



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

© copyright Oluchi Joyce Igili, Amsterdam 2023

Printing: ProefschriftMaken || www.proefschriftmaken.nl

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the author or the copyright-owning journals for previous published chapters.

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

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus
prof. dr. ir. P.P.C.C. Verbeek
ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel
op vrijdag 21 april 2023, te 10.00 uur
door Oluchi Joyce Igili
geboren te Uyo

Promotiecommissie

Promotor: prof. dr. K.E. Röttger Universiteit van Amsterdam

Copromotor: dr. S. Bala Universiteit van Amsterdam

Overige leden: prof. dr. M. Roelofs Universiteit van Amsterdam

prof. dr. C.M.K.E. Lerm-Hayes Universiteit van Amsterdam

prof. dr. S. Godsland Universiteit van Amsterdam

prof. dr. M. Okhakhu University of Benin

dr. S. Murray University of Glasgow

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

The research for/publication of this doctoral thesis received financial assistance from Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) NIGERIA *TETFUND/DASTD/UNIV/AKUNGBA-AKOKO/ASTD/2016/VOL.1* of 2nd February, 2018, under Academic Staff Training and Development for her PhD studies at the University of Amsterdam, Netherlands.

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
making.*

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | x |
| 0.0 Introduction | xv |
| 0.1 Rationale and Research Question | 1 |
| 0.2 Structural Specifics of the Dissertation | 4 |
| 0.3. Notes on Guiding Theoretical and Conceptual Frames | 9 |
| 0.3.1. Guiding Thoughts on the Concept of Theatre | 9 |
| 0.3.2. Guiding Thoughts on the Concept of Law | 10 |
| 0.3.3. Guiding Thoughts on the Concept of Democracy | 12 |
| 0.4. Theatre and the Principle of Representation | 14 |
| 0.5 Boalian Aesthetics in Brief | 16 |
| 0.6 Methodological Approach | 18 |
| 0.7. Limitations of the Study | 20 |
| 1. Political Theatre in Nigeria: Faces, Phases and Contending Forces | 23 |
| 1.1. Theatre and the State | 25 |
| 1.2. Perspectives on Politics and its Interface with Creativity | 28 |
| 1.2.1. The Concept of Political Theatre | 29 |
| 1.2.2. Perspectives on Nigerian Political Theatre | 30 |
| 1.3. Pathways of the Nigerian Political Theatre | 31 |
| 1.3.1. Politics on the Nigerian Popular Stage, Hubert Ogunde as Paradigms: 1946-1969 | 32 |
| 1.3.1.1. Ogunde's Contemporaries | 41 |
| 1.3.2. Nigerian Political Theatre in the Hands of University Scholars | 44 |
| 1.3.2.1. Nigerian Political Theatre and University Scholars: Wole Soyinka as Paradigm (1960-1996) | 45 |
| 1.3.2.2. Nigerian Political Theatre and University Scholars: Femi Osofisan as Paradigm (1970s and 1980s) | 51 |
| 1.4. Myth, Political Theatre and Intervention in Nigeria's Policies and Laws Before 1999 | 59 |
| 1.5. Contemporary Nigerian Political Theatre (1999-2019): An Overview | 61 |
| 1.6. Conclusion | 66 |
| 2. The Mask of Developmentalism in the Nigerian Theatre for Development (TfD) | 69 |
| 2.1. Emergence of the Era of Development | 72 |
| 2.1.1. Conceptualisation of Development | 76 |
| 2.1.2. Nigeria and the Development Discourse | 78 |
| 2.2. African Theatre for Development: Brief Historical Perspective and Praxis | 80 |
| 2.2.1. Laedza Batanani: The Inception of Theatre for Development (TfD) in Africa | 83 |
| 2.3. Advent of Theatre for Development (TfD) in Nigeria and the Channels of Intervention | 86 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| 2.3.1. Analysis of Selected Tfd Interventions on the Environment | 90 |
| 2.3.2. Tfd Interventions of Sexuality Education | 98 |
| 2.3.3. Tfd and Nigeria's Citizen/Indigene Debacle | 102 |
| 2.3.4. Tfd: Women Empowerment and Community Development Interventions | 108 |
| 2.4. Conclusion | 112 |
| 3. Legislative Theatre: Foundation, Critical Reflections and Seminal Experiment in Nigeria | 117 |
| 3.1. The Foundation of Legislative Theatre | 121 |
| 3.1.1. Legislative Theatre: Socio-Political Context of its Inception | 123 |
| 3.1.2. The Aims | 126 |
| 3.1.3. The Specifics of Boal's Practice of Legislative Theatre | 129 |
| 3.1.4. Impact of Boal's Practice of Legislative Theatre | 133 |
| 3.2. Adoptions of Legislative Theatre | 137 |
| 3.2.1. 'Practicing Democracy': Legislative Theatre Debuts in North America | 137 |
| 3.2.2. Legislative Theatre in Afghanistan: Afghan Women's Voices for Human Rights | 140 |
| 3.2.3. Legislative Theatre in the US: Theatre of the Oppressed, New York City (TONYC) | 144 |
| 3.2.4. Adopting Legislative Theatre in Nigeria: Foreseeable Benefits and Limitations | 146 |
| 3.3. Legislative Theatre: The AAUA Intervention and Theorisation as Play | 150 |
| 3.3.1. Legislative Theatre and the Practice of Tfd in Nigeria | 151 |
| 3.3.2. Legislative Theatre: A Tool for Deepening Democratic Culture | 153 |
| 3.4. Laboratory Legislative Theatre Project on Sexual Harassment: The AAUA Intervention | 154 |
| 3.4.1. Sexual Harassment: Contours and Consequences | 155 |
| 3.4.2. The Intervention: Getting Set | 157 |
| 3.4.3. The Workshop Sessions | 159 |
| 3.4.4. The Devised Story | 161 |
| 3.4.5. The Intervention | 163 |
| 3.4.6. The Outcome | 166 |
| 3.5. Theorising Legislative Theatre as Play | 170 |
| 3.6. Conclusion | 180 |
| 4. Conclusion: Making a Case for the Practitioners' Positionality | 183 |
| 4.1. Scope for Further Scholarly Investigation | 192 |
| 4.2. Closing Thoughts | 193 |
| Summary | 197 |
| Samenvatting | 201 |
| Bibliography | 205 |

Acknowledgements

As someone once quipped, every PhD trajectory has its own story. Mine is definitely unique! I am happy and thankful to God to arrive at the end of the journey with this dissertation.

Having spent an unusually lengthy period of about four years (no thanks to an unstable academic calendar), to complete my Master's degree programme, I resolved, for my sanity, to seek further academic fulfilment outside the shores of my country. Securing admission in foreign universities was relatively easy. But on each occasion, I was unable to pursue the dream further due to a recurrent albatross – lack of funding! Several applications for funding returned unsuccessful. This became an unacceptable recurring decimal. Months kept crawling into years while I struggled to keep the dream alive.

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!

This dissertation is undoubtedly a proof of the effort, attention, diligence, support and care of a team of thorough, firm yet amiable supervisors, Kati Röttger and Sruti Bala. I am intentional about my choice of the word, *team*, for they indeed worked as one. My profound thanks to both of you. I am quick to admit that many times I have wondered how you found the grace to cope with my utter cluelessness at the beginning of this trajectory. Thank you for taking me by the hand and guiding me through this PhD track. Thank you for being so understanding and encouraging. Thank you for allowing me to drink freely from your academic fountains so rich in scope and depth! Thank you both for pressing harder, and still harder, even at moments when I felt no academic 'juice' could flow anymore. Throughout the supervision journey, you had an uncommon working relationship, candour and harmony that belied the stories one often hears about PhD supervision. That alone gave me so much peace of mind.

Your distinct yet complementary approaches achieved one thing for sure: a much better PhD dissertation than I could have ever imagined. I will always be grateful that Providence brought you my way!

I am grateful to members of my Doctoral Committee, prof. dr. Monique Roelofs, prof. dr. C.M.K.E Lerm-Hayes, prof. dr. Shelley Godsland, Prof Marcellinus Okhakhu and Dr Simon Murray; thank you for graciously accepting to be a part of my life at this crucial juncture. I do not take for granted the honour of having you on my Doctoral Committee. I am definitely happy to be associated with such an esteemed team of accomplished academics.

To Prof. Igbekele Ajibefun, the immediate past Vice Chancellor of Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Nigeria; thank you, sir, for finally giving your nod of approval. Prof. Gbenga Ige, you inherited from your predecessor the responsibility of approving the yearly release of my funding and you ensured that there was no delay; my deep thanks to you, sir. To Prof. Clement Ajidahun, former Head of Performing Arts Department; If angels ever came in human form, the role you played in securing the fund for my PhD studies qualifies you as one. Without your intervention at that critical moment, the dream for a foreign degree would most probably have remained just that; a dream! For want of a better way to express my appreciation, I make that simple yet profound statement, Thank you, sir! To Prof (Mrs) Mary Iyabo Omoniyi, you staked it all for my sake. Words are not sufficient to express my gratitude. To Prof. Benson Igboin, we met as colleagues but became family even if not by blood. Thank you for all you do.

I am grateful to the staff and students of the Department of Performing Arts for the support I enjoyed while carrying out the practice-informed research project on Legislative Theatre. To the thirteen participants who willingly and gladly journeyed with me to the end of the project, you earned yourselves a space in my heart. My appreciation also goes to the Legal Unit of the University, as a whole, and in particular, to the Director of the Unit, Mr. Peter Alede; to Dr Simon-Peter Ayooluwa St. Emmanuel of the Faculty of Law, to the Ag. Director of the Women Studies and Development Centre, Dr (Mrs) Victoria Olugbemi, to Damilola Akintewe, founder, Coalition for Legal Education and Rights Protection (CLERP). I am equally grateful to the University's Counselling Unit for their support. Thank you all for accommodating my requests.

My sincere gratitude goes to the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) Nigeria, for the financial assistance I received towards my PhD studies in the Netherlands and to the Academic Planning Unit of Adekunle Ajasin University for facilitating the

funding application. Without their assistance, the narrative would have been different, no doubt.

I am grateful to Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) for admitting me into the ASCA community and giving me the opportunity to interact with other PhDs. Special thanks for the ASCA Theory Seminar series and the academic exchange which the sessions afforded. I am particularly thankful to ASCA for bearing the cost of my Wi-fi subscription from the period of the lockdown till the end of my PhD journey. Thank you for extending that lifeline to my research at that critical period. Thank you Dr Eloë Kingma for your concern and warmth. I will always cherish your smiles! A special note of thanks to Astrit Blommestijn also.

To all my colleagues in Prof. Kati Röttger's PhD reading group, thank you for your thoughtful input at those times when I presented my research during our reading sessions. Thank you for reading the texts I recommended. Your contributions helped to sharpen my thoughts.

The invitation by the organisers of the University of Glasgow Theatre Seminar series provided me a much cherished academic platform to present part of my research. I owe special thanks to Dr Simon Murray, thank you for surprising me with that honour. A note of thanks also to Dr Cristina Delgado-Garcia, the then coordinator of the seminar series.

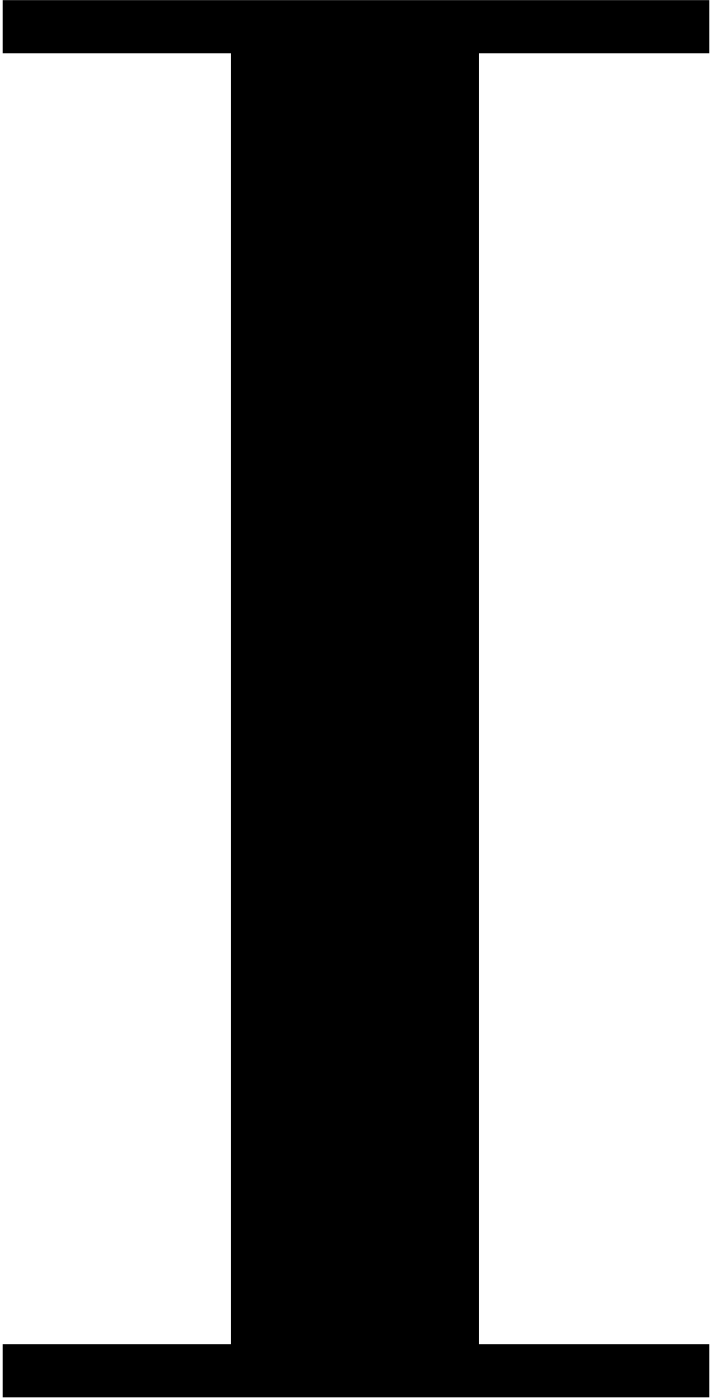
To all the pastors, ministers and members of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Amsterdam; I am grateful for the warmth and fellowship we have shared. Besides academic related matters, you are the only other 'life' I have had in Amsterdam. Thank you! To my church family back in Akure, Nigeria, the Reconciliation House Assembly, thank you for the calls, prayers and words of encouragement. They are all deeply appreciated.

It gets really juicy at this point. Huge thanks to my daughter, Ebunoluwa, and to my son, Ifeoluwa. True to your names, you have both proven to be inestimable *gifts* (Ebun) to me and you have both shown me unquantifiable *love* (Ife). You have demonstrated to me that children are indeed gifts from God as a show of His love. Thank you for being there for me all the time I needed you. I am indeed proud to have you in my life as my children. You make motherhood an eternal joy!

It gets even juicier; to my 'Project Manager' Godwin, my partner of life, words definitely fail me here. How can I ever thank you sufficiently for your immeasurable support and love? Thank you for such uncommon commitment. Thank you for being

ever so ready to go the extra mile for my sake. Thank you for ‘carrying my matter for head’, as we say in Nigerian parlance. Thank you, indeed!

I have reserved the best for the last. My profound appreciation to God for making this dream come true. Much more than the PhD itself, I am totally thankful to God for the unmerited gift of life and for rescuing me from the jaws of death when life was almost ebbing out of me in the course of this journey. Thank you, God, for another chance at life, literally! Thank You! Thank You!! Thank You!!!



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.