was viewed as the dependable way to evaluate the feasibility and appropriateness of the adoption of the Legislative Theatre methodology in Nigeria.

Bearing in mind the gulf which often exists between lawmakers and their constituents, the experiment executed in the course of this research demonstrated that the Legislative Theatre methodology is potentially beneficial in the building of democratic culture and in the incorporation of the citizens into participatory democratic processes. ***The experiment also exemplified the significant utility of the tool in facilitating productive interaction between policy makers and the citizens who are the direct recipients of the effects of the policies.*** The experiment also proved that Legislative Theatre sessions are appropriate occasions for the enhancement of the civic participation of citizens. The sessions are equally useful for the policy education of participants and for the interrogation of the provisions of extant laws. ***It was proven that through Legislative Theatre sessions citizens could learn about the lacuna(e) which exists in extant laws.***

The experiment also provided considerable proof in favour of the hypothetical assumption that ***Legislative Theatre could create the opportunity for Nigerian citizens to be incorporated into the lawmaking processes in a democratic setting.*** In spite of the novelty of the Legislative Theatre methodology within the Nigerian theatre sphere, which expectedly placed inhibitions on the participants, the experiment sufficiently illustrated the willingness of the citizens to offer input and become part of the processes that could produce the laws that govern and determine the socio-political as well as economic atmosphere under which they live. However, in view of the fact that some of the proposals from participants were deemed non justiciable, the experiment also raised concerns about how certain provisions of extant laws could constitute a hindrance to the realisation of the legislative inputs by citizens and the impact that members of the Metabolising Cell are capable of exerting on the Legislative Theatre process. This reveals a challenge which practitioners need to be mindful of and requires that in the adoption of the methodology, practitioners should devise means to further ensure the enhanced agency of the citizens over the process.

A crucial part of my concern in this dissertation, as reflected in the title; 'Let's *Make the Law Because We Live the Law: New Perspectives on the Role of Political Theatre in Nigeria*' is a focus on how the positionality of Nigerian theatre practitioners impacted – and could impact -on the Nigerian polity. Thus, the dissertation is concerned with charting a new course for the involvement of Nigerian theatre practitioners in participatory democracy in Nigeria. In essence, each chapter of the dissertation presents a peculiarly nuanced role which Nigerian theatre practitioners played or could play

within the Nigerian polity. The dissertation commenced by discussing how Nigerian theatre practitioners plied their trade in the interest of the citizens. The practitioners identified with the concerns and agitations of Nigerians by speaking on behalf of the citizens against perceived repressive laws. In other words, the positionality of the practitioners was in tandem with the aspirations and agitations of the citizens. The dramatic outputs of the practitioners were, in essence, the voice of the citizens who were affected by the unjust laws of the government. Underlining the interest of the theatre practitioners was a desire to see a democratic Nigeria free from insensitivity to the plight of the people as it featured under British colonial rule and military dictatorship. In this regard, Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 was (hastily) celebrated as a consummation of that desire.

The role of Nigerian theatre practitioners of TfD differ significantly from the role played by playwrights in the political theatre under colonialism and military rule. While under the Nigerian political theatre of between the 1940s and 1999 the role of the playwrights favoured the interests of the citizens against the State, the developmentalist imperatives of TfD resulted in a collaboration between the practitioners of TfD and the authorities in a manner that apparently relegated the interests and aspirations of the citizens to the background. In this form of practice, the interests of the citizens soon became a secondary, not primary, concern of the practitioners. This casts a doubt about the touted affinity between the Theatre of Development - a brainchild of the developmentalist thinking - and democracy.

The inferences drawn in this dissertation from Nigeria's political theatre and the Theatre for Development (TfD) clearly demonstrate the importance of the role of theatre practitioners in the polity and is therefore the premise of my advocacy for a re-consideration of the positionality of Nigerian theatre practitioners under a democratic Nigeria. Thus, recognising that the proposed Legislative Theatre methodology will be adopted apace with other forms of theatrical practice, I advocate, as stated previously, that practitioners should realign noticeably and decidedly with the cause of the citizens irrespective of the mode of expression of their theatrical output. In specific terms, there should be a revival of political theatre which will engage perceptibly with extant realities in Nigeria's democracy. I also advocate that TfD practitioners should resolutely articulate their practice from the referential point of the citizens in a manner that will engender tangible development. Additionally, the Legislative Theatre methodology should be applied to enrich the democratic citizenship habits of the citizens especially with respect to participation in the lawmaking process.

This implies that Nigerian theatre practitioners will jettison their dalliance with the authorities and will, using various theatrical expressions, give due attention to Nige-

ria's democracy. The cumulative effect of this will presumably manifest in a meaningful positive impact on Nigeria's democracy. The new approaches could potentially engender active collaboration between the practitioners and Nigerian citizens which anticipatorily would result in an enhanced civic participation, thus positively impacting on the political agency of the citizens. The accruing benefits of the active civic participation and the restoration of the citizens' political voice would conceivably ramify in many ways including, but not limited, to the involvement of the citizens in the processes which produce legislations. In carrying out the responsibility of galvanising the citizens to form part of the processes of lawmaking, the theatre artist should expect opposition from the political class who, arguably, have been benefiting from the subsisting practice in which the citizens are reckoned with only during elections. Notwithstanding the possibility of opposition from the political class, the new perspective to the role of the Nigerian theatre practitioner holds considerable prospects and deserves to be put to test in the service of Nigeria's democracy.

Drawing therefore from what has been examined in the study I have adopted a reduction of principles to support my position that democratic culture could be deepened through the praxis of the Legislative Theatre methodology, hence my advocacy for its adoption in Nigeria. Based on the above submissions, Nigerian theatre practitioners should consider playing a more prominent role in the Nigerian political system with the intent of buoying up Nigeria's democracy. As earlier noted in this study, democracy is one of the arenas where theatre has been known to leave its significantly positive imprint. Also, I have previously noted that any democracy not well managed is potentially capable of turning into a post-colonial institutionalisation of colonial domination. In other words, a poorly managed democracy stands the risk of being distorted and is potentially as harmful as both colonialism and military totalitarianism. This is particularly pertinent in view of current assessment of Nigeria's democracy.⁷³² The poor ratings attest to the critical and practical need to ensure equality before the law for Nigerian citizens under a democratic governance and build a healthier relationship between the electorate and their representatives through the participatory involvement of the citizens. Theatrical practice can be decisive in facilitating the citizens' participation given its playfulness and ability to address political and societal concerns on an aesthetic and imaginative register.

Also crucial in this regard is the gap between the Nigerian electorate and their representatives. Nigeria's elected representatives, as studies note, conduct themselves in government with little or no regard for the interests and concerns of the electoral

732 In 2021 Nigeria recorded a Perceived Democratic Deficit of 54%. The slightly improved Perceived Democratic Deficit of 51% in 2022 notwithstanding, the 2022 assessment still returned a worrisome prime position in critical areas such as inequality before the law (58%), limitations on free speech (76%) and fear of unfair elections (85%) for Nigeria.

populace. Thus, I have argued that Nigeria's democracy is reasonably comparable to an electocracy. The absence of collaboration between the electorate and their representatives is one critical factor which reduces a democracy to an electocracy. Even as an electocracy, Nigerian elections have also been said to have significantly lost their essential democratic essence and ingredients. All these indices point to an ailing democracy. My position therefore is that Nigeria's democratic culture is an area of need in which Nigerian theatre practitioners could make significant impact.

The Legislative Theatre experiment exemplified the possibility, as well as the imperative, for a collaborative relationship between policy makers and the citizens who daily live under the impact of the policies. As demonstrated by the experiment, *Legislative Theatre sessions engender the ambience for the education of citizens on the provisions of extant laws and policies, and the interrogation of those laws.* The sessions also reveal any lacunae in extant laws. Such lacunae represent possible areas of intervention by, and participation, of citizens. All these reinforce the utilitarian prospects of the Legislative Theatre methodology for which it deserves to be put to test by Nigerian theatre practitioners. In addition to the possibility of enlisting the citizens in the process of lawmaking, *Legislative Theatre sessions also enhance civic participation which is indispensable for the growth and health of any democracy.* An unhealthy or distorted democracy, as Nigeria now represents, could putatively be positively impacted on through the adoption of the approaches suggested above. In essence, Nigeria's democracy should not be taken as a given, rather it should be seen as a continuum capable of being tilted by theatre practitioners in the direction of training the habits of democracy.

I have noted that the degree of the citizens' participation in the determination of the laws that dictate their daily living is a veritable gauge of the quality of their participation in democracy. Thus, I reiterate my suggestion that Nigerian theatre practitioners should become more involved in Nigeria's democracy through the use of various modes of theatre praxis. For instance, Legislative Theatre could be employed to continuously expose and interrogate unwelcome laws and policies in the interest of those who daily grapple with the effects of those oppressive laws. The dissertation demonstrates that there necessarily ought always to be adversarial democratic engagement between the forces that want society to remain as it is and the counter forces which desire change through democratic means. Legislative Theatre is a way to move beyond the framework of electoral politics in order to secure a people's collective material interest.

In sum, I advocate for a discernible revival of political theatre to address extant democratic concerns with specific respect to laws, a modification of Tfd to ensure that performances are articulated from the reference point of the citizens and, the

adoption of Legislative Theatre methodology to engage the citizens in the lawmaking processes. These approaches will bridge the existing gap between the theatrical engagements of practitioners and the happenings on the Nigerian democratic arena.

This dissertation has offered perspectives, in historical, theoretical and empirical terms, on an area of theatre theory and practice that has hitherto not featured within the Nigerian theatre studies and praxis. First, the dissertation fills the research gap in Nigerian theatre history of the 20th and 21st centuries with particular regard to approaches to changing, implementing and making laws. The dissertation has drawn a connection between diverse theatrical forms such as folk opera, modern(ist) plays and Theatre for Development (TfD) and has introduced Legislative Theatre into the corpus of theatrical forms (both in theory and in practice) in Nigeria. With this study a mode of theatrical practice has been introduced with which Nigerian theatre practitioners could potentially integrate the citizens into the processes that produce legislations. The academic field of theatre studies as well as its praxis could continuously be made more robust by the interaction between Nigerian theatre practitioners and different aspects of society as facilitated on the platform of the Legislative Theatre methodology. This dissertation has provided insight, and also opened up new vistas for investigation, on how that interaction plays out with regard to democratic practices. With my theorisation of Legislative Theatre as play, this dissertation has also enriched available scholarship on the concepts of Legislative Theatre and play.

4.1. Scope for Further Scholarly Investigation

As I conclude this dissertation, I reflect on some germane points which came to the fore in the course of the execution of the study and which call for further investigation. First, the execution of my practice-informed research project on Legislative Theatre revealed an observably high degree of influence which members of the Metabolising Cell are capable of exerting on the Legislative Theatre process. In this instance, the members of the Metabolising Cell categorised some of the legislative inputs of the participants as being non-justiciable. This evidently equates to the silencing of the voices of the sponsors of the affected legislative inputs and thereby to their disenfranchisement. In other words, it detracts from the powers of the participants in a process which is supposedly founded on the intention to restore their political voice and agency. An effective way of benefitting maximally from the expertise of the Metabolising Cell while ensuring that their role does not negatively impact on the agency of participants is an area which I intend to further interrogate in my research and practice.

Also, while acknowledging that this dissertation is a modest contribution to scholarship on Legislative Theatre, the prevailing paucity of literature on Legislative Theatre makes apparent the need for more research in this branch of theatre scholarship. Therefore, I suggest that theatre practitioners should devote more attention to the field.

4.2. Closing Thoughts

When this research commenced in 2018, it was driven by my motivation to investigate what theatre practitioners have done and what they could do to strengthen Nigeria's democratic culture. Nigeria's dictatorial democracy, decades of corruption, autocratic rule, absence of the rule of law and the presence of violent non-state actors as well as militarisation had at that time driven the citizens to despair. After nineteen years of democratic governance there was palpable despondency over the anticipated gains which Nigerians had thought would herald democratic governance. Although the political class was always quick to claim that the 'dividends of democracy' were being delivered to Nigerians their claim was often in dissonant relationship with the expectations and lived realities of the citizens. These realities were ambient to my reflection on how theatre practitioners and playwrights had in the past sought to hold the system to account and how that could possibly be replicated in the face of extant challenges.

Therefore, in view of the concerns of this dissertation with respect to the role theatre practitioners could play in favour of Nigeria's democracy, I deem it apposite to conclude with a quick reflection on some contemporaneous issues which seem to portend a major shift in regard to Nigeria's democracy. My advocacy for theatre practitioners to utilise various theatrical forms (political theatre, TfD and Legislative Theatre) in playing an active role in democratic practice in Nigeria has perhaps been reinforced by contemporary events. Between 2018 and 2022 Nigeria's democratic ambience seems to have undergone significant transformation. This is however not in regard to the delivery of the often touted 'dividends of democracy'. Rather, there seems to be a significant surge in the demand, by the citizens, for socio-political and economic transformation which they (the citizens) can experientially identify with.

The root of the current surge is arguably traceable to the #EndSARS protests of October, 2020 when, for about 2 weeks, Nigerian youths took to the streets in protest against what they perceived as cruelty by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), an arm of the Nigerian Police Force, notorious for its brutality and human rights violations. SARS was established in 1992 to tackle violent crimes particularly

armed robbery. However, over the years the unit apparently abandoned their official mandate and began to engage in 'stop and search' exercise which specifically targeted Nigerian youths and led to unlawful detention, maiming and extrajudicial killing of many youths who neither committed nor were convicted of any known crime. The #EndSARS protests became the springboard from which Nigerian youth sought to aggregately express their discontent with the socio-political and economic situation of the country. The protests reached a climax on October 20, 2020 when officers of the Nigerian police and the Nigerian army allegedly shot at unarmed protesting youth killing some of them.

The alleged shootings ostensibly quelled the protests but failed, apparently, to annihilate the agitation by the youth for a better Nigeria. Prequel to the 2023 general elections, Nigerian youths have organised many politically oriented rallies. The rallies are perhaps evidence of an unsuccessful attempt to annihilate the germ of the #ENDSARS protests. The peak of the rallies took place on October 1, 2022, when Nigeria marked the 62nd anniversary of her independence from colonial rule. The 2022 independence celebrations took a remarkably different trajectory. Instead of the usual march past at various stadia, hundreds of thousands of Nigerians, mainly the youth, organised unprecedented street rallies simultaneously across the country to demonstrate their agitation for a new Nigeria which they hope will be birthed by the 2023 general elections. Nigeria's political democratic landscape is, undoubtedly, currently undergoing a mutation. Thus, while Nigeria has celebrated 62 years of independence from British colonial rule, many Nigerians express optimism that the 2023 general elections will result in 'independence' from bad leadership. This is another indication of the precarity of Nigeria's democracy.

My advocacy for Nigerian theatre practitioners to engage with Nigeria's democracy is couched within the context of its extant precarity. Therefore, I posit that Nigerian theatre practitioners should, regardless (and also in anticipation, perhaps) of the outcome of the 2023 general elections, adequately utilise political theatre to address policies and laws which support inequalities and oppression in the society, adopt a discernible bottom-up approach in the execution of TfD to reflect the voice of benefitting communities and employ the Legislative Theatre methodology to, possibly, incorporate the citizens in the processes of lawmaking. While none of the approaches is deemed singularly adequate, each one of them could be appropriated to hold the State and its institutions to account. Thus, an aggregation of the different forms will presumably help in creating a more robust polity in which, in addition to other indices of a healthy democracy, citizens could also actively engage in making the laws under which they live. Each of the approaches could be employed by the citizens to make the law by playfully living the law in the theatre.

Summary: Let's Make the Law Because We Live the Law: New Perspectives on the Role of Political Theatre in Nigeria

In this dissertation, *Let's Make the Law Because We Live the Law: New Perspectives on the Role of Political Theatre in Nigeria*, I seek to reimagine the role of Nigerian theatre practitioners in relation to Nigeria's democracy, directing critical attention to how theatre is used to stimulate and enculturate stronger democratic habits. I pay attention to how playwrights and theatre practitioners have engaged the law, used theatre to protest State abuses of the law, and explored how theatre can be used to overcome legal barriers to citizen participation. Furthermore, I envisage and conceptualise an interface between Nigerian theatre practice and Nigerian laws in a manner that could engage Nigerian citizens in the process of lawmaking. The theoretical framework undergirding my interrogation of the intersection between theatre and law revolves around how citizens live the law in performance using myth and play.

Using a multi-pronged methodological approach which triangulates a contextual, historical and critical reading of dramatic writings, a qualitative sociological study of theatre in developmental policies and governance, and a practice-informed investigation of the potential and pitfalls of the Legislative Theatre methodology, the dissertation unravels the manner in which the Nigerian theatre has served as platform to explore the unwelcome impact of some Nigerian laws on the socio-economic and political lives of its citizens. I examine how Nigerian playwrights have employed their writings as tools of protest against colonialism and military rule and as means of asserting the voice of citizens. I draw from the concept of play to articulate the engagement of playwrights and practitioners/participants with the law at both textual and participatory levels. I explore the reimagination of the democratic citizenship of Nigerians through their involvement in democratic processes including, but not limited to, the processes that produce the laws under which the citizens live.

The dissertation is structured in three main chapters, each of which presents a nuanced view of the interface which connects theatre practitioners and playwrights, on the one hand, with the laws and state apparatuses of power, on the other hand. The first chapter titled 'Political Theatre in Nigeria: Faces, Phases and Contending Forces' opens the dissertation, setting out its historical context, examining the interrelation between theatre practice and Nigerian laws as dramatically relayed on the Nigerian stage and in English language. I engage with the dramatic writings of three 20th century playwrights, specifically inquiring into how they interrogated certain laws enacted in Nigeria from the 1940s during the British colonial era to the end of military dictatorship in 1999.

My analysis proposes two major pathways to Nigerian political theatre: the pathway of Nigerian Popular Theatre represented in this study by the theatre practices of Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola and Adunni Oluwole, and the pathway of university scholars represented by Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan. I adopt a contextual, historical approach to critically examine select works by Ogunde, re-enacting the effects of colonial laws on Nigerians during the Second World War. Through this, I establish the anti-colonial ethos of Ogunde's theatre. I further note the extent to which or how the anti-colonial imperative of Ogunde's theatre distinguishes it from the theatres of his contemporaries.

The first chapter continues with a contextual critical reading of selected dramatic writings of university scholars during Nigeria's military era, namely Wole Soyinka and Femi Osofisan. With this shift, I broaden the historical scope of my investigation of the interface between theatre and law in Nigeria, looking at how university scholars dealt with the laws of the military period on stage, and how this differed from the approaches of Nigerian Popular Theatre. Through these two pathways, I argue that the cultural practitioners' dissatisfaction with the state of democratic practices in Nigeria propelled their playful and creative questioning of the state abuses of power. I posit that the political theatre of both the Nigerian Popular theatre movement as well as that of university scholars identified with the plight of the citizens and spoke in their favour against the oppressive impact of the policies enacted by colonial rule and the postcolonial Nigerian State. The chapter underscores the similarity of purpose in the playwrights' nuanced adoption of myth as shield while making critical political commentary. I posit in this respect that the playwrights *playfully* adopted myth in their repudiation of uncharitable laws and policies of the State. I note that notwithstanding the artful deployment of myth, the playwrights could not escape the wrath of the authorities, altogether.

In Chapter 2, 'The Mask of Developmentalism in the Nigerian Theatre for Development (TfD)', I mobilise a qualitative sociological method of investigation to my study of theatre in developmental policies and governance. In this regard, I focus attention on Theatre for Development (TfD), a brainchild of the era of development, and a method of theatre praxis innovated ostensibly to facilitate the cultivation of democratic values and also engender development in host communities. Through a close study of secondary accounts of TfD projects in Nigeria, I assess the extent of the congruency of the projects to the objectives of TfD as advertised at its inception. My specific objective in this regard is to ascertain the extent to which the projects cohere with the tenets of development, democracy and democratic participation. While taking note of the preponderance of TfD in contemporary Nigeria, the dissertation leverages on documented Nigerian TfD projects to discuss the theoretical unity between TfD

and tangible development in contradistinction to their practical split. Put differently, the dissertation notes the appropriation of theatre (TfD, to be specific) by the State in pursuit of goals which are purportedly in the interest of the citizens but which, however, do not ultimately adequately represent their interests. The dissertation posits that this approach to the practice of TfD precludes Nigerian TfD practitioners from contributing substantially to the cultivation of habits that are crucial to the sustenance of healthy democracy.

Chapter 3, 'Legislative Theatre: Foundations, Critical Reflections and Seminal Experiment in Nigeria', contains a theoretical study of the Legislative Theatre methodology. I adopt a practice-informed research approach to investigate the potential of adopting Legislative Theatre within the Nigerian context, while also tracing the genealogies of Legislative Theatre in Brazil and comparing this with other practices around the world. The instances of Legislative Theatre interventions which this chapter parades enrich the corpus which Nigerian practitioners could presumably draw from for the benefit of Nigeria's democracy. The chapter elaborates on a Legislative Theatre workshop/laboratory I designed and conducted with students and faculty members at Adekunle Ajasin University in 2020. The workshop sought to use the Legislative Theatre methodology to put forward recommendations for legal guidelines against sexual harassment at the university. Reflecting on this concrete example allows me to extrapolate the potential benefits of the Legislative Theatre methodology in enhancing the democratic participation of citizens, bridging the gap between citizens and their representatives, and making room for the incorporation of citizens into the lawmaking processes thereby impacting positively on the democratic habits of Nigerian citizens. This is in line with the participatory model of democracy which is my interest in this dissertation.

A deeper reflection on the contents of the three core chapters of the dissertation illustrates the import of the positionality of theatre practitioners. In Chapter 1, the dissertation shows a theatre in which, through the practitioners, the citizens register their protest to the authorities. Chapter 2 critically enquires into a theatre which seeks the compliance and affirmative involvement of citizens in implementing governmental policies with the assistance of non-governmental agencies. Finally, Chapter 3 imagines and dramatises the theatrical possibility of collaboration between theatre practitioners and the citizens, which can potentially strengthen democratic habits.

Crucially, in this dissertation I conceptualise play as a politico-theatrical element which aids the possibilities highlighted above. To begin with, I make a connection between play and myth in the playwrights' interrogation of laws perceived as oppressive. I then conceptualise play as a means of facilitating the incursion of practitioners

and participants into the territory of lawmaking. I posit that as a consequence of the incursion, play crosses certain systemic boundaries and serves the utilitarian purpose of enriching the citizens' democratic agency and facilitating the ambience in which citizens participate in making the laws which circumscribe their living. The research fills the gap in Nigerian theatre history of the 20th and 21st centuries with respect to theatrical approaches to making, changing and implementing laws. The research connects the dots between diverse theatrical forms in Nigeria: folk opera, modern(ist) plays and TfD, and from that interplay introduces the Legislative Theatre methodology.

I close the dissertation by making suggestions on how the three theatre forms – Political theatre and playwriting, TfD, and Legislative Theatre – could be interpreted in the service of Nigeria's democracy. First, I advocate the revival of political theatre in a manner which engages perceptibly with extant realities in Nigeria's democracy. Also, I recommend that TfD practitioners should be decisive in articulating their practice from the referential point of the citizens in a manner that will engender tangible development, rather than being agents of non-governmental or governmental action. In addition, the Legislative Theatre methodology should be applied to enrich the democratic citizenship habits of the citizens especially with respect to participation in the lawmaking process. These recommendations countenance the insufficiency of each of the forms to singularly address the deficiencies of Nigeria's democracy. It is therefore argued that Nigerian theatre practitioners could adopt each of the approaches in working with the citizens to make the law by playfully living the law in the theatre.

Samenvatting: De wet (be)leven: Nieuwe perspectieven op de rol van het politieke theater in Nigeria

In dit proefschrift, *De wet (be)leven: Nieuwe perspectieven op de rol van het politieke theater in Nigeria*, probeer ik een nieuwe beeld te creëren van de rol van Nigeriaanse theatermakers in relatie tot de democratie van Nigeria door kritische aandacht te schenken aan hoe theater wordt gebruikt om democratische gewoonten en de burgerparticipatie te versterken. Ik besteed aandacht aan hoe toneelschrijvers en theatermakers zich met de wet en de rechtsorde hebben beziggehouden, theater hebben gebruikt om te protesteren tegen misbruik van de wet door de staat, en hebben onderzocht hoe theater kan worden gebruikt om wettelijke belemmeringen voor burgerparticipatie te overwinnen. Bovendien overweeg en conceptualiseer ik een interface tussen de Nigeriaanse theaterpraktijk en de Nigeriaanse wetgeving op een manier die Nigeriaanse burgers bij het wetgevingsproces kan betrekken. Het theoretische kader dat ten grondslag ligt aan mijn onderzoek naar het raakvlak tussen theater en recht draait om de vraag hoe burgers de wet ‘leven’ door middel van mythe en spel.

Het proefschrift maakt gebruik van een meerledige methodologische benadering waarin een contextuele, historische en kritische lezing van toneelteksten, een kwalitatieve sociologische studie naar de inzet van theater in ontwikkelingsbeleid en bestuur, en een praktijkgericht onderzoek naar het potentieel en de valkuilen van de methodologie van het Legislative Theatre samenkomen. Het proefschrift ontrafelt de manier waarop het Nigeriaanse theater heeft gediend als platform om de ongewenste impact van sommige Nigeriaanse wetten op het sociaal-economische en politieke leven van de burgers te onderzoeken. Ik onderzoek hoe Nigeriaanse toneelschrijvers hun toneelteksten hebben gebruikt als instrumenten om te protesteren tegen het kolonialisme en het militaire bewind en als middel om de stem van de burgers te laten horen. Ik put uit het concept ‘spel’ om de betrokkenheid van toneelschrijvers en theatermakers bij de wet te articuleren op zowel tekstueel als participatief niveau. Ik onderzoek de herverbeelding van het democratisch burgerschap van Nigerianen via hun betrokkenheid bij democratische processen, met inbegrip van, maar niet beperkt tot, de processen die de wetten produceren waaronder de burgers leven.

Het proefschrift is opgebouwd uit drie hoofdstukken, die elk een genuanceerde kijk geven op het raakvlak tussen theatermakers en toneelschrijvers enerzijds en de wetten en machtsapparaten van de staat anderzijds. In het eerste hoofdstuk “Political Theatre in Nigeria: Faces, Phases and Contending Forces” wordt de historische context geschetst en wordt de interrelatie onderzocht tussen de theaterpraktijk en de Nigeriaanse wetten zoals die op het Nigeriaanse toneel en in de Engelse taal worden weergegeven. Ik ga in op de toneelteksten van drie 20e-eeuwse toneelschrijvers, waarbij ik specifiek

onderzoek hoe zij bepaalde wetten bevragen die in Nigeria zijn uitgevaardigd vanaf de jaren veertig van de vorige eeuw, tijdens het Britse koloniale tijdperk, tot het einde van de militaire dictatuur in 1999.

Mijn analyse stelt twee belangrijke wegen naar een Nigeriaans politiek theater voor: de weg van het Nigeriaanse volkstheater, in deze studie vertegenwoordigd door de theaterpraktijk van Hubert Ogunde, Duro Ladipo, Kola Ogunmola en Adunni Oluwole, en de weg van universiteitstheater, vertegenwoordigd door Wole Soyinka en Femi Osofisan. Ik hanteer een contextuele, historische benadering om een selectie uit het werk van Ogunde kritisch te onderzoeken, waarbij ik de effecten van de koloniale wetten op Nigerianen tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog weergeef. Op die manier stel ik het antikoloniale ethos van Ogunde's theater vast. Verder stel ik vast hoe en in welke mate de antikoloniale imperatief van Ogunde's theater zich onderscheidt van het theater van zijn tijdgenoten.

Het eerste hoofdstuk vervolgt met een contextuele kritische lezing van geselecteerde dramatische geschriften van academici tijdens Nigeria's militaire regime, namelijk Wole Soyinka en Femi Osofisan. Door te kijken hoe zij de wetten ten tijde van het militaire regime op het toneel behandelden, en hoe dit verschilde van de aanpak van het Nigeriaanse volkstheater, verbreed ik de historische reikwijdte van mijn onderzoek naar het raakvlak tussen theater en recht in Nigeria. Via deze twee wegen kom ik tot de vaststelling dat de ontevredenheid van deze makers (cultural practitioners) over de toestand van de democratische praktijken in Nigeria hun speelse en creatieve bevraging van het machtsmisbruik door de staat stimuleerde. Ik stel dat het politieke theater van zowel de Nigeriaanse volkstheaterbeweging als dat van de academici zich identificeerde met de benarde situatie van de burgers en voor hen opkwam tegen de onderdrukkende gevolgen van het beleid ten tijde van de koloniale overheersing en de postkoloniale Nigeriaanse staat. Het hoofdstuk onderstreept de overeenkomsten in de genuanceerde manier waarop de toneelschrijvers bekende Nigeriaanse mythologische verhalen en figuren als schild gebruikten voor hun kritische, politieke commentaar. Ik stel in dit verband dat de toneelschrijvers de mythen gebruiken om op speelse wijze de onbarmhartige wetten en het beleid van de staat af te wijzen. Ook stel ik vast dat zij desondanks niet volledig aan de woede van de autoriteiten hebben kunnen ontsnappen.

In hoofdstuk 2 ("The Mask of Developmentalism in the Nigerian Theatre for Development (TfD)") maak ik gebruik van een kwalitatieve sociologische onderzoeksmethode voor mijn studie van theater in ontwikkelingsbeleid en bestuur. In dit verband richt ik mijn aandacht op Theatre for Development (TfD), een geesteskind van het tijdperk van internationale ontwikkelingsamenwerking, en een vorm van theaterpraxis

is ontwikkeld om het cultiveren van democratische waarden te vergemakkelijken en ook om politieke, economische en maatschappelijke ontwikkeling tweeweg te brengen. Door middel van een nauwkeurige studie van verslagen van Tfd-projecten in Nigeria beoordeel ik in hoeverre de projecten overeenstemmen met de doelstellingen van Tfd zoals die bij aanvang werden vastgesteld. Mijn specifieke doelstelling in dit verband is na te gaan in hoeverre de projecten stroken met de beginselen van ontwikkeling, democratie en democratische participatie. Het proefschrift constateert de dominantie van Tfd in het hedendaagse Nigeria en maakt gebruik van gedocumenteerde Nigeriaanse Tfd-projecten om het verband tussen de beoogde doelen en concrete praktijken van Tfd te bespreken, daar waar dit in de praktijk gescheiden zaken zijn. Anders gezegd, de dissertatie stelt vast dat de staat zich het theater (Tfd, om precies te zijn) toe-eigent om doelen na te streven die zogenaamd in het belang van de burgers zijn, maar die uiteindelijk hun belangen niet adequaat vertegenwoordigen. Het proefschrift stelt dat deze benadering van de praktijk van Tfd verhindert dat Nigeriaanse makers een wezenlijke bijdrage leveren aan het cultiveren van gewoonten die cruciaal zijn voor de instandhouding van een gezonde democratie.

Hoofdstuk 3, (“Legislative Theatre: Foundations, Critical Reflections and Seminal Experiment in Nigeria”) bevat een theoretische studie van de Legislative Theatre-methodologie. Ik gebruik een op die praktijk gebaseerde onderzoeksbenadering om het potentieel van het Legislative Theatre binnen de Nigeriaanse context te onderzoeken, terwijl ik ook de genealogie van Legislative Theatre in Brazilië traceer en deze vergelijk met andere praktijken over de hele wereld. De voorbeelden van Legislative Theatre-interventies in dit hoofdstuk verrijken het corpus waaruit de Nigeriaanse praktijk vermoedelijk zou kunnen putten ten voordele van de Nigeriaanse democratie. Het hoofdstuk gaat over een Legislative Theatre workshop die ik heb ontworpen en uitgevoerd met studenten en docenten aan de Adekunle Ajasin Universiteit in 2020. De workshop was bedoeld om met behulp van de Legislative Theatre-methodologie aanbevelingen te doen voor wettelijke richtlijnen tegen seksuele intimidatie aan de universiteit. Reflecterend op dit concrete voorbeeld kan ik de potentiële voordelen van de Legislative Theatre-methodologie extrapoleren om de democratische participatie van burgers te vergroten, de kloof tussen burgers en hun vertegenwoordigers te overbruggen, en ruimte te maken voor de integratie van burgers in het wetgevingsproces, met een positieve impact op de democratische gewoonten van Nigeriaanse burgers. Dit is in lijn met het participatieve model van democratie dat mijn belangstelling heeft in dit proefschrift.

Een diepere reflectie op de inhoud van de drie kernhoofdstukken van het proefschrift illustreert het belang van de positionaliteit van theatermakers. In hoofdstuk 1 toont het proefschrift een theater waarin de burgers, via de makers, hun protest tegen de

autoriteiten laten horen. In hoofdstuk 2 wordt kritisch gekeken naar een theater waarin met behulp van niet-gouvernementele instanties gezocht wordt naar de positieve betrokkenheid en medewerking van burgers bij de uitvoering van overheidsbeleid. Hoofdstuk 3 ten slotte verbeeldt en dramatiseert de theatrale mogelijkheid van samenwerking tussen theatermakers en burgers, die democratische gewoonten kan versterken.

Cruciaal is dat ik in deze dissertatie spel conceptualiseer als een politiek-theatraal element dat de bovengenoemde mogelijkheden ondersteunt. Om te beginnen leg ik een verband tussen spel en mythe in de bevraging door de toneelschrijvers van als onderdrukkend ervaren wetten. Vervolgens conceptualiseer ik spel als een middel dat het voor makers en deelnemers vergemakkelijkt om binnen te dringen in het gebied van de wetgeving. Ik stel dat als gevolg hiervan het spel bepaalde systeemgrenzen overschrijdt en als utilitair doel heeft het democratisch handelen van de burgers te verrijken en een sfeer te creëren waarin burgers makkelijker deelnemen aan het maken van de wetten die hun leven bepalen. Het onderzoek vult hiermee een leemte in de Nigeriaanse theatergeschiedenis van de 20e en 21e eeuw waar het gaat om theatrale benaderingen van het maken, veranderen en implementeren van wetten. Daarbij worden diverse theatervormen in Nigeria met elkaar verbonden: volksopera, modern(istisch)e toneelstukken en Tfd. Vanuit dat samenspel wordt de methodologie van het Legislative Theatre geïntroduceerd.

Ik sluit het proefschrift af met suggesties over hoe de drie theatervormen - Politiek theater en toneelschrijven, Tfd en Legislative Theatre - kunnen worden ingezet in dienst van Nigeria's democratie. Ten eerste pleit ik voor een heropleving van het politieke theater dat zich op een waarneembare manier met de bestaande realiteiten in de Nigeriaanse democratie bezighoudt. Ook beveel ik aan dat Tfd-beoefenaars hun praktijk resoluut vanuit het referentiepunt van de burgers verwoorden, op een manier die tot concrete ontwikkelingen leidt, in plaats van agenten te zijn van niet-gouvernementele of gouvernementele actie. Bovendien moet de methode van het Legislative Theatre worden toegepast om de gewoonten van democratische burgerschap te verrijken, vooral wat betreft de deelname aan het wetgevingsproces. Deze aanbevelingen bevestigen dat de afzonderlijke vormen op zichzelf niet volstaan om de tekortkomingen van de Nigeriaanse democratie aan te pakken. Daarom wordt betoogd dat Nigeriaanse theatermakers van elk van de drie benaderingen gebruik zouden moeten maken, om met de burgers samen de wet te maken door hem spelenderwijs in het theater te (be) leven.

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