

IN THE SPIRIT OF THESIS: THE THEATRE ARTS AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

BY

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Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Fellow academics, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to stand before you this beautiful day in this renowned citadel of learning as the Chief Priest of today's intellectual harvest. This is the first inaugural lecture this academic "session, the first by a Professor of Theatre Arts in this University, and the first to be chaired by our present Vice-chancellor since he took the mantle of leadership in the University.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my aim this afternoon is not to feed you with mere academic dish garnished and spiced with morsels of intellectual dogmas. My aim is to provoke thought, through pertinent situations and deductions, so that by the conclusion of this lecture the main issues surrounding the role of theatre in national integration and nation building will become transparent.

The Inaugural

The inaugural lecture is an opportunity for the occupant of the chair to profess his knowledge before a diverse and erudite assembly, on a topic whose matter and manner is, of necessity, not restricted to the Ivory Tower. Today, a Professor of Theatre Arts is giving an inaugural lecture in this country's first autonomous university. It is the Lord's doing, a marvel in our eyes, and we give Him the glory. Theatricians and other lovers of theatre will, in this auspicious occasion, join us in the Igbo traditional song of jubilation and ecstasy, a song that heralds the outing of a new masquerade that would perform the traditional *Ijele* dance with potency and capability.

In his inaugural lecture, Professor P.O. Esedebe reminded us that the inaugural gives the scholar-masquerade the opportunity of saying virtually anything under the sun without being challenged (2). I am pleased to add that the inaugural gives the scholar the

opportunity of discussing his discipline before a multifaceted audience without running into the danger of obscurity. It is, therefore, hoped that by the end of this lecture, both the artist and the scientist will commingle into one monolithic entity, and generate thoughts that would kindle their minds and generate a new way of looking at something which was earlier considered familiar. We shall make an incursion into the origin of theatre as enactment, into the development of theatre as an art form, into the intrusion of theatre into the curriculum of the university, into the concept of nation building, and finally into illuminating conjectures about the role of theatre as a tool for national integration.

The Theatre Arts Programme at the University of Nigeria

The Dramatic Arts programme was conceived of by the founding fathers of the University as one of the pioneer disciplines of the University of Nigeria at its inception in 1960. A building provided for this programme, the Robeson College of Dramatics, was named after the renowned African-American actor, Paul Robeson. Unfortunately, because of staffing problems, the discipline was attached for a long time to the Department of English as a stress area. At a time, a lecturer in Mass Communication was appointed its Coordinator, giving rise to the "colonization" of a part of the Robeson Building by the then Department of Journalism. During the 1982/83 academic session, the Drama stress area was upgraded to a sub-department of Dramatic Arts, thereby making it quasi-independent, and giving it positive encouragement; to run programmes and administrative work. Specifically, this historic event took effect by the approval of the University of Nigeria Senate at its 138th meeting held on July 06, 1983, in the Continuing Education Centre.

At the end of the Civil War the Arts Theatre dedicated for the fostering of the public performances of the programme suddenly turned into a multi-purpose hall, causing the programme to compete with other people for the use of their own space. Fortunately, Professor Chimere Ikoku, the then Vice Chancellor and an ardent lover of theatre, returned the Arts Theatre to the exclusive control of the Sub-department ..on February 13, 1992. But another unfortunate incident overtook the building. It was gutted by fire on the night of April 14, 1996. For about six years, the Sub-department had to

stage its performances either at the Marion Johnson Building or Princess Alexandria Auditorium. Fortunately through a special grant by the Education Task Fund, the Arts Theatre was rebuilt and handed back to the sub-department during the historic 40th Anniversary celebration. The opening ceremony was marked with the performance of my epic play, *When the Arrow Rebounds*, a dramatic recreation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*.

In 2000 when I was appointed Coordinator of the Sub-department, I conceived the need for an open-air theatre and made a proposal for the project. I was told to look beyond Opi junction to fund the project. Once again, God came to the rescue of the sub-department. I did not need to go too far from Opi since the then Chairman of Igbo-Etiti Local Government Council, Chief Nnanwike Nwodo, happily agreed to fund the project. The result was an open-air, Greek-style theatre and pavilion.

The road to the achievement of a full departmental status was not easy either. In 2002, I was elected the Dean of the Faculty of Arts; the first time a Professor of Theatre Arts has held that position in the history of the Faculty. The resolution for the upgrading of Dramatic Arts to a full-fledged Department of Theatre Arts was unanimously passed by the Board of the Faculty of Arts on June 16, 2003. The case was subsequently taken to the Committee of Deans through its Development Committee, and finally to the University Senate. On April 28, 2004, at its 296th meeting, the Senate of the University of Nigeria approved the upgrading of the Sub-department of Dramatic Arts to a full-fledged Department of Theatre Arts.

Despite this excruciating history, the Theatre Department has continued to make its mark in the intellectual orbit of the University of Nigeria and beyond. For instance, the department is an important player in the vibrant Nigerian Home Video industry popularly referred to as Nollywood. It has succeeded in bringing the Video industry to the shores of Nsukka and its environs, and performances are now recorded at Nsukka. It remains the only Theatre Arts department in the whole country that runs an annual workshop for the Actors Guild of Nigeria. It associates with various production experts, developed new creative horizons and exposed its staff and students to the technicalities of modern film

making. It is a thing of joy that today the department is considered an important resource for actors, script writers, and producers of the movie industry. And I am proud to say that both Professor Laz Ekwueme of the University of Lagos, and my humble self are the only professors of the performing arts in Nigeria currently engaged not only in consultancy services for the Home Video Industry, but also involved in actual acting. One of the most recent successes is a Film titled *My Father's Love* produced by Andy Best Electronics. The film was shot here at Nsukka with locations at Ohodo. Through our expertise, the epic was taken from the world of make-believe and situated in the modern world of human beings without the unfortunate obfuscation of meaning which such creative activities tend to portend.

Even as a sub-department, the unit had maintained unparalleled vibrancy, and has introduced innovations in production and research. A few examples of the pioneering activities of today's inaugural lecturer will suffice. In 1992, my television script, *A Parliament of Vultures*, was divided into thirteen episodes and featured for a full season in the Nigerian Television Authority, Enugu. In 1993, I received a research grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to work on the use of drama in the dissemination of information to target audiences on maternal mortality and the risks of adolescent pregnancy. My play, *The Road to Maternal Death*, was used as an 'instrument for this dissemination, and was staged in many communities from Enugu, to Abuja. Thus I was in research collaboration with the Society for Gynecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON) and was in close research association with some of its members most prominent among them being Professor W. Chukwudebelu of our Teaching Hospital, and Professor Nimmi Briggs, the present Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt.

With the success of the SOGON research, I was again invited by the Onchocerciasis Research Group on a grant from the World Health Organization. My research involvement was the use of drama to encourage patients to respond to repeated treatment for onchocerciasis. In collaboration with the leader of this group, Professor Paul Okonkwo of the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics of our College of Medicine, and appropriate script, *After the Deluge*, was produced, and this served the

purpose effectively. It is now clear, from these few examples, that the versatile theatre scholar's research forte is limitless.

The Origin of Theatre

The Vice-Chancellor, fellow academics, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the genesis of our art took place one day in the sixth century BC during the vintage season. Many citizens of Athens, numbering about 15,000, dressed in their best tunics, were happily seated in the Theatre of Dionysus, an amphitheatre on the south side of the Acropolis, the tallest hill in Athens. A chorus of fifty men was performing the dithyramb before the audience. The performance was a simple affair. The performers had to dance amidst songs of praise to Dionysus, the Greek God of wine and fertility.

In the middle of the performance, which was mainly presentational, one of the chorus members broke away from the group, mounted the altar stone in the centre of the performance arena, and assumed the role of the god about whose activities the chorus had assembled to recount. Stepping out of himself, he sang and danced, gestured and mimicked, to the appreciation of the astonished audience.

This sole actor impersonated the hero instead of singing about him, thereby turning a purely storytelling and praise-chant situation into a dramatic form before the ecstatic spectators. The man who performed this historic act was **Thespis**, the Greek artist credited with the discovery ' of drama, and who eventually became known as the first actor, as well as the first writer of tragedy. The Greek word for actor, *hypocrite*, literally means *Answerer*, thus emphasizing the fact that drama required the verbal exchange of dialogue and interaction of the actor with the chorus.

Soon after this marvelous innovation, other Greek artists began to imitate the performance method of this extraordinary artist. By 534 BC this method had gained so much popularity that the Greek ruler, Pisistratus, set up dramatic contests as part of the festival of Dionysus. Drama, thus, became a state affair. Since then, this art has grown considerably, acquired different forms and has come to mean different things to different communities. Though it has consistently emphasized the affinity between the Greek word *dran*, to do, and *theatron*, to see, this art has affected too many people around the

globe, and has assumed different roles in many communities.

In non-western cultures, especially Africa, the origin of theatre was for a long time a subject of intellectual speculation. African scholars, and scholars interested in African drama and theatre, were engaged in intellectual pugilism on whether or not African performances can be perceived as theatre, resulting in two schools of criticism: the evolutionary and the relativistic schools. While the evolutionary school argues that since drama is dynamic, yields meaning readily, and aims in part at edification, and since the story is not dramatized, traditional performances cannot be called drama, the relativistic school, argues that African traditional drama should be recognized as potent drama because they are communal dramas, not secular ones. This school examines aspects of some African festivals and uses the critical parameters of western theatre to describe a situation that is not tailored to embody that kind of sensibility. The ultimate tragedy of this situation is that virtually all aspects of cultural life find impetus in this exegesis.

However, there is need to exercise caution in ascribing the quality of drama to traditional festivals. While some traditional performances contain elements or features of drama, many others merely contain elements of the dramatic. And here lies the confusion between drama as a genre and the dramatic as a concept. An activity may be considered *dramatic* without necessarily being *drama* or *entertainment*. A public fight between a man and his wife may be dramatic but it is not *drama*. Drama involves imitation, impersonation, and a deliberate interest in costume, modulation of voice, gesticulation and movement in rhythm with the idiosyncrasies of the character being imitated. It is not reality but an illusion of it. As Bertolt Brecht rightly points out,

Human beings go to the theatre in order to be swept away, captivated, impressed, uplifted, horrified, moved, kept in suspense, released, diverted, set free, set going, transplanted from their own time, and supplied with illusions (271-2).

Even when plays are modeled on actual happenings, the law of probability must prevail, and probable impossibility takes precedence over improbable possibility.

The origin of theatre as enactment in non-western cultures is tied to the apron strings of ritual associated with fertility, vegetation and communal displays. The

particular ritual that gave rise to drama, it appears, was sympathetic magic - acting out ceremonies designed to affect the behaviour of the gods. This theory first received impetus from the works of Sir James George Frazer. His monumental work, *The Golden Bough*, lays bare some characteristic archetypes in primitive vegetation magic which are deemed to have paved the way for the evolution of theatre as enactment. The primitive man, it appears, first noticed the forces that affected his existence and sought ways of understanding these forces in order to woo them or even control them for their own benefit, thus leading to ritual practices. As I have pointed out elsewhere, Frazer's work was the first to focus the attention of scholars to the fact that theatre may have originated from the ritual practices of ancient people, and must have led Susan Langer and Northrop Frye into coining their theories of describing literary genres as if they were structured by the rhythms of seasonal change (42).

Frazer's work also opened the door for other empirical investigations on the origin of non-western theatres. Benjamin Hunninger, E.T. Kirby, William Ridgeway, Loomis Havemeyer, Colin Tumbull are significant researchers whose works are of interest to the theatre scholar. In my work on the origin of non-western theatre, I summarized this theory of origin in the following terms:

The major enactment that caused (non-western) theatre to originate, it seems to me, was the worship of the dead. While Frazer talks of cultures in which the effective spirits (or gods) are identified as ancestors', Ridgeway emphatically maintains, 'through empirical research, that worship of dead ancestors caused the origin of theatre. He states that the actor was merely a medium for this origination, citing examples from the *nat-kadaws* (translated nat-wives) of Burma who, according to him, acted as if spirit husbands, who have been given identity as spirits, possessed them. Ancestral worship was a form of ritual whose performance required dramatic action, but which was not intended to entertain an audience. Science and intellect punctured the belief system which held the ritual together and thus inevitably moved it to entertainment (44).

It is interesting to note, however, that other traditional theatrical performances abound in many cultures around the world. A few examples of these performances include the *Noh theatre* of Japan which is inspired both spiritually and artistically by Zen

Buddhism, and which dates back to the fourteenth century. Other examples are the *Kathakali drama* of South India which creates episodes from ancient Ramayana, the *Bear dance* of native Americans, the *Corroboree* performance of the Australian Aborigines, the *Furry dance* festival of Helston, Cornwall, England, the *Maori Haka* dance of New Zealand and the *Mummers' play*, a popular British folk drama. Some of these traditional performances have been given academic interpretations unique to their art, as exemplified in Zeami Motokiyo's summary of the practice of Noh in terms of nine levels of abstraction.

It is noteworthy that the theory of origin is supported, in part, by modern scholars who have advanced this theory in favour of other academic disciplines apart from theatre. Carl Jung, for instance, saw myths as emanating from what he describes as a universal, or collective, unconscious: stories that have the quality of dreams, but are not associated with the private dreams of individuals but inherited dreams of all humanity embodying basic realities, thus giving rise to his conclusion that psychological reality is more compelling than scientific reality.

Furthermore, Antonin Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty* is an inverted concept of sympathetic magic because of its conception of cruelty. To Artaud modern life is full of cruelty and in order to survive these horrors we need to confront them as entertainment.

Theatre as an Academic Discipline

Theatre as an academic discipline received its first impetus in the United States of America. The earliest known intrusion of Drama into the University system was pioneered in 1906 by George Pierce Baker at Harvard University. Baker started teaching Drama in one of his classes, *English 47*, which he eventually renamed *47 Workshop*. He later made a proposal for the establishment of a Department of Drama in Harvard but the University saw the venture as experimental and the proposal was unsuccessful. In 1914, Thomas Wood Stevens established the first degree programme in Drama at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In 1924, with an endowment by Edward S. Harkness, Yale University established a Drama programme in the School of the Fine Arts. George Pierce Baker happily migrated to Yale the following year to head

the new department.

In England, the situation was different. Dramatic activities were accepted as part of undergraduate student leisure interest. This was eventually given official impetus in 1855, thus establishing The Amateur Dramatic Company at Trinity College, Cambridge University. This Company operated in the University Arts Theatre and "served the double functions of repertory for the town and good plays for the schools" (Coggin 221). In 1885 the Oxford University Dramatic Society was formed, and that further helped to boost the fortunes of drama in that continent.

In 1950, with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation of New York, the University of Bristol established and inaugurated the first department of drama in an English university. The man instrumental to the birth of the department was Professor Glynne Wickham, and to show his intellectual attachment to the discipline, he promptly gave his inaugural lecture, thus becoming the first professor to give an inaugural lecture in Theatre in a British university. Incidentally when the Drama programme was established in the University College, Ibadan, Professor Wickham was appointed the first External Examiner in Drama (Adedeji 6).

The first School of Drama in the Nigerian University system was established at the University College, Ibadan. This was a result of a visitation conducted in 1961. By 1962, the University obtained a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation of New York for the purpose of establishing the School. In October 1963, the school was officially opened for academic work.

The Art of Theatre

Before examining the role of theatre in national integration, let us attempt a comprehensive definition of theatre. Theatre is art, and art is life seen through the temperament of an individual artist. As Leo Tolstoy rightly points out, "Art, like speech, is a means of communication, and therefore of progress, that is of the movement of humanity forward towards perfection" (917). In every society, in every period of history, the feeling of people is reflected in the various ramifications of their art. Hence, art and

life are not totally abysmal. As Oscar Wilde points out, "Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and re-fashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact, invents, imagines, dreams and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment" (625).

In stating and analyzing the utility and validity of art, Susanne Langer puts forward a theory in which she asserts that "all art are the creation of 'expressive forms', or apparent forms expressive of human feeling". To further elucidate the meaning and utility of art, she states:

A work of art is an expressive form created for our perception through sense or imagination, and what it expresses is human feeling. The word feeling must be taken here in its broadest sense, meaning everything that can be felt, from physical sensation, pain, and comfort, excitement and repose, to the most complex emotions, intellectual tensions, or the steady feeling-tones of a conscious human life (15).

There is a tendency, even a temptation, to classify drama as literature. Clearly, drama can serve both as literature as well as a performing art. The script of a play places drama directly under the altar of literature, while its performance, assigns it to the performing arts.

However, there are plays which cannot necessarily be categorized as literature. An example is the mime play, which utilizes gestures to communicate without the spoken word. Since literature is necessarily linguistic, it ought to be distinguished from painting, sculpture, music, and dance. Of the three creative works - novel, poetry and drama - drama stands on a different pedestal because it can communicate without the spoken word, while the poet and the novelist have nothing but the spoken word, which is linguistic, to communicate meaning. In these genres, depiction of character, feeling, action, thought and setting can only be done through language. The dramatist also uses language to depict thought, character, feeling, action and setting, but he is not limited to it. He can also utilize movement, gesture, visual and sound effects to communicate meaning.

Mention should also be made of dance dramas and mime plays. While the former

is the work of choreographers, the latter is within the province or domain of mime artists. And since language is not a part of their realization, they cannot be classified as literature. They, like theatre, belong to the performing arts, but the theatre artist makes use of them to bring about a comprehensive theatrical ensemble to achieve the totality of the quintessence of performance.

It is necessary to point out, also, the existence of wordless plays, which are not necessarily mimes, but which use a combination of gestures, sound effects, and rhythm to communicate meaning. An example of this type of play is Samuel Beckett's *Breath*, which cannot be classified as literature. At the other side of the coin, we have radio plays which utilize language to communicate meaning, though not limited to it. Its power arises from the actor's speaking of the language, and its realization is not complete until it is spoken by an actor. Here, meaning is derived from a combination of factors: projection, modulation, articulation and resonance, and sometimes these are what make it interesting to the audience.

Though a work can be classified as dramatic literature, its utility does not stop on the altar of drama. In a theatrical production, language is used only to complement the resources of the stage. That is why a theatrical production does not necessarily pass literature on to the audience, but utilizes other resources of the stage to communicate meaning. A performance is not merely a concatenation of sentences uttered by a character. This is because dramatists do not talk. They create characters that talk to the audience.

Films also constitute an integral part of theatre. However, it is important to note that in films, language is subordinate to the visual image.

However, the use of language is not exclusive to the linguistic requirements of lexicon, syntax and semantics. Because action is the hallmark of theatre, theatre artists often talk of the language of love, the language of music, the language of action, the language of dance.

Because it uses words to communicate, theatre belongs to the family of literature, and its use of the visual image and spectacle classifies it as a visual art. As George R. Kemodle,

a Renaissance scholar, points out, if "theatre is an offspring of literature on one side of the family tree it is no less a descendant of painting and sculpture on the other side (2). It is, therefore, necessary to conclude vehemently that theatre is many things at once: architecture, painting, electrical engineering, stagecraft, fashion designing, etc.

Because of the complexity of theatre arts, its appreciation follows an entirely unique situation. First, its creation compels perception by 'two senses and their dimensions are both temporal and spatial. This is because its creation arises not as the forte of one isolated artist but results from collaboration by different artists: the playwright, the director, the designers, the actors, etc. This collaboration results in a final product.

It is this complexity that makes extant terminologies inadequate to express the totality of the art of theatre. For instance, while the words ' Historian, Linguist or Archaeologist may express the totality of what these artists do, the popular term, *dramatist*, is inadequate in describing the theatre artist since the word is exclusively used for the author of 'plays. *Theatrician*, therefore, is the most appropriate term to describe the theatre artist in its totality. This will not be out of place since the Mathematics scholar goes by the appellation of Mathematician.

Theatre critic and scholar, Theodore Shank, has earlier drawn our attention to the inadequacy of certain terms to reflect faithfully the ' happenings in the theatre. The words *audience* and *spectator*, he maintains, are inadequate appellations for those who attend theatrical ' productions. Invoking the *Webster's International Dictionary* to buttress his point, Shank maintains that the word "audience" means an assembly of hearers, and does not represent a single individual watching a theatrical production. Furthermore, the term "spectator" refers to one who merely looks or beholds, as in a football match or wrestling tournament. Since the person watching a theatre performance is involved in the activities of looking and listening, the word, *percipient* seems most appropriate to reflect the idea of listening, watching and appreciating a performance. .,

For the purpose of this lecture, the term *drama* may be used interchangeably with

theatre, but emphasis will be placed on the written script when the word drama is used, and on the performance, when the word theatre is used. Invariably, as Shank points out, audience can be used to reflect the assembly of people in the theatre, spectator to specifically refer to an individual in the audience, and percipient to refer to theatricians and other artists who utilize the art of perception in watching a dramatic production.

Theatre and Other Disciplines

As has been pointed out earlier, theatre has significant affinities with other academic disciplines. The relationship between theatre and other areas and academic concepts is quite significant. In fact, only few academic disciplines have momentous connection with other academic disciplines in the same magnitude as theatre. Through playwriting, the theatre artist becomes a philosopher, psychologist, and creative artist;

through acting, he demonstrates his penchant for creativity and role playing; through directing he becomes a teacher, an educator and through technical set-design, he becomes an architect, an engineer, a fine artist, a draughtsman; and through Theatre Administration and Management, he becomes a public relations expert, a business man, an accountant; through costume design he demonstrates abilities in fashion designing, and through make-up, he becomes a beauty expert in both physical and metaphysical dimensions.

Apart from these significant affinities, the study of theatre arts has been infused into academic disciplines not merely as appendages to these disciplines but as an independent unit of study. Furthermore, critical concepts outside the humanities have found their way into the study of theatre arts. This has given rise to the evolution of new disciplines in the Universities in Europe and America where theatre arts has developed a tremendous niche in diverse academic situations. Let us briefly examine some of these disciplines and concepts if only to establish the status of theatre as an exceptional discipline.

psychodrama

The term, *psychodrama*, is used to describe such activities as clinical role playing, action analysis, drama therapy, behavioral rehearsal, improvisatory theatre and

spontaneous happening. It involves a certain kind of psychotherapy, and is largely a method of healing through the use of action methods, but it is not limited to it. An important branch of this art, behavioral psychodrama, is used to remove symptoms, change behaviour, and promote social adjustment. In extreme cases, psychodrama has been effective even in curative measures.

A comprehensive definition of psychodrama is provided by Peter Felix Kellermann, thus:

Psychodrama is a method of psychotherapy in which clients are encouraged to continue and complete their actions through dramatization, role playing and dramatic self-presentation. Both verbal and non verbal communications are utilized. A number of scenes are enacted, depicting, for example, memories of specific happenings in the past, unfinished situations, inner dramas, fantasies, dreams, preparations for future risk-taking situations, or unrehearsed expressions of mental states in the here and now. These scenes either approximate real-life situations or are externalizations of inner mental processes... Many techniques are employed, such as role reversal, doubling, mirroring, concretizing, maximizing and soliloquy (20).

The process of role-taking in psychodrama is synonymous with the method an actor takes on a new role in his effort to interpret character. As a therapy, it helps in the promotion of personality growth and developments, as well as human growth and creativity, and in rectifying the unfortunate problems of inhibited growth. Hence, through psychodrama, the patient is assured productive attitudes towards life, and a more gratifying relationship with others.

In his book, *The Passionate Technique: Strategic Psychodrama with Individuals, Families and Groups*, Williams points out the epic qualities of psychodrama by emphasizing such characteristics as its penchant for "showing people the value and intentionality of their lives, for validating a viewpoint, or making sense of a crazy experience, for expression of pent-up emotion, for providing a spark, a moment of "" epiphany, intensity and poetry" (79).

Theatre Therapy

Theatre therapy refers to two disciplines, drama/theatre and psychotherapy, and utilizes techniques that are common to both. Most prominent in these techniques are a combination of affective cognitive and psychomotor situations which are achieved through improvisation and role playing. Renowned actor-trainer, Konstantin Stanislavski, in his seminal book, *An Actor Prepares*, makes use of this technique, which he describes as free association and affective memory. Furthermore, theatre practitioners who have referred to the cathartic analysis of the theatre experience include Julian Beck, Judith Malina, Richard Schechner, Jerzy Grotowski, and Antonin Artaud. These theatricians emphasize the use of theatre therapy by using the terms *subconscious*, *ego*, *projection* and *repression* in their discourses on actor training and dramatic criticism, thus making theatre therapy a significant aspect of theatre arts. Artaud, for instance, points out that theatre has the potential to release conflicts, disengage power and liberate possibilities. According to him, "the action of the theatre, like that of the plague, is beneficial for impelling men to see themselves as they are, it causes the mask to fall, reveals the lie, the slackness, baseness and hypocrisy of our world (31)

Theatre therapists, as Robert J. Landy points out, work with an avalanche of people, "especially the emotionally disturbed, the physically disabled, including deaf and blind groups, the developmentally disabled, the socio-pathic, groups of incarcerated or ex-offenders, the language impaired, the gifted and the elderly." (6). Apart from these groups theatre therapists also work with non-disabled individuals who are in one kind of crisis or another, as well as those in need of investigating and finding solutions to certain confusing aspects of their lives. Thus, guidance counselors harness the gains of theatre arts in the behaviour modification of their clients during counseling sessions.

Creative Dramatics/Theatre in Education

In the performing arts, creative dramatics is a unique method of instruction considered advantageous in the nurture of children, especially the gifted and talented. Creative drama is not drama in the literal sense of the word. It refers to the process of informal or improvised drama which is created by participants. Its main goal is not

dramatic production for an external audience but dramatization of events, stories, tales, poems and other necessary situations from academic areas which the teacher wants his students to understand better and remember more vividly. In this type of drama, learning takes place while the children are actively involved in improvised, process-centred drama which is not meant for an external audience. The "play" is exclusively meant for the children involved in the classroom experience.

In creative drama the rigours of production are non-existent. There are no rehearsals since the little practice sometimes encountered serves as a part of the learning process. The classroom space serves as the stage as well as the auditorium. There is no need for theatrical settings or decoration, no costumes, no special lighting. Properties are sometimes used but their use is limited to the basic essentials, especially when they add to the understanding of the creative process involved.

Scholars are unanimous in their opinion that creative drama plays an invaluable role in a child's developmental learning. This is supported by the fact that social maturation can be facilitated by experience and that what a child does makes a greater impact on him than what he is told. Furthermore, the process of creative drama exposes the child to the learning process without the tight rigours of the traditional classroom situation, thus enabling him to better internalize and demonstrate the experience acquired during the process.

William J. McKeachie, one of the proponents of the use of role playing in teaching, has identified seven purposes of role playing in creative dramatics:

- ☐ to give students practice in using what they have learned;
- ☐ to illustrate principles from the course content;
- ☐ to develop insight into human relations problems;
- ☐ to provide concrete basis for discussion;
- ☐ to maintain or arouse interest;
- ☐ to provide a channel in which feelings can be expressed under the guise of make-believe; and

- to develop increased awareness of one's own and other's feelings, (136-7)

Creative drama helps to resuscitate and revive tired and bored minds. It is particularly beneficial to the education of children who could be easily bored by the traditional classroom experience. It creates an adequate opportunity for activities which help the students to internalize what has been experienced. Since it is a way of living, it aids a child's study and achievement rather than interfere with it. And since it is concerned with direct experience, it aids the intuitive knowledge of the students. Creative drama, therefore, helps the child to develop practical and creative skills through the development of his own mimetic instinct. Hence, the period spent in listening to boring explanations and copious rhetoric could be better spent learning through direct experience.

In effect, creative drama develops the learners' cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities.

Some Approaches to Theatre Scholarship

It is necessary to point out that there are innovative perspectives in contemporary theatre practice, like theatre for development and popular theatre, which include performances like puppetry, singing and dancing, and Guerrilla Theatre, which targets not merely the educated but all members of the community. This category of theatre is performed mainly in local languages and tackles local problems peculiar to the members of a particular community. For time constraints this lecture will not delve into this category. For now, let us briefly examine two significant and avant-garde approaches to theatre scholarship.

The Semiotic Approach

Semiotics or Semiology, the science that studies the production of meaning in society, has been variously applied to the study and criticism of theatre, especially with regard to signification and communication. Since it deals with the methods through which meanings are both generated and exchanged, the sign-systems and codes rampant in society, as well as actual messages and texts produced thereby, semiotics has been

found to be a veritable academic tool in the interpretation of theatre as communication. The concept of semiotization intruded into theatre studies in 1931 with the Prague School whose structural researches into almost every kind of artistic and semiotic activity led the way to the establishment of the principles of theatrical signification. Their researches gave birth to the two important publications that affected the scientific analysis of theatre arts.

The first, *Aesthetics of the Art of Drama* by Otakar Zick which, though not exclusively structuralist in nature, provided groundwork for future studies in the semiotics of theatre arts. The second, "An Attempted Structural Analysis of the Phenomenon of the Actor" by Jan Mukarovsky has remained the first study of performance semiotics. The profundity of Mukarovsky's study is that it classifies an assemblage of festival signs and their functions using the mimes of Charlie Chaplin as a model for analysis

In theatre semiotics, it is assumed that every detail is a sign clearly intended to signify meaning and the totality of meaning is arrived at through a comprehensive evaluation of the signs or significations. The theatrical costume or set, for instance, is seen as signs that signify certain characteristics. As Keir Elam rightly points out.

In traditional dramatic performance, the actor's body acquires its mimetic and representational powers by becoming something other than itself, more and less than individual. This applies equally to his speech (which assumes the generally signified "discourse") and every aspect of his performance, to the extent that even purely contingent factors, such as physiologically determined reflexes are accepted as signifying units (9).

As the science of signs, semiology is not concerned with the identification of meaning as does hermeneutics or literary criticism. It is mainly concerned with the study of the role of signs in rendering meaning through connotative and denotative dimensions, by integrating a sign into a signifying system, thus establishing its aesthetic function.

The Hermeneutic Approach

Hermeneutics, the theory of interpretative methods in the humanities and social sciences, is primarily concerned with the modernization of existing but pertinent interpretation. It originated from Biblical exegesis and later the scholarly works of the

Alexandrian School of Hellenistic and Judaic exegesis, both of which seek the hidden meaning in texts. It involves the clarification and distortions and obscurities that arise as a result of past conclusions that may have become obsolete, and ensures the preservation of the text despite changes in language and attitudes to scholarship. The aim is not to determine the literary meaning of a text but to reintegrate a canonical or significant text into the present time by reformulating it in order to make it relevant and valid to a new generation.

Hungarian scholar, George Lukacs gave hermeneutics significant impetus as a tool for the interpretation of modern drama with the publication of his seminal work. *The Evolution of Modern Drama* (1908), Lukacs, who was one of the founders of the Thalia Theatre, was the first scholar to translate Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* into Hungarian. With the arrival of Jurgen Habermas into the scene, the forte of hermeneutics shifted from psychologism to the language of communication.

The Hermeneutic Circle is very significant in the understanding, interpretation and appreciation of drama both as text and performance. The doctrine of hermeneutics stipulates that one cannot fully understand any part of a text until the whole is read and analyzed. Invariably, the whole cannot be fully understood until the parts are understood. In the same way, one cannot clearly understand any scene of a play until one has seen the whole play and ranked it with the pieces of action tied together to form a total experience. An understanding of the pairs - the parts and the whole, the one and the multitude, the subordinate and the comprehensive - is crucial to our understanding of the theatre arts. The works of Stanislavski, especially the development of psychological realism, are indicative of the application of general hermeneutics in actor training.

Recent scholarship on hermeneutic theory stresses the importance of translation and adaptation in the recreation of an old work by placing it in new historical circumstances. My attempt at this hermeneutic exercise is encapsulated in my adaptation of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*, entitled *When the Arrow Rebounds* which gives a dramatic re-interpretation of this classic.

Neophyte critics of drama have consistently fallen into the danger of documentary

fallacy, the inability of the critic to draw the necessary line between a work of art and its creation, and sometimes question the dramatic character instead of the author. There is basically no difference between a Pediment created by a plastic artist and a play created by a dramatist. But unfortunately, when one sees a pediment, one does not talk to it as if it were a human being. One knows that an artist created it. Invariably, one should not consider a dramatic character as human being. One should know that someone created it and ascribed certain linguistic inscriptions on him.

The Process of Integration ,

Now, let us examine the role of theatre as a tool for national integration. The term integration bears the connotation of bringing parts into a whole, of removal of barriers that cause segregation. It involves unification and cooperation. It is the method of combining separate parts into one monolithic entity. In Mathematics, integration is the instance of obtaining the integral of a function. The integrationist is an apostle of unification, amalgamation, consolidation, homogenization and concatenation. Without integration there is bound to be disintegration which causes cultural confusion.

Confusion can be described as a mix up, disorder, to bewilder or embarrass. The *Thesaurus* goes further to list an avalanche of words that further clarify the meaning of confusion: complication, intricacy, untidiness, complexity, mistake, turmoil, pandemonium, commotion, disarray, jumble, trouble, uproar, fracas, distraction, astonishment, consternation, chaos, turbulence, irregularity, breakdown, obstruction.

Confusion can lead to acculturation, loss of group identity and tainted

The Image of the Nigerian

In a period of self-examination, Justice Oputa remarks, in a voice laden with lamentation and lachrymose: "We don't have Nigerians yet, but tribalists" (9). Clearly, Nigeria's image is fraught with dirt in the international circles, despite the efforts of the government to bleach it. The Nigerian situation looks like a comedy on the one hand, where the leaders complain of the unfortunate inability of the ruled to bend to the rule of

law. On the other hand, it looks like a tragedy where the ruled lament the excesses of the rulers, especially with regard to the exercise of caution in manning the national treasury. The consequent diversity in unity and unity in diversity in the expression of opinion leads to a constant display of theatre of the absurd.

Ruminating on the situation of the Nigerian society, literary critic, Emeka Okeke-Ezigbo states:

Although Nigerian citizens wear expensive lace and shoes, their profile approximates what Duncan Williams caustically characterized as "trouserless apes. The modern Nigerian has no proper knowledge of self or society. He lacks a focus and a destination. He is like the foolish man in the fable trying to run a race in iron shoes and not understanding why he cannot move. The average modern Nigerian is a noisy, crude fellow without moral scruples or conscience. His instincts are mechanical, commercial, his tastes are expensive, vulgar and corrupt, his politics is expediency, his religion is hypocrisy. He lies, cheats, steals, and evades "taxes.... His sexual appetite is lawless; he is the eternal he-goat on heat. He is unpatriotic, impatient, wicked and anti-social. He has institutionalized mediocrity, with the result that arts and culture are smothered by barbarian mundaneness and cheap resonance of cheap entertainment. In short, Nigerian society, like decadent Rome, is a vicious amusement park (131).

The interpretation of the nature of the Nigerian society depends on the psychoanalytical status of the interpreter. Those who complain oppression see Nigeria in negative terms. But those who appear comfortable declare, with ecstasy, the greatness of the nation. Renowned novelist, Chinua Achebe, clarifies the situation further by stating that

Nigeria is not a great country. It is one of the most disorderly nations of the world. It is one of the most corrupt, insensitive, inefficient places under the sun. It is one of the most expensive countries and one of those that give the least value for money. It is dirty, callous, noisy, ostentatious, dishonest and vulgar. In short, it is among the most unpleasant places on earth (11).

This does not mean that Nigerians are without redemption, and that efforts have not been made in the area of national integration, but it appears that those efforts are not strong enough to make an impact on national integration. This can be exemplified in the various attempts at fighting indiscipline, the conscious attempt to evolve a civil society,

the colossal fight against corruption, and efforts at achieving a federal character. As a nation, we have stipulated goals, development plans, annual budgets and creation of experts in the workforce. But these are scattered efforts which have not made significant impact on national integration.

Notions of citizenship in our modern society are less attractive than in the traditional society where excellence is fundamental in the conferment of citizenship or honour on someone. In the traditional society, a person who has achieved excellence in an acceptable characteristic of society is conferred with the citizenship of that country and given appropriate rights and privileges. For instance, in the Greek society, Oedipus was immediately conferred with the citizenship of Thebes after answering the riddle of the Sphinx and saving the nation from catastrophe. Notions of citizenship in Nigeria should be structured in such a way that people are accorded rights of citizenship where they live in order to ensure national integration.

The Theatre Arts and National Integration

Before examining how theatre can help in national integration, let us evaluate the Nigerian society by distinguishing between the reptilian brain and mammalian instinct. A society characterized by the reptilian brain displays features of aggression, resistance to change, a scramble for materialism with voracious instincts. Such a society lacks the mammalian brain which is characterized by insights, intuitions, and self-sacrifice, and is, therefore, innocent of conscious sustained thought and the ability to abstract and synthesize. In this kind of society, the question is not how the theatre arts can contribute to national integration. Such a society needs the theatre arts because they constitute the best and brightest expressions of all humanity. They help to solve real problems, the problems of existence, the problem of being human.

Indifference to the theatre arts is the bane of many societies including Nigeria. A society that abhors the theatre arts is incapable of humanistic thinking and cultural behaviour. William Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar* paints a picture of a character that is devoid of the theatre arts and was described as unreliable and dangerous. The

indefatigable Caesar confides in his friend. Mark Anthony that Cassius loves no plays and hears no music. The conclusion is that since Cassius is incapable of appreciating the arts, he was unreliable and dangerous. Can this be the case with a majority of Nigerians? Can one conclude that a majority of Nigerians are incapable of appreciating the theatre arts?

Performance starts with a script, and a script is usually produced in a social setting, with a background of shared concepts and conventions. The craft of writing requires the playwright to have a destination and carry that destination through his work in order to inform, even change, society. The writer channels his work towards the audience in such a way that his work is seen to have utility to the reader or audience. It can be directed to particular archetypal characters or the entire nation. In this way, empathy becomes not only imperative but paramount. Ideological stipulations should be formed in the materiality of the literary text. Hence, the playwright is many things at once: a philosopher, a historical witness, a psychologist and psychoanalyst, a teacher, and a custodian of the moral conscience of his society. He should be committed, not see his work as arbitrary scabrousness, but an enterprise that has tremendous utility, which should be a vehicle for change. The relationship between the text and the public, H.R. Jauss maintains,

encompasses more than the facet that every work has its specific, historically and sociologically determined audience, that every writer is dependent upon the milieu, views and ideology of his readers and that literary success requires a book which expresses what the group expects, a book which presents the group with its own portrait (85).

When the script is performed before an audience, it portrays the reality of life, mirrors society and the lives of the citizens and addresses the problems of the society. A society that cannot read should, at least, watch. A society that is devoid of both is headed in the Carthaginian direction.

The present state of our dramatic literature can best be described as ethnic or regional literature. It is necessary to transcend the present state of dramatic writing and transit from ethnic to national heroes. The temperament of the nation can be

achieved through the depiction of ethnic heroes, or through the transition from ethnic to national heroes. Ethnic heroes like Ezeulu (Nwabueze's *When the Arrow Rebounds*), Harcourt White (Rotimi's *Hopes of the Living Dead*), Elesin Oba '(Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*) and Morountodun (Osofisan's *Morountodun*) to mention but four, can be portrayed to transit from ethnic to national models of heroism.

Even in prose fiction, the situation remains the same. Chris Oriko (Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*), and Chief Nanga (*A Man of the People*), though embedded with national setting but grounded in ethnic bases, can be made to transcend ethnic bases and assume the role

of national heroes. Renowned American writer, Herman Melville, represented the characteristic American spirit in his celebrated novel, *Moby Dick*. It is my submission that in order to achieve national integration, dramatists ought to portray what would be described as the Nigerian spirit!

The traditional mode of literary expression lends authenticity to integration and universality. The setting of traditional tales is far removed from the ordinary specific environment. The authors of legends and folktales involve the characters in issues of universal relevance to the society, not to a particular group. Often, the setting is seven forests and seven rivers away from the ordinary locale of the living, in order to situate it in a purely anonymous environment so that setting does not encumber interpretation or appreciation. In animal stories, for instance, the action takes place in the country of animals, not the specific locale of a particular group of animals. Even when a particular animal is chosen as the character, his attitude is placed alongside the attitude of other animals in the kingdom. Incidentally, our writers are believed to have developed from oral tradition. How, then, can one explain the fact that oral tradition stresses unity and integration, while the modern literary tradition consciously or unconsciously departs from it.

To achieve extraordinary universality in writing, the writer may return to archetypes or the creation of the world hero, what Irish novelist, James Joyce, describes

as *monomyth*. Stressing the unique qualities of the world hero, Richard Janaro and Thelma Altshuler maintain that "he appears to represent humanity in an idealized form: special, nearly godlike, destined for better things but beset by incredible obstacles" (324). Though he may not be morally perfect and does not always triumph, his characteristics are universal rather than peculiar.

The Language Problem

The issue of language should be ignored in any purposeful discussion of the role of theatre in national integration because though the performer can rely on gesture, movement, visual and sound effects to communicate meaning, language still remains his veritable communication tool. The language question has been variously addressed in critical scholarship that one feels reluctant to repeat them here. The issue of the use of the mother tongue in literary expression, as has been noted, is out of the question because of the multiplicity of indigenous languages in Nigeria. Using a particular ethnic language in a country like Nigeria will exacerbate the situation. As Balibar and Macherey point out, "the work of literary production depends on the existence of a common language codifying linguistic, both for its material and for its aims - insomuch as literature contributes directly to the maintenance of a common language" (62). In a country without a national language, what is the possible method of achieving this?

There have been efforts made towards the dislocation of language, or at least the introduction of novelty in its application. Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Femi Osofisan, Gabriel Okara, Aig Imokhuede, Ogonna Agu, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ezenwa-Ohaeto, to mention no more, have made attempts at the experimental use of language, the aim being to make it applicable to all categories of audience. Ola Rotimi's case has demonstrated that language can be tailored to accommodate all categories of audience. Discussing Ola Rotimi's commitment to his audience, Alex C. Johnson describes Rotimi's language as "a kind of language close to the rhythms and speech patterns of his native language but not deviating too radically from standard English and adequate to carry the weight of his themes" (137-8).

Though this situation may not be peculiar to Rotimi's art, and could be said to have

been pioneered by Chinua Achebe in his fiction, Rotimi remains an adequate example of the problem of language in a multi-lingual society. Rotimi's mother was Ijaw, while his father was Yoruba. His father did not speak Ijaw, while his mother never spoke Yoruba. The children communicated with both parents in an adulterated form of the English language. As Rotimi himself points out, "in handling the English language in my plays, I strive to temper its phraseology to the ear of both the dominant semi-literate as well as the literate classes, ensuring that my dialogue reaches out to both groups with ease in assimilation and clarity in identification" (60).

Let us conclude the language issue by stating the obvious: that the use of English as a vehicle for literary expression does not place the reader or the writer at a disadvantage. As a vehicle for national integration, the language should be used in such a way that it conveys meaning without distorting the uniqueness of the situation, or the intelligibility of the language. The English language, as a world language, has been subjected to different forms of use. Since we have American English, etc., Nigerian English will not be totally unrealistic. Dramatists should introduce novelty in the use of English and attempt to make it a national phenomenon.

The Theme of Politics

Politics is one major avenue for achieving national integration, but our politics has variously been described as hypocrisy, and African politicians appear to wallow in indiscriminate abuse of power. Somalian writer, Nuruddin Farah, painfully laments the situation of the African politician, in the following words: "The African politician is a blind man; he moves only in one direction - towards himself (11).

Plays like Emeka Nwabueze's *A Parliament of Vultures* and Wole Soyinka's *Kongi's Harvest*, *A Play of Giants* and *King Babu* portray the politician in different garbs. For instance, while *Kongi's Harvest* explores the clash between a modern dictatorship and the traditional system it replaced, *A Parliament of Vultures* deals with modern political maneuvering. Kongi attempts to usurp the spiritual authority of Oba Danlola in his effort to acquire both political and traditional authority. Asking the Oba to perform

the ritual of offering him the yam harvest in a public ceremony is symbolically tantamount to handing over the spiritual authority of the traditional ruler to the crafty politician. Soyinka depicts that tradition is a spiritual affair which derives from the roots of a people's culture, while politics is a physical affair, a game whose success derives from intrigue and crafty polemics delivered from the safety of the soapbox.

No art can better serve society as the theatre arts. This is because theatre contains so many elements found in other arts and its appeal is exceptionally broad. Theatre presents us with a meaningful human action. Such an action can also be described as "psychic gesture" because the action and its rendering yield more meaning since they speak to our whole being, and hence ensure our total understanding and compliance.

As a vehicle for national integration, drama stands at the apex of other genres because of its immediacy and direct appeal. A play creates and presents a just and lively image of human nature and behaviour. It reproduces the passions and humours, and changes in fortune to which humanity is subject. Its ultimate aim is the delight and instruction of mankind. This genre has a bi-partite utility: it serves as literature, and also yields to a practical production where the audience is brought face to face with its infelicities through a dramatic performance. Even those who cannot read effectively will be touched by the powerful grip and the 41

edification of a performance. The use of a Traveling Theatre is recommended to ensure that the performance reaches all the parts of the country to ensure integration through a theme of national interest.

The Place of Criticism in National Integration

Criticism, the art of evaluation and interpretation, is one of the oldest academic disciplines which have helped to situate the works in their right interpretative situations. Criticism had a boost in the works of Socrates, a scholar whose doctrine of knowledge led to the evolution of comprehensive learning systems. By the time he was condemned and executed in 399 BC, he had touched the hearts of all lovers of knowledge, and his teachings became the bedrock on which later knowledge was based. Socrates was so

devoted to his teaching, for which he charged no fees, that his wife, Xanthippe, continuously nagged him about what she considered his neglect of the domestic sector.

The teachings of Socrates are significant and relevant to Nigeria's process of integration. First, he is credited with the teleological premise, which means that anything whose existence is for a useful purpose is the work of an Intelligence. Second, he taught the doctrine of the Supreme Good which states that well-being is conditioned by good action; that man reaches the apogee of his quintessence through the self denial of external needs as well as the cultivation of the mind. To Socrates happiness does not dwell in perishable and external things of the world but in things that endure which dwell within the individual.

Perhaps one of the most popular teachings of Socrates is the doctrine of self-knowledge which he considered the basis of true knowledge. This, he maintains, leads to the mastery of passion which in turn leads to the possession of unlimited powers. It is this doctrine of self-knowledge that led to his often quoted philosophy: an unexamined life is not worth living.

Forty two years later, another Classical scholar, Plato, was born. He was only twenty eight years when Socrates died, but had been a pupil of Socrates for eight years. Plato established The Academy where he taught Politics, Statesmanship, Mathematics and Dialectics - subjects that were based on the educational principles advocated in the ideal Republic. The doctrines attributed to Plato are concerned with the theory of ideas - ideality, reality and illusion - the doctrine of cosmology, and the theory of aesthetics.

Aristotle, born in 384 BC studied in Plato's Academy and even taught there, spending a total of twenty eight years with him. After the death of Plato, and the subsequent take-over of the Academy by Plato's nephew, Aristotle left for Mysia. Because of his comprehensive general knowledge, he was appointed the tutor of Alexander the Great. Alexander was then only thirteen, and was later reputed to be one of the greatest monarchs in history.

These three scholars set the pace for the criticism of the theatre arts. Plato, who was profoundly influenced by Socrates, wrote *The Republic* where he espouses in detail

the most appropriate behaviour necessary for good citizenship. Aristotle, on the other hand, differentiates the truth of art from the truth of actuality, and introduced the theory of *catharsis* as the main purpose of tragedy.

The Nigerian critic is still a slave to traditional criticism which places much faith in the sociology and history of the text and the biography of the author. Modern criticism, on the other hand, examines the internal dynamics of the text under discussion, examining it and depersonalizing and ignoring the author, asserting the individuality of the text without worrying about the peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of the creator.

Deconstruction, the most significant of all post-structuralist theories, considers the idea of a unified work illusory because of textual indeterminacy. Jacques Derrida, the apostle of the theory of deconstruction, maintains that the text should be perceived as an entity within itself and its interpretation should not be encumbered by unnecessary intrusive meanings. To him, meaning is always in a state of contention and flux because of the fluidity of the text.

In a country like Nigeria, deconstruction can be a useful critical concept because of its concentration on the text and not the author. Because of the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country, concentration on the text and not the author or his environment will make for national integration because the critic will be forced to use the process to project national issues. Concentration on the text yields meaning to the consumer of the creative work without putting him into the contradiction which the prejudicial attitude to the author imposes on him.

Conclusion

Theatre cannot be viewed in isolation of the heterodox sociopolitical matrix, since it is acknowledged universally as a social phenomenon. All aspects of life, including History, Politics, Philosophy, Psychology, and Ideology, commingle in one manner or another to form the woof of theatre. It is, therefore, a veritable weapon that would help us to grapple with our problems and lead us to that "no man's land" called national integration.

There is no better way of articulating national integration than the theatre arts. Since the play script is a blueprint for a production, this articulation should start from the

script, hence the importance of the dramatist as a progenitor of national integration. The playwright should be able to tell the truth as he sees it, and remember that the human mind has the power to grasp the truth with intuitive certainty. When he engages in a war for national integration, he should not be afraid of the consequences. He should be prepared to be abused, cajoled, and even die for his cause for, as Soyinka's *Iyaloja* would say, "It is the death of

war that kills the valiant" (*Horseman* 184). Though the artist has a considerable amount of license, this is continuously being eroded by the powerful in their efforts to stifle or falsify the notion of assimilable reality.

An avalanche of examples abounds in this continent. South African novelist, Alex La Guma, died in exile, Dennis Brutus suffered a long term of imprisonment before going on exile, while Bessie Head deserted her country and assumed a new nationality in Botswana. Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Moroccan writer Abdulateef Laabi, have suffered different terms of imprisonment. Micere Mugo was detained and tortured, and Ama Ata Aidoo lives in exile.

Theatre has been used exclusively to bring order, morality, and candour in society. An example is the English Restoration Age which, as I have argued elsewhere, is a replica of the Nigerian society. William Wycherley's play. *The Country Wife*, for instance, utilizes incidents and characters that shock us into the realization of the shortcomings of the age. Wycherley's satire is the Johnsonian kind of corrective satire which tries to reform vice through laughter and ridicule. What Jeremy Collier describes as obscene language and immoral theme in the play is the playwright's way of bringing the realities of the society firsthand to the shocked members of his society. In the end, only this form of satire, through the playwright's vehement language and crass depiction of hypocrisy and amorality, was able to make an impact in the amoral Restoration society.

In the Greek society where Thespis lived, drama was at the apex of literature and theatre was the most respected art form. Drama dealt with mythological subjects of national significance, and through it the society was exposed to the attributes of good citizenship.

Because theatre produces a positive moral effect on the human mind, it inspires humanity to virtuous action. A literary work has a multiplicity of contrasting, varying and mutually exclusive strands of meaning which are reached after the interpretation of the work. For theatre to make an impact in Nigeria, the writer should be committed to his trade. He should remember that his proficiency dwells in the pen. He should unmask

ignorance, pretensions and hypocrisy. He should tackle the plethora of errors that impede our march to nationalism, and attack ethnic prejudices. He should deal heavy blows on errors that border on our national psyche: greed, reckless individualism, ignorance, hedonism, bloated sense of self-evaluation, occupational disease of self-importance and megalomania, and corruption in public places. He should transcend from ethnic or regional situations to national integration by creating characters that assume national significance. And in doing all these, he should not be afraid of being a literary hangman.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patience.

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Recognitions

CITATION IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR EMEKA PATRICK NWABUEZE, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS INAUGURAL LECTURE AS A PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, ON THURSDAY, 30 JUNE 2005.

I stand here to present to you a distinguished professor of the University of Nigeria. He is a teacher, a tireless researcher, a great and resourceful administrator, a leader and motivator, a friend and inspirer of students, a writer, an artist, and a theatre practitioner of no mean proportions - to say nothing of his humour.

In this man, you see a deep font of knowledge, in his work and interpersonal relations practical wisdom, reflecting his wide travel and experience built up over the years here in this University and in universities of other academic and cultural traditions elsewhere in Africa and the West, where he studied or taught, or served as a visiting professor.

He is a respected alumnus of this University, and had his early training in the Department of English, with Dramatic Arts as a sub-department. He was to clock up several terms as coordinator of that sub-department since joining the academic staff of the University, ultimately serving as the prime mover, from the higher office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, in the process that brought that sub-department to the status of a full Department of Theatre Arts. A new entity, namely the Department of English and Literary Studies, was also to rise out of the old one that for many years had served as the surrogate mother of Dramatic Arts.

This man, we can say, nursed the sub-department to maturity, giving it all he had. Under his leadership, the Sub-Department got an open-air theatre and began to build up a collection of books for the Departmental library. Since gaining the status of a department, with him once again at the helm, the old Paul Robeson Building, which had served the sub-Department as a temple and sanctuary, has now been refurbished and wears a

charming new look.

As the Dean of Arts, 2002-2004, he pursued energetically the laying out and beautification of the grounds between the Faculty buildings, with the lawns now fully enclosed within hedges and regularly trimmed and manicured. He earned both a formal motion of commendation at the Faculty Board of Arts and a special letter of commendation from members for his services and leadership of the Faculty during the period.

This is the man we have assembled to receive for his inaugural lecture as a Professor of Dramatic Arts of the University of Nigeria; and he will be speaking on 'things new and old.' The title of this lecture is:

'In the Spirit of Thespis: Theatre Arts and National Integration,'

We have every right to expect this to be a great inaugural lecture because this professor is both an advanced researcher and an original thinker. His publications in both categories now number over 60 titles.

These include *Visions and Re-Visions: Selected Discourses on Literary Criticism* (2004) and *Studies in Dramatic Literature*, which is coming out soon. He also has a host of journal articles, book chapters, and invited reviews. As well as these, he has published short stories and novellas and several major plays. Not only does this man bubble with creativity, he also has a genius for entertainment.

Some of his dramatic works, like *Spokesman for the Oracle* (1986), *A Dance of the Dead* (1991), and *When the Arrow Rebounds* (1992) have been produced and performed again and again in this University and elsewhere without ever losing anything of their power. It was rather that the oftener one watched them the more intense the experience: they were

on each occasion always new, always engaging and arresting, always thought-provoking, a mark of serious art.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, sir, distinguished guests, eminent professors and members of the Senate of the University of Nigeria, honourable members of the Governing Council of the University here present, up and coming academics, dynamic University managers and administrators, diligent students learning for the future, ladies and gentlemen: the man I speak of is already on his feet. He is Professor Emeka Patrick Nwabueze –

Professor of Dramatic Arts, University of Nigeria,

- First Head, Department of Theatre Arts
- Former Dean, Faculty of Arts,
- Area Coordinator, National Association of African-American Studies,
- Honourable member, Research Board of Advisors, The American bibliographical Institute -Please, welcome him to the lecture stand!

Rev. Fr Prof. A.N. Akwanya

Professor of English and Literary Studies.